



A JAPANESE GIRL'S RENUNCIATION

BY MISS A. STOTT

THE Eastern sun was pouring down in all his golden effulgence and glory, his warm brilliance lighting up a small but exquisitely-kept Japanese garden, in a picturesque country town. The scarlet camellias and the snow-petalled magnolia contrasted pleasantly against the background of dwarf pine, maple, and corymbia, whilst the sunbeams discovered the glint of the goldfish in the little pond, and made them shine and flash to and fro through the dark water.—"How lovely it all is!" said Hana, or "little flower," as her name meant, as she stepped noiselessly on to the verandah. Unconscious of the effect she herself lent to the beautiful scene, she stood gracefully at ease, drinking in the fair glory of the sunny afternoon. How simple and picturesque she looked, in her delicate-shaded dress, with its broad, black satin "obi," and her rich, black hair arranged in its quaint style to suit her Eastern type of face. Clear, soft, and limpid were her dark eyes, expressive in every feature was the small, daintily-poised head, and the beauty of robust health and natural refinement dwelt in the bright, fresh face of more than usual charm and beauty. Hana was not only

A LOVELY TYPE OF JAPANESE GIRLHOOD; she was cultured and well educated. The exquisitely-painted scrolls in the house beyond testified to her skill in using her brush, according to the prescribed rules of Japanese art, she could arrange flowers in the approved style, dispense "cha-no-ya"—ceremonial tea—with all the grace and etiquette of the strictest feminine accomplishment. She could play the "koto" and "samisen"—native musical instruments—with such effect that many of her father's friends would come in of an evening, to spend an hour or so, listening to Hana as she sang Japanese songs, and made the monotonous droning sound more like music, because of her clear, resonant voice, with its sweet, modulated tones. But alas! Hana's parents were in dire poverty—an old aristocratic but effete branch of an ancient Samurai clan. They had had the bitterest struggle to maintain the family through pecuniary losses of various sorts. The father, though an industrious man, had never succeeded well in his business, and being now broken in health and spirits, he was in terrible anxiety regarding the education of his large family. Hana was the eldest, and was twenty, whilst her two elder brothers, Taro and Ito, being now nearly initiated themselves, had never respectively, were ready to enter upon specific training—one as a doctor, the other as an electrical engineer. The family pride, which filled the parents' hearts, was vested in

THESE BRIGHT, AMBITIOUS YOUTHS, who had acquired themselves such much honour in their public examinations, so that their future looked bright and successful. But, alas! where there is the means to be found to send Taro abroad to study medicine under German professors, and how was Ito to have the expenses met of the Tokyo College of Engineering?

The father knew only too well, in order to make their name, his sons must have the best of training, or sink into poverty and obscurity. A plan had therefore been hatched in the parent's brain, of which Hana was in blissful ignorance. She had just recently left the high school, after having successfully passed the ordinary examinations required. During her past two years at school, a

GREAT CHANGE HAD COME INTO HER LIFE, for, having been induced by some fellow-students to attend a lady missionary's house for further instruction in English, Hana had heard the Gospel week by week. At first she had listened with careless inattention, and only understood vaguely the nearest intimation of the interest so earnestly and impressively, but the missionary had made her a special subject of prayerful intercession, and by-and-bye her faith and tact were rewarded in seeing Hana really interested, and enquiring genuinely the way of salvation. With what joy did the devoted worker lead the yearning soul, until the peace of forgiveness was given. From that time, over a year ago, Hana had tried in her quiet, unobtrusive way to live for her Saviour, but her parents, being SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMEN, she had deemed it best not to say too much about her change of religion. She had warmly praised her new friend, the lady missionary, and had asked if she might accompany her sometimes to worship. The parents had demurred, but finally, with tacit care, however, she occasionally won permission, though they utterly refused to allow her to identify herself in any outward rite with the Christian community. Indeed, they looked upon her desire to worship the foreigner's God as a mere phase of her school life, which would, of course, be given up when she settled down into more serious duties, and became a wife, busy with her household.

But let us return now to the sunny garden and Hana, as she dreamily watches the glistening goldfish in the little shady pond. On a few occasions, on a few moments is she free to drink in the golden beauty around her, for a voice is heard calling imperatively, "Hana! Hana!" Instantly the girl replies, "Hi! Hi!" and disappears

THROUGH THE PAPER-SCREENED WINDOW, like the flash of a fleeting sunbeam. Her mother, a pale, resolute-looking woman of middle age, is busily engaged in preparing the evening meal, and Hana is soon occupied in cutting up the vegetables, whilst the small hired girl, drawn from the kitchen, looks well. Poor as they are, they must afford this small addition to the family expenses, in their effort to maintain their respectable superiority to their neighbours.

"Be quick, Hana!" says her mother. "I hear your father at the gate, and it is nearly five o'clock, and—why, I do declare, he has brought two guests with him! Be quick and make the tea, and heat the charcoal box for their pipes."

With her usual rapid obedience, the girl does as she is commanded, and almost as soon as her father and his companions have removed their shoes

and entered the guest-room, her gentle voice asks admission. With supple grace she kneels on the soft-matted floor, and, first making

THE LOW, POLITE BOWS REQUIRED, she then gracefully pours out the tea into the tiny cups, and places them beside each guest. She is conscious all the time that the strangers are regarding her fixedly, and although her eyes are never raised for a moment, she feels the cold, calculating glance bent upon her.

Her father details her for a few moments with somewhat unusual questions, and she is thankful when she is allowed to withdraw, for she is conscious of a vague fear, and her mind is full of nameless forebodings. She dared not ask her aunt mother about the unknown men who had come, nor what was the object of their visit, for somehow that they had some business on hand she felt certain.

However, she had little time for wondering, seeing that extra food had to be prepared, and Hana was soon too busy in helping with the evening meal to think of anything else.

It was late that evening, after the children had retired to bed, that Hana was sitting a little distance from her parents on the matted floor, doing some dainty embroidery. Suddenly her father said, "Hana, you are nearly a woman now. You know all about our family difficulties—how Taro wants to go abroad to study medicine, and Ito must go to Tokyo Engineering College; and you you must give up my business. My heart is set on them having such advantages as will enable them to provide for your mother and me in our old age. I am rapidly falling in health and eyesight, so that in a short time I shall be completely unable to do my work. We have no wealthy relations or even friends who could help us just now, and I feel I could never bring myself to be dependent on the charity of others, even could I find those who would assist us. Then there are the other children growing up in my mind, at such a cost of consultation, your mother, and I have decided to send you to some friends in Tokyo,

WHO WILL TRAIN YOU for a GEISHA. With your good looks and musical abilities, we hope you will soon be able to earn enough to help your family at this crisis, for your brothers now are our first consideration."

Whilst her father was speaking, Hana kept her eyes fixed on her embroidery, and when he stopped, there was a deep silence in the room. Her parents expected no reply whatever, only silent obedience to her father's word, his long pipe, and her mother, bending over the charcoal brazier, merely stirred the dying embers into a red glow.

Under her stolid, undemonstrative Eastern manner, she loved her eldest daughter deeply, and would have wished that Hana had married a well-to-do merchant nearer home, but they had been unsuccessful in securing a rich and eligible husband. Now she felt she must support her husband in trying to advance her sons at all costs to her personal feelings for her gentle daughter.

"Yes, Hana," she said, slowly, "we cannot find

A WEALTHY HUSBAND FOR YOU, although we have done our best; and it is no use your marrying one who could not help your brothers at this juncture. We have absolutely no resource, and so you must go to Tokyo to be trained as a geisha. The gentlemen whom your father brought this evening approve of your looks, and you will soon learn all you must know in order to be a popular geisha. To-morrow we must get you some new dresses to suit your youthful position."