

The Japanese Girl

BY DOUGLAS SLADEN.

SHAKESPEARE'S Seven Ages are not for the Japanese girl. She has only two—unmarried and married. The former is all sunshine; the latter, at best, cool retreat. The state of unmarried girlhood commences very early in Japan, where quite little children are set to take care of



THE ETIQUETTE OF ARRANGING FLOWERS.

babies. The way they do it is typical of the seeming absurdities of the Japanese. The baby is tied on the back of a tiny tot, in a *haori*, or shawl, preventing its small deputy mamma from taking a moment's rest, and the baby also; for this nurse skips, or plays ball or shuttlecock, without a thought for her charge, whose head shakes till you expect it drop off. The baby, however, only regards it as a form of rocking.

In time—a very short time, for a woman gets married at fifteen—the little nurse will grow into a mousmee, the grisette of Japan about whom so much has been written. She will then have grown out of carrying babies when she has younger sisters; she can be put to better uses in other ways. It is the fact of their using very young children to do whatever is within their capacity which makes Japanese goods so cheap.

Girls have trousseaux costing more than their fathers' incomes. The child of moderately well-off parents might take five thousand dollars of goods with her to her bridegroom's house (they have no word for home at all, except the corruption *honsu*), but not a dollar of money. It was especially a point that she should have every conceivable article even of a household nature, down to candles, which she could possibly require in the first year, so as not to have to ask her husband for money.

The Japanese girl of the lower classes, when she is ripe for the mourning garments of marriage, is a most fascinating little creature. Her complexion is not yellow, but sunny brown, with rich red blood showing through it like the best Italian complexions: Her eyes are not obliquely placed or set in slits—she would only be too thankful if they were, for it is vulgar to have the eyes we admire. The paintings of Giotto would seem perfectly beautiful to a Japanese. The merry little maiden like *Greuze's Girl at the fountain* with her bright healthy cheeks and lips like cherries and innocent round eyes which Europeans admire so much, in Japan only strikes the Japanese themselves as plebeian—they prefer tragic queens with lantern jaws, long hooked noses, pasty white faces, and eyes like oats. Natural color is considered most unbecoming. If a girl has auburn hair, she soaks it in

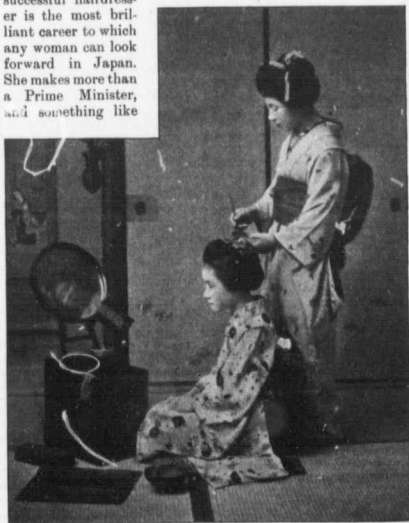
camellia oil till it looks black, and the fashionable woman carries down her sleeve a little ivory card-case for dyeing her lips magenta or even gilt. The geishas, the Japanese ideals of beauty, chalk their faces.

The Japanese girl has no jewellery, though she is gaily itself in her costume compared with married women in these degenerate days, when the richly flowered robes of the Feudal age are relegated to the stage.

To take the place of jewellery, she has the little articles of toilet which she carries in her sleeve or slung round her waist, and her hairpins. Hairpins are the hatspins of Japan. To rival the fine diamonds and pearls with which our shop-girls keep on their hats, she uses hairpins which have nothing to do with keeping her hair up. Specimens of them are shown in the *obi* picture. According to her wealth and refinement her hairpin-heads vary from little bits of choice lacquer to gaudy imitation flowers and butterflies. In the Whitechapel Exhibition there were even hairpin-heads of Japanese soldiers dragging Chinese soldiers by their pigtails. But these were not good style, and the large tortoise-shell hairpins which look like fiddle-pegs are only worn by a few women in Japan.

The saying that a woman's hair is her glory has a special significance in Japan, where no woman with any pretence to modishness can do her own hair, and hair, like Macbeth, has conquered sleep.

The women of Japan and Mashonaland hit upon an almost identical contrivance to enable them to go without doing their hair for a week. It is made of wood and looks like a door-scraper with a top taken from a cripple's crutch. When the woman sleeps, she lays not her head, but the nape of her neck up this headsman's block. Probably the grand ladies at the Court of the Grant Monarque had some contrivance like these of the Japs and Mashonas. It takes a really smart woman about half a day to have her hair done, and to be a successful hairdresser is the most brilliant career to which any woman can look forward in Japan. She makes more than a Prime Minister, and something like



THE HAIRDRESSER'S FINISHING TOUCHES.

the income of a first-rate actor. Our illustration shows the hairdresser putting on the finishing touches. In front of her victim is one of the magic mirrors of Japan in its lacquer case. These mirrors are round discs of silver-colored bronze,