

WHERE THEY PROMISE TO LOVE, HONOR AND OBEY A PHOTOGRAPH



Walking Down the Gangplank

Some Amazing Revelations Concerning the Picture Marriages of the Japanese, in Which the Bride Is Legally Bound to a Picture and Takes Her Chance of Meeting the Original.



She Looked Into the Face of Her Future Husband for the First Time

The United States have not hesitated to declare that:—
"To question the validity of such a marriage by requiring a second marriage according to our law and custom is wholly without warrant in equity or law. It impeaches the integrity of the Japanese government and is little short of an insult to a friendly nation—that the Christian marriage vows are not binding upon the consciences of the non-Christian Japanese, and it is little short of a farce to require them."

As to the Legal Side.

A generally accepted principle of international law is the dictum that a marriage contract legalized by the laws of the country where the ceremony is performed should be similarly treated by all other countries when to so regard such a contract is not detrimental to public policy.

Contraverting the opinion quoted, an abundance of opinion has been offered in support of the claim that marriage according to American custom of parties to these "picture marriages" is demanded not only for its moral value, but for many other reasons. Even though the Japanese marriage laws may not require the physical presence of the contracting parties at the place where such contract it made effective, yet it seems reasonable to suppose when the Japanese government enacted its marriage laws that the physical presence of both interested parties within the jurisdiction of Japan, when the ceremony was completed, was contemplated, and not that one of such parties should be a permanent resident of California, subject to all its laws, the other being so domiciled as to render obedience to Japanese law obligatory.

It is pointed out that the marriage laws of all great governments other than Japan provide for the bodily presence of both contracting parties when marriage is celebrated, hence the contention that to allow the consummation of "picture marriages" without enforcement of marriage sanctioned by our own law and custom is positively detrimental to a public policy to which our people have steadfastly adhered since the founding of the government.

The Japanese male who obtains his wife through the "picture marriage" system in nearly every instance has been a permanent resident of the United States for a term of years, has been amenable to all our laws and a recipient of many benefits accruing therefrom. He intends to continue residence in the United States after marriage, and does it not therefore seem perfectly proper and altogether reasonable to insist that when the marriage compact is effected the ceremony should by all means conform to the laws of the State wherein the marriage takes place?

Research fails to develop that the subjects of any government on earth other than that of Japan expect our government to recognize as binding any marriage not consummated while both participants are physically present, either in the country of adoption or in some other country. It cannot be gainsaid when any subject of a foreign government, exclusive of the Japanese, who has had a residence in the United States wishes to take in marriage a woman then residing abroad and to continue residence here thereafter that such subject either proceeds to his native land, celebrates his marriage agreement under the laws of his own government, or as an alternative sends for his prospective spouse and immediately upon arrival accepts her in marriage in accordance with the laws of his own country. To insist that Japanese principals in "picture marriages" do likewise conveys absolutely no intention or desire on the part of our government to show discourtesy to the friendly government of Japan.

Polygamy Obnoxious.

As a matter of fact, there are other countries whose marriage laws go unrecognized by our government, reference being had to those governments which stamp with approval obnoxious polygamous marriages. Not only are polygamous marriages contracted under the laws of other countries taboo by Uncle Sam, but the statute explicitly states that "polygamists, or persons who admit their belief in the practice of polygamy," shall be denied admission to the United States. The latter government believes that polygamous marriages are detrimental to public policy, and regardless of what other countries may favor such contracts they will not be recognized here; but at the same time our government in the enforcement of its laws does not intend the slightest discourtesy to any friendly nation whose laws or beliefs make polygamous marriages possible.

In addition to the reasons cited why parties to the "picture marriages" should be required to conform to our own marriage custom there remains the decided necessity for such action as will, under the mandates of our own laws, definitely determine who is to be responsible for the moral safeguarding of the young Japanese girls brought into the United States by the system herein outlined. In all probability the census of this country will show the Japanese population about to be taken will show the Japanese population of the United States to be in the neighborhood of 150,000, the males representing about seventy-five per cent of the total number.

The Japanese Consul General at San Francisco has said that he and the Japanese government desired, in the interests of morality, to have as many of the Japanese in this country married as possible. Will it conserve our own public policy to have any portion of the Japanese males now in the United States import their wives under the "picture marriage" plan, ignoring all reference to the marriage laws of this country?

Our people in general have little or no knowledge of the cunning displayed in the matter of supplying victims for the many houses of infamy to be found in thickly settled districts in every city of any size on the Pacific slope. One authority on the subject of Oriental immigration indulges in the following:—
"The Oriental in this country has no family life. In 1885 the municipality of San Francisco made an investigation in Chinatown of that city. The report says:—There were found living in families, women, 57; children, 59; herded together with apparent indiscriminate parental relations and no family classification, women, 761; children, 576; professional women and children living together, women, 567; children, 87."

"At that time 50,000 Chinese lived in this district called Chinatown, and there were in all that number less than three score wives, with less than three score children."

Here chastity is unknown, and women are mainly slaves sold to infamy and trained to vice.
"These conditions still continue, and the Japanese are but little better than the Chinese. Their housing conditions are a little better, but the relations of sexes are fully as bad. The census of 1900 showed on the mainland of the United States a total of 24,326 Japanese, of which only 985 were females. It is safe to say that far more than a majority of these females were prostitutes. After 1900 a larger number of Japanese women were imported for immoral purposes, so that about one-third of the arrivals were women."

"The activity of the federal government in 1907 brought about a change, for during that year, while the number of Japanese males arriving was 27,240, the number of females was only 2,988."

Concomitant of the foregoing is the fact that it would not be difficult for government officials to show that even after marriage as required by our custom Japanese girls brought to the United States under the "picture marriage" arrangement have only been imported to add to the already immense number of their sex and race who follow lives of degradation in the Pacific coast cities.

Must Be Safeguarded.

No foreign government disposed to fair dealing could possibly take exceptions to the maintenance by our government of a public policy calculated to eradicate such conditions as are described, and any intelligent person who will give the subject reasonable consideration must necessarily reach the conclusion that it devolves upon the federal authorities to surround Japanese "picture marriages" with every possible safeguard in order that society may be protected, and that unscrupulous men who fatten from the earnings of shame may not enrich themselves through the importation of innocent Japanese girls. The Executive Order of President Roosevelt dated March 14, 1907, reads as follows:—

"Whereas, upon sufficient evidence produced before me by the Department of Commerce and Labor, I am satisfied that passports issued by the government of Japan to citizens of that country or of Korea and who are laborers, skilled or unskilled, to go to Mexico, to Canada, and to Hawaii, are being used for the purpose of enabling the holders thereof to come to the continental territory of the United States to the detriment of labor conditions therein, I hereby order that such citizens of Japan and Korea, to whom Japanese or Korean laborers holding passports to go to Mexico, Canada, or Hawaii, and come therefrom, be refused permission to enter the continental territory of the United States."

The reader will readily recall the agitation in the Pacific coast cities during 1907, particularly in San Francisco, over the proposal to segregate Japanese children for school purposes, which resulted in the establishment of separate schools, but in fully understanding with the Japanese government, or the restriction of Japanese immigration of the laboring class to this country, the above executive order forbidding the admission to continental United States of Japanese or Korean laborers holding passports to go to Mexico, Canada, or Hawaii. It was hoped that by restricting Japanese immigration to this country not only would labor conditions in the sections where the agitation was most pronounced be benefited, but that the necessity for separate schools would be obviated. The influx of Japanese women under the "picture marriage" plan (and they are coming in large numbers) will certainly render schools of some sort necessary, and a further problem will be up for settlement when we reflect that the Japanese must rapidly and that the progeny resulting from "picture marriages" will be citizens of the United States by birth and entitled to every right and privilege contemplated in such title.

By the "community of nations" not infrequently alluded to by the courts when dealing with international problems, under ordinary circumstances, when both of the contracting parties are physically within the jurisdiction of the laws under which a marriage is consummated in a foreign country, our government should, and does, accord such unions full recognition, excepting where polygamy is involved, full recognition being extended to all Japanese marriages where the ceremony has been performed while both parties were within the purview of Japanese statutes.

But our government has its own public policy to maintain, and, prompted by the demands of such policy, uniformly insists that participants in "picture marriages" shall be united by a ceremony conforming to American usage, and the wisdom of employing such other safeguards to insure the genuineness of these marriages is now under consideration. It is firmly believed before surrender of a Japanese bride into the care of her alleged husband, who in nearly every case has had a residence of some years in the United States, that a thorough investigation should be enforced by the government in order that there may be absolutely no uncertainty as to the trustworthiness of the bridegroom. Once admitted to the United States, identification of Japanese girls without the use of a photograph is an impossibility, and in addition to the other precautions it is deemed essential that the Japanese government be requested to cause some official endorsement to be made on the photograph of the bride, said photograph to be filed with the government's officers when the holder is admitted to this country, for by this means only can it be determined whether the Japanese females now landing in the United States in increasing numbers under the "picture marriage" system are coming to an existence of chastity or vice.

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"HAVE you ever seen your intended husband?"
"Yes."
"Where?"
"I saw him in the hall as I came into this room."

"How were you able to recognize him among so many?"
"I have his picture."
"Do you wish to ask him any questions to satisfy yourself that you have made no mistake?"
"No."

The foregoing conversation recently took place at the port of Seattle between a government official and a diminutive Japanese girl eighteen years old, who had just completed a 4,500 mile journey, entirely unaccompanied, from her home in the interior of Japan and across the Pacific to meet her future lord and master.

She had never seen her future husband before that day, knew nothing of his history, had no acquaintance with his people in Japan. Under the marriage laws of that country, however, she had already been legally united in marriage to the man whose photograph she carried, and as to whether she would more firmly cement the compact by marriage according to American usages now depended upon the examining-officials, who, after weighing every circumstance in her case, must pass upon her admissibility into the United States.

To watch this tiny representative of womanhood, without a friend or adviser, walk down the gangplank of the great ocean liner and take her place in the waiting room, already crowded with girls of her own race, whose migration to the United States was in many instances in circumstances such as surrounded her own case; to observe the composure with which she met every requirement of the law, and the entire absence of doubt or fear when in the presence of the examining officers she looked into the face of her future husband for the first time, not only bespoke the confidence which this little daughter of Nippon must have had in mankind in general but also served to arouse in the native American breast emotions difficult to describe.

Can we imagine any American girl of the same age, in like circumstances, starting on a similar journey with a corresponding object in view?

Some six months previous the bridegroom, a prosperous merchant in Lower California, had notified his father in Japan that he wished to take unto himself a wife. According to Japanese custom it then devolved upon the father to look about for a suitable consort for his son. The son in explaining how he obtained his wife offered the following:—
"You see, my father's brother knew a man who knew this girl's father, and so they made the necessary arrangements. Then my father sent me this photograph of my fiancée, which I have shown here, after which it was necessary for me to have my friends in California call upon the Japanese Consul General at San Francisco to ask that he make such representations to his home government as would secure for my fiancée the passport which she would be obliged to have before she could depart from her own country. When the passport was issued then all that remained to be done was the sending of money with which to pay her passage. This I did, and you see she is here."

They Then Join Hands.

The decision of the examining officers being favorable, the services of the Buddhist priest were invoked, and as the contracting parties joined hands for the first time in their lives, in conformity with the laws of the State of Washington was consummated the so-called "Japanese picture marriage."

It should be understood, however, that the legality of the above marriage was in nowise influenced by the photograph, either as regards the civil ceremony



After Three Months' Residence in the United States

"The Arrival of the Bride"



"The Arrival of the Bride"

of Japan or the ceremony dictated by the laws of Washington. Under the Civil Code of Japan the sole requirements in the consummation of marriage are these:—

First—The attainment of legal age by the contracting parties.

Second—The consent of parents or guardians up to the age of twenty-five for the women and thirty years for the men.

Third—The formal filing of a notification of marriage with the proper district registrar.

Females of the age of fifteen years, and males of the age of seventeen years, are eligible for marriage under Japanese law, and the legal consummation of such a marriage does not necessarily contemplate a social or religious function of any kind. Moreover, Japanese law does not require the presence of a couple to be united, even though not separated by an ocean's expanse.

With those controlled by our own American custom it is hard to conceive of a marriage contract not the result of an understanding or agreement between the principals in such union, which rule obtains as to marriage in Japan. The fact is that the family, and not the individual, is the unit under Japanese law, and each family has its legal representative—its "koshu"—who conducts all negotiations pertaining to marriages, as it is also his duty to see to it that upon completion of such a contract the same is duly registered

under the family seal. The Japanese girl thus wedded becomes an integral part of the family of the husband, and when the little bride mentioned at the commencement of this article was asked who would care for her in the event of the death of her husband, or his failure to live up to the marriage contract she quickly replied:—"His father and brothers would have to keep me."

In the light of the foregoing it is not surprising that participants in "Japanese picture marriages" do not take any too kindly to the rule requiring marriage having legal force and sanction in our own country. As the principals in the aforementioned marriage at Seattle were above the average of their class their obedience to American marriage requirements was apparently cheerful, yet the reader should not imagine that our marriage customs are held in similar regard by the majority of participants in the "picture marriages." Notwithstanding the young men and girls who are wedded by this plan may never have seen each other before, their belief in the efficacy of their own marriage ritual is faded, and though yielding to the demand of government officers that marriage according to the American custom be entered into before entry to the United States is authorized, the latter ceremony is regarded largely as a joke and in nowise binding upon the interested parties. Certain persons of undisputed intellectual strength who have investigated the above proposition in both Japan and