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LOVE AND POETRY

Combination Long Prominent in Japanese Wooing.

Custom of Utagaki First Mentioned in Fifth Century, Though Believed to Be Much Older—Devoted to Verse Making.

One of the prettiest customs of old Japan that has survived the new order is the Utagaki, or gathering of Japanese young men and women in flower season to compose odes to the blossoms and to the moonbeams, forming friendships that often endure through life. It is first mentioned in the time of Emperor Yuryaku in the fifth century, although no doubt much older.

The Utagaki, or primitive form of wooing, according to which Utagaki was most fashionable, took place at Tsuwakinochi in Yamato, in the vicinity of Mount Utagaki. At these happy gatherings, if a man failed to win the heart of the lady he was bent on winning, the others made a laughing-stock of him and jeered him to indignation. Consequently, suitors were persevering in order to escape ridicule.

As the meeting came to order, if there was order, each of the participants selected a theme for the ode to be composed. After the composition was completed, the man recited his achievement to the company, and a lady was asked to recite hers; and so it went, men and women reciting in turn, until all had done.

Those whose verses pleased the audience most were then commended for their efforts. The man whose verse won most approval was to have the lady whose verse was deemed best. At least it was easier for the ladies to like the men who were most expert in these odes, which created jealousy among those not so expert. The upshot of it all usually was that all finally mated before the festival was over.

This custom of Utagaki continued popular for centuries. Competition in poetry and love was considered worthy of emulation. One does not wonder that it frequently led to war.

As a rule the higher classes did not allow their daughters to go from home unattended; but the Utagaki was always considered an exception to the rule. Nor is it remarkable that we often read in the literature of this period such expressions as "fell in love at first sight," and so on. It was only natural that in time, as civilization advanced, the custom of holding Utagaki should fall into disuse.

There is a belief in Japan that the custom of holding these poetic love-meetings is as old as the first emperor. It is said that an incident in the life of the imperial house gave rise to the custom of Utagaki. In those far-off days marriage, in 99 cases out of 100, took place by the exchanging of odes, which were expressions of love.—Japan Magazine.

Make 2,000 Ukuleles a Month.

The ukulele, the Hawaiian musical instrument, which has attained considerable popularity in the United States the last year or two, was first produced by a Portuguese at Honolulu, and it at once made a hit with the natives. It is made chiefly from a native wood known as koa wood. The peculiar tone is obtained only when well-seasoned wood is used, properly prepared and fitted. In the islands the instruments sell at from \$3.75 to \$20 each, according to quality and decoration. In the past year the monthly production of instruments has trebled, that for September amounting to 1,600. A company was recently organized at Honolulu to manufacture 2,000 ukuleles a month; it is estimated that the total output in the coming year will be about 40,000.

Will Develop Island Property.

Evidently there is one man in England who is not seriously disturbed by the idea that the ownership of large estates will progressively give way to the division of land into small holdings; at any rate Lord Leverholme has not hesitated to purchase Lewis Island, which, next to Great Britain and Ireland, is the largest of the British Isles. Lewis Island covers some 770 square miles, off the west coast of Scotland, and has a present population of about 30,000 people. This, however, it is said, the new owner regards as quite an inadequate population for his island, which he thinks should reasonably support 300,000. His idea is to make his property the center of the British fishing business, and he has already shown his ability on the Mersey.

A Peer as a Corporal.

Lord Crawford, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, whose principal house is Haigh hall, Wigan, has applied as "Corporal Crawford" for membership in the Wigan branch of the Comrades of the Great War. In the early days of the war he enlisted as a private in the Royal Army Medical corps, served in France as a private, and was later promoted to a corporal, which rank he still retains.

Killing a Nursery Rhyme.

Mother—And are you learning anything in your lessons in natural history in school, Ethel?

Ethel—I think I am, mamma.

Mother—What have you learned?

Ethel—Well, it's taught me to think that it wasn't a cow that jumped over the moon at all; that it was a kangaroo.

To Curtail Naval Expenditures

LONDON, Dec. 23—Calls for Great Britain, Japan and the United States to curtail naval expenditures by mutual agreement were featured by a number of London newspapers this morning. In following it is course the journals give expression to the anxiety which has prevailed here since the receipt of reports of the new United States naval programme—an anxiety which may be traced to the assumption that if the United States builds a big navy, Great Britain must do likewise.

The morning Post comments that politicians in the United States have chosen a moment when the war time fellowship of the British and United States navies and the "chivalrous courtesy of American seamen," have united the naval services of the two nations, "to declare in effect that the British navy is a plebeian message to America." The newspaper complains of contradiction between American politics and America practice. Professing no desire to question the right of the United States to build as large a navy as she thinks proper, and admitting the United States can afford to build the biggest navy in the world, while Great Britain cannot, the Post contends that "the conclusion of a working arrangement" between the United States and Great Britain would do more to establish and maintain the peace of the world than any other plan conceivable; and urges that "the recent utterances of Sena or Borah and other Americans encourage the belief that such an arrangement is possible."

Another plea for an agreement between the United States, Japan and Great Britain is voiced by the Daily News, which urges that the inter-annual agreement of President-elect Harding should be utilized by the statement of the three countries to educate the public.

"The time should also be utilized," the newspaper continues, "by the public to stimulate statesmen to invite conversations with a view to arriving at the most desirable and most practical step toward relieving the peoples of a burden which is condemned universally in theory as intolerable."

An identical plea is made by the Express, which maintains that an agreement between the three countries would "assure prosperity as well as peace."

TOKIO, Dec. 23—The Jiji Shimpō, which has been one of the strongest supporters of the government's naval programme, says to-day that if the world consents to arrest the race for naval supremacy there is no reason why Japan's plan for eight battleships, eight battle cruisers and 120 submarines to be completed by 1925 should not be modified.

The newspaper calls on the Japanese government to take the initiative and points out that the current expenditure for education is less than one-tenth of the expenditure for armaments.

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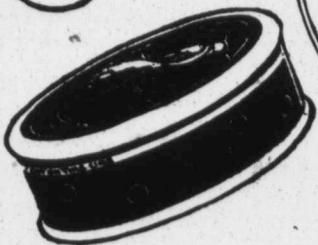
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