

Omachi and its Gods.

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No. III.

IN OMACHI.

Such are the homes of Omachi, and such, with differences your eye would not notice, are the homes of Omachi's countless sister towns. You would not call them inviting, either without or within. The low gray roof of roughly laid shingles was weighted down with stones; the lattice and *shoji* of the upper storey, the low, dingy rooms opening in the street from the ground floor; it is all very homely and very unhomelike, and the average interior is equally uninviting. The *doba* with its bags of charcoal, bundles of firewood and shelves of such lumber as we relegate to the attic, the kitchen with its primitive utensils and its roof of smoky beams, the little low rooms with their bare walls, yellow mats, lack of ornament or furniture,—after all it is not much more than a hut. It is only the homes of the well-to-do which approach the comfortableness, not to say the comfortable-lookingness, of a laborer's cottage in the towns of the Provinces. No daintily papered walls hung with pictures; no mantel-piece or wall-brackets with their modest ornaments; no bright carpets or rugs; no tidy kitchen with its shining range and shelves of glistening pans; no dining room with its glass and china and bit of silver plate set on its snowy cloth; no cosy sitting room or parlor with its cane rocker, its easy chairs and sofa, its shining piano, perhaps, with its ivory and ebony keys; no bedroom with its immaculate pillow-shams and counterpanes, its snowy towels and doilies fearfully and wonderfully made. We missionaries of course have all these things, or most of them, in our own homes. It is of the native style of living only I am speaking. Whatever approach to comfort and refinement such a house affords will be found in the rear room. This opens on a little yard with flowers or shrubs, or perhaps a patch of vegetables. The mats are bright and clean, and by the low writing table are bright floor cushions. The wall paper is neat or even tasty, and a wall banner or a motto in Chinese relieves the bareness. On a side shelf may be a few books. This is the parlor, and is pleasant enough in a very simple way.

A Japanese family does not require many rooms. The rooms used during the day for dining room, parlor, work room, etc., may at evening be all transformed in a few minutes to bedrooms. At a hotel there is no bar, no office, no baggage room, no reading room, no guest's parlor, no dining room. When you enter and have washed your feet you are taken directly to your room, which will be like an ordinary best room in a Japanese home, and your luggage follows you. There you sleep, eat, and entertain your visitors. When you depart your bill is brought to you. There is however, as before stated, the common wash place, with its wooden sink and copper basin, where the guests of all degrees meet together.

As I said before—and I have to go back on my tracks a little sometimes, to make clear to the gentle reader what is in a large degree so unfamiliar to him—the lower front rooms of most of the town houses are either workshops or stores or both combined, places of business as we should say. We will get some idea of these places of business, and of the aspect which a town street presents, if we take as examples the houses within a stone's throw of our home here on this Upper Middle street of Omachi. Remember that all are wide open to the street, without even plate glass windows to obstruct our view. We will take the houses just as they stand, 12 from each side of the street. Next door to us on the south is an eye doctor, and a glance within will show that he has modern and western appliances. He has studied at Tokio, at the Imperial University perhaps, and is probably, for a country doctor, a fair specialist. He seems to have a good practice, and there are many in need of his skill, and many sightless ones whom his skill cannot reach. Next door below is a barber shop, with western methods if not of western cleanliness. Here you may be shorn for about 4 cents of our money, and shaven for about 2 cents. Japanese men now nearly all follow our method of hair dressing, preferring close crops, but the women, except those under strong foreign influence, maintain the old elaborate style, with its abundance of grease and padding. The barber's next door neighbor is a clothier. His fabrics, in small narrow rolls, are bestowed on shelves around the shop, and he squats on the floor, plying his needle or displaying his goods to the honorable customers who have deigned to augustly ascend. If you want to inspect them he will put a cushion for you on the edge of the shop floor next the *doba*, and bewilder you with countless patterns of the narrow Japanese cotton cloth, chiefly in white or blue. The shop next below is a shoe-maker's if a manufacturer and dealer in wooden *geta* of all varieties can be so yclept. He by the way, after many years study of Christianity, professed to be a believer and was received with the Dutch Reformed church, which is in Japan a branch of the United church. He almost at once fell away however, and now does not scruple to defend the worship of the national and local deities, and, which is at least consistent, has resigned his church membership. Next below him is a druggist or

apothecary, with a stock of native and foreign medicines and chemicals, and probably some tinned goods. In front of his shop depend many banners or cloths, with Chinese characters setting forth special medicines for sale.

Coming back to the preaching place and going north we have first a *tabiya*, a maker and seller of the white or blue foot-mittens which answer to our stockings and socks. The white are for indoor or street wear, for dress occasions; the blue are more durable and are used in journeys. They have a separate place, or thumb, for the great toe, in order to allow the thong of the wooden or straw *geta* and *zori* to pass in between that clumsy member and its more slender sisters. They are fastened at the back, down the heel, by brass buckles passing through thread catches, a sort of hook and eye arrangement. Next door is a *jinrikisha* stand, and if you want to go over to Ikeda, 6 miles south, and are too lazy to foot it in your *tabi* and *waraji*, and are too careful of your bones to risk them in the old rattle trap coach which runs up and down the valley, the *jinrikishi* will set you up in his little baby carriage, tuck a dust cloth around your knees, and getting between the shafts take you over at an easy run for about 30 *sen*, or 15 cents. The missionary and his helper of course do not presume to such extravagance. Our well worn *tabi* make the 12 miles back and forth every Sunday, no matter how high the thermometer may stand. The next shop north is another *tabiya*, and next to that is a tea-house, or restaurant, where the traveller, or the farmer in on business can lunch for about three cents on rice, sea-weed, cucumbers and tea. Very appropriately the next door neighbor is a second class hotel. It is not one where we would care to lodge, but the class of travellers who put up there, find it good enough, and think the 10 or 12 cents they pay for supper, bed and breakfast quite extravagance enough.

Now let us cross the street and take the 12 houses opposite those we have examined. First we have a doctor's office. He is one of the new school of course, has a diploma from the government, and doses his patient's according to the medical law of the west. Next comes the post-office, with the telegraph-office under the same roof. In addition to the letter box in front of the office there are six or seven boxes in different sections of the town, in the nearest house to each of which stamps can be bought, so that one has not far to go to mail his letters. These boxes are cleared thrice a day. Mails are distributed by carriers four times a day, from house to house, and there is no such thing as going for one's mail. Even the remote villages and scattered hamlets have their mail delivered from door to door, at appointed times. The post-office is now found in every town of any importance. That of Omachi is probably used chiefly by the silk dealers. For 15 *sen* (7½ cents) one sends a message of 10 syllables to any part of Japan.

Next to the post-office, and carried on by the same household, is what we would call a saddle and harness shop, where the various rather clumsy equipments of the Japanese horse are to be bought. In this part of Japan every well-to-do farmer has his horse, and a good deal of horse flesh is needed to transport goods on trucks, or pack-saddles, across the hills. The horse is not employed for riding or driving, except as a cavalry or coach horse. It is rare to see the owner on horse back, or sitting on his truck. The saddlery we are looking at is adjoined by a hardware store, where the iron, copper, and tin vessels and instruments of the kitchen, the carpenter's bench, etc., are on sale. The next house is occupied by a farmer, whose ricefields are adjacent to the town, and at present he does not carry on any other trade. Most of the citizens, perhaps, in addition to their shops, are farmers in a small way, with a patch of ground for vegetables, and so forth, near at hand, and some ricefields out on the plain within reach. While some members of the household carry on the in-door business, others, the wife perhaps, or the grown sons, or daughters, or the hired help, plant and garner the rice. Even the preaching place has a little farm at one end of the tiny yard, about as big as a *tatami*, where Mrs. Kaneko has already raised various crops of greens, onions, cucumbers, etc., and now has a promising stand of egg-plants.

The farmer's neighbor is a *getaya*, and next to him is a *tabiya*. It takes a good many makers of clogs and foot-mittens to supply the Omachi market. Then we have a druggist, whose store is right opposite the preaching place. The next door south is a brewery, or distillery, where Japanese rice liquor, *sake*, is made and wholesaled. This is the largest building on this street, and the proprietors are men of means and importance. They are licensed by the government to consume in the production of *sake*, about 5000 bushels of rice. This amount of grain, which at present retail prices, would sell for about \$12,000 of Canadian money, is said to produce \$18,000 worth of *sake*. As about \$5000.00 of this goes to the government, the manufacturers would have about \$13000.00 a year, less running expenses, which latter they probably make up by the manufacture and sale of several ingredients of Japanese food. There are four of these *sake* factories in the town, the other three doing a smaller business. Every town of any size has one or more. It is rare to find a Japanese who does not drink, and many drink to excess, but drunkenness can hardly be considered a national characteristic, and *sake* is said to be a purer and better liquor than most of what is dealt across the saloon counter at home. There are many places in the town where *sake* is retailed, the *sake* shop sign being a large ball of cryptomecia twigs, dried and closely bound together. I do not know the significance of this, but it is said to have some semi-religious meaning, a spiritual bearing, as it were. The *sake* factory over the way has one hanging from the eaves, four or five feet in diameter. The distillery has for its neighbor on the south, as well

as on the north, a drug store, the druggists having wisely set themselves where they would be most needed. Then follows a *jinrikisha* stand; then a dealer in beef, and probably also horse-flesh, and not very much of both put together, for very little meat is eaten in Omachi. The next building, and here we will stop, is a silk dealers' office, as nearly as I can translate its title, a sort of silk exchange.

From this score or so of examples, taken for convenience in the immediate neighborhood of our Omachi home, the Gentle Reader may form some idea of what he might see of the business side of Omachi, if he should go through the whole town. He ought also, however, to visit some of the silk-spinning factories, of which there are a baker's dozen, employing a thousand girls, who come from near and far for the season's work. These are the girls whose *geta* go clattering by at four in the morning. Some spinning is still done in the old way by the housewives at their cottage doors, but the factories which dot the country absorb most of the work. I am afraid that the manners and morals of the girls, are not improved by their factory life. The great cotton factories of Osaka, are said to be hot-beds of the grossest immoralities. The civilization of the west will swamp Japan in destruction and perdition, unless the saving power of the gospel works mightily with it.

But time and space would fail me, to tell of all that the Gentle Reader ought to see. In Omachi,—of its system of sewerage and water supply; of its fine looking and finely appointed school, really a credit to a place of 5000 "mouths;" of its home life, its social customs, its festivals, its wickedness, and its elements of good. To me, who live so many weeks each year in the midst of it all, and to whom the people are real flesh and blood, with hopes and disappointments, joys and sorrows, and with spiritual natures like our own, it is all very interesting, but it is difficult, even with the use of many words, to picture it forth as it is. In my next letter I hope to tell of "the gods of Omachi," and I think what I have to say will be of general, as well as of missionary interest.

Omachi, Shinano, Japan.

Sights and Sounds in India for Boys and Girls in Canada.

DEAR GIRLS AND BOYS.—Please get out of the road! My bicycle is old and rheumatic; but this morning it seems to have renewed its youth. Do you see, far away to the south, those heavy clouds? They hang over a little city by the sea, called Bimlipatam. Before we reach that place, we have yet thirty-eight miles to go. On our left, above the tops of the hills, the sky is aglow with streams of light from the rising sun. The best plan is to leave as much of the road as possible behind before the sun gets high and hot. Therefore everything must get out of the way or get run over. Past tall palms, low mud-huts, narrow muddy canals, broad gleaming tanks, broad green rice fields, slow ox carts, and ragged men and women, half awake, half asleep and half naked, trudging along to earn a day's palty wages, by standing in the mire and water from morn till eve, transplanting rice. The awakened wheel, glad to get beyond the caravan and to have the highway to itself, seems to feel the joy of the morning in its aged joints, and breaks the record of its better days. This is exhilarating and—Click! Click! What is the matter? Down goes the brake! Too late! Clank! Snap! Suddenly, all is at a stand in the middle of the road! The chain has slipped out of the driving wheel, and one link has caught on a prong that used to hold the chain guard. Before the brake could stop the wheel there is a break in the chain. One link is bent and wrenched in two, and gives an unwelcome illustration of the old adage that one broken link spoils the chain. The sun is now risen, and his first rays flash upon the glinting spokes of a chainless bicycle. It begins to dawn upon me what a predicament I am in! Our worst enemy in India has already opened fire with his long range artillery, and our destination is still thirty-six and a half miles away to the south! They say that it takes cranks to make the world go around! But here is a good crank that cannot make anything go around; for a crank is no good without a chain. The wallet of tools and repair materials is opened and searched; but there is nothing which anticipated an accident of this kind. Here we are, like a steamship in mid-ocean, with a broken propeller and with no means of repairing it. To make the matter more serious, I am hurrying home because a telegram came last night saying that my sick little girl was worse and longing to see me! Minutes are hours! It seems to me that rather than take a slow ox cart I will attempt to stretch out my arms for wings and fly to the bedside of my child!

Last night, at Bobbili, I said "Good-night" to Mr. and Mrs. Gullison and Miss Harrison, and was taking a walk up and down the veranda before retiring. A white-robed figure glided in from the road like a ghost! It went to Mr. Gullison's door. In a minute Mr. Gullison came and handed me a reddish-brown envelope. It was a telegram, and the figure that I saw coming in from the road was the telegraph messenger. The despatch was torn open and you know already what the message was! I did not sleep that night at Bobbili. Immediately the plans for the journey were laid. My wheel was to be put in Mr. Churchill's *jinrikisha* with me, and we both were to ride until break of day. Then the *jinrikisha* would be sent back to Bobbili, and I would wheel it the rest of the way home. However, it was the season when all the coolies were busy transplanting rice by day and

busy resting by night. I could not work on the morning, not thus engaged. The community had died, funeral by all geta, them could not find the mission house, fendish religion, the face of the devil's religion, fernal darkness! any language, sin, and soul of these and children, who day!! There was night for love or with enough *jinrikisha*. A clock was striking standing on the *jinrikisha*, and The lantern sways shafts which the joggled along or were relieved from hollow, like the snow-drift. The of heavily laden carrying the prostration at Vizianag pits and take such more than eight before we come to it is pretty tedious coach, especially the lantern light eyes, and the ball like the peace of suddenly came to flowing river. The stones, but wide. The coolies over to the other they came back inside. Shallow this bare-footed traveller would find his route every sidered that the altered. The pleasant sound, and enjoy the lush was no time to w mile village, and force. The bicycle the *jinrikisha*, trying to get a stage was reached away before the contained my suitcase filled with egg s me by Mrs. Gullison this hearty lunch, last watch of the refreshed for the meat and drink, that only leaves them. They are nearly two years try them when wholesome. As own hands from vowed them, skin in the orchard at I ever had the plor out peeling; for and the fruit sell habits. Breakfast my luggage in the simplified there share of room; I like the camels last a long journey to Bobbili with the All aboard! The hot; but the bicycle before the sun ah! What a fine road carts have not ha floor, and as smoo went better. The speed along, mak punkah can produce springs to the gre in his tracks, to s life could be as Clank! Clank! S broken chain! V smooth? We are Bobbili, and thirt