

Women's Societies

A CALL FROM JAPAN.

A Missionary Play.

By Miss Carrie Lee Campbell.

(So many requests have come for this play that we are reprinting it in revised form.—Editor.)

SCENE I.

Scene—A Japanese garden, made by means of lanterns, a shrine, an arbor covered with wistaria and cherry blossoms (of tissue paper) tied on a small tree.

(Enter Mrs. Brown, a missionary of experience, and Margaret Taylor, a college girl just from America.)

Mrs. Brown: Good morning, Margaret. You have come for your lesson, haven't you?

Margaret: Yes, Mrs. Brown, and what a lovely place to have it in. Is all Japan as pretty as this?

Mrs. Brown: Much of it is, Margaret; that is, on the surface; but your point of view, or rather your appreciation of values, will change after you know the people and see the undercurrent of life.

Margaret: But they are a nation of artists, aren't they?

Mrs. Brown: Oh, yes; they are trained from early childhood to see and know the beautiful in color, and in color combinations. You know, one important course in the girls' schools is the arranging of flowers; one chrysanthemum in a vase, the vase of just such a color and shape; or a sprig of cherry blossoms against a screen just of the right tone.

Margaret: But doesn't it make your heart ache to find so much progress in some things and so little in the things that count most?

Mrs. Brown: Oh, Margaret, when I had been here about a year I began to feel that I just couldn't stand it: so much sin, so much misery, so much indifference and intellectual antagonism, and so many people, people everywhere, and so few who had come to know Christ.

Margaret: How many?

Mrs. Brown: Fifty-five million people in Japan, and only about one hundred thousand Christians; and, of course, not that many in our United Church.

Margaret: What do you mean by "our United Church"?

Mrs. Brown: The Church here is called the Church of Christ in Japan, and is composed of those bodies holding the Presbyterian form of doctrine.

Margaret: Isn't that splendid? Our home Church will have a good deal to learn from our foreign fields.

Mrs. Brown: Yes, in many ways.

Margaret: But I am feeling some of your impatience, too; I want to get to work on the language. Can I have a lesson today? I have been out of college two years, and I am afraid my mind is already growing rusty.

Mrs. Brown: Oh, little sister of mine, one of the first things we missionaries have to learn is patience; and then many other things. God has to take out of us so much before He can use us at all; and one of the things that must go first is undue haste. But you remember our first missionary here in Japan waited thirteen years for his first convert. Then, besides, Margaret, I want you just to sit here a while today in this picturesque place and see something of things Japanese. I chose this spot because it is a favorite with many of my friends of the "Sunrise Kingdom."

Margaret: Anything is welcome which will hasten my knowledge of

these winsome people I have decided to live among.

Mrs. Brown: Oh! here come the children from the kindergarten—the charming little creatures. I wonder whether you will think they are more like flowers or butterflies? They are so earnest in their work, they will hardly know we are here. Let's sit down and watch them.

(Enter teacher with twenty little Japanese kindergarteners. These, in a circle, sing "Good Morning to You," or any kindergarten song. Then they sit on the floor and the teacher tells them a story of Jesus' birth and babyhood. Later they sing a lullaby and all "play" going to sleep.)

Mrs. Brown: Did you watch their faces, Margaret? See how happy they are. Oh! I see down the street three other mothers bringing their children. They told me they wanted their children to learn the "happy songs."

Margaret: But Miss Stevens can't take any more children until she has a helper.

Mrs. Brown: No, surely not. She is tired all the time now, with so much to do, though she never will admit it. But she is keeping a list of all these children who are brought, promising to take them as soon as the committee sends out another helper.

Margaret: Are any helpers ready to come?

Mrs. Brown: Yes, yes; just waiting for the money.

(Enter Japanese women with children.)

First Japanese Woman to Teacher: Will your honorable self take our worthless children and teach them songs and teach them to be happy?

Miss Stevens: You know we have to teach them the Jesus doctrine, too. It's all for Jesus. That's what we are here for, to teach about him.

First Japanese Woman: We will be so glad if you will condescend to teach them anything. Will you keep them?

Miss Stevens: All these children?

First Japanese Woman: Yes.

Second Japanese Woman: Mine, too?

Third Japanese Woman: And mine, too?

Miss Stevens: Oh! I am so sorry. It makes my heart very heavy to have to say "No"; but I cannot take any more children until my helper comes from America.

Second Japanese Woman: When is she coming?

Miss Stevens: My Church people at home love Jesus, and they will send me somebody to help tell your little children about him. As soon as they know the great need, they will send me a splendid teacher right away.

Third Japanese Woman: But when is she coming? Our children are growing up.

Miss Stevens: We expect to hear from our home Church very soon. We have told them how many children are waiting to come in, and we are looking for good news and help in a little while now. I will tell you just as soon as I hear.

Japanese Women (turning sadly away): How long must we wait?

Miss Stevens (thoughtfully): They come so often bringing these precious children, and I have to turn them off. What can I do? Now, children, let's sing the song you like best of all, and then we must go. What shall it be?

Two of the Children: "Jesus Loves Me."

Miss Stevens: I am glad you chose that.

(They sing two verses of "Jesus Loves Me," and then file out.)

Mrs. Brown: Margaret, you will see

this need for kindergartens and other needs everywhere. At our last mission meeting the men made out a list of all the needs at this station to send to the committee at home. These needs were divided into first, second and third choice, according to the urgency of the case. Then, for fear we might be seeming to ask for too much, we all decided it was best to strike off all the third choice list (but they did seem so important); and then we scaled down that second choice list; but we just had to send in that first choice list, all of it, because we do need workers and equipment so much.

Margaret: In what part of the work?

Mrs. Brown: Oh! in every part. Schools and teachers, churches and preachers and homes for our missionaries. Do you know, Margaret, that all last winter Mrs. Friend, just out from her comfortable home in America, spent the whole winter in a Japanese house with not a fire of any kind in it except an oil stove?

Margaret: No; you don't mean it? Do the people at home know this?

Mrs. Brown: I don't think they can know it, because they wouldn't let their missionaries risk their lives in this way if they knew it. The sympathy of the women and the business sense of the men wouldn't allow it. So I just believe they don't know.

Margaret: How did Mrs. Friend stand it?

Mrs. Brown: Sick half the time with colds and grip.

(A thoughtful silence.)

Margaret: I wonder more of my ambitious college friends don't put their lives out here where they will count for something. I just heard of a young minister friend of mine who had settled in a little town of a few thousands, where there were four evangelical churches. Everybody there had certainly had a chance to know about Christ.

Mrs. Brown: And out here he could have the joy of telling people who had never heard, nearly one hundred thousand of them, all to himself and not a single rival preacher.

(Both sit and meditate.)

Mrs. Brown: How I do long for that news from the committee. More schools, more teachers, more churches, more preachers, God send to Japan! This rings in my head all the time. I think I say it in my dreams. More schools, more teachers, more churches, more preachers, God send to Japan.

Margaret: It is hard on you missionaries who are here and see the need all the time.

Mrs. Brown: And the opportunity! The people at home don't understand. They don't understand.

SCENE II.

Margaret: Mrs. Brown, I wish you would tell me what the people of Japan worship.

Mrs. Brown: Margaret, I hardly know; and I don't believe they know themselves.

Margaret: Before I left home I thought I would try to find out, and it seemed to me such a jumble. The best synopsis of their faith which I could find in any encyclopedia was something like this: Birth is sorrow; age is sorrow; sickness is sorrow; death is sorrow; clinging to earthly things is sorrow; and the only escape is to follow the Eightfold Path, right word, right act, right thinking, right life, and so on (the hopelessness of it all burnt itself into my memory). But how are they to follow this path without Christ, who is the Way?

Mrs. Brown: Yes, without Christ it is all as hopeless as it sounds, as is easily seen by the "fruits." That is Buddhism you are describing, and Shintoism is even worse; the number

of beings worshipped is estimated at eight million!

(Enter a pilgrim, crosses stage at rear, worshipping before the shrine. He puts his hands together, kneels and bows his head, all the time repeating, "Namu" (Nom-moo), "Amida Buda," "Amida Buda," while the two missionaries look on with interest. Exit pilgrim.)

Margaret: Who was that strange looking man?

Mrs. Brown: He must be a pilgrim going to Kompira. (Pronounced Kom-pee-ra.)

Margaret: Is that the wonderful shrine which is reached by five hundred and sixty-three steps?

Mrs. Brown: Yes.

Margaret: And where are the wonderful bronze horses which I have seen in the missionary magazines?

Mrs. Brown: About half way up those five hundred and sixty-three steps; and as the pilgrims go up they throw rice to the horses, and pray to be cured of the toothache!

Margaret: What are they praying for when they say, "Amida Buda," so often?

Mrs. Brown: That's the pathetic part of it, Margaret. They have no idea what the prayer means, nor to whom they are praying.

Margaret: Is the shrine at Kompira Buddhist or Shintoist?

Mrs. Brown: It used to be a Buddhist stronghold, but the government wanted the revenue, and conveniently discovered it to be Shintoist, the state religion, and now it is under government control.

Margaret: What deity is worshipped at Kompira, Mrs. Brown?

Mrs. Brown: That's another strange thing. No one knew what deity was being worshipped at Kompira. Millions of pilgrims had worshipped there, but they did not know what they were worshipping. So the scholars went to work and made an investigation. They studied the old volumes and went deep into ancient traditions, and in time they proved to the satisfaction of everybody that the temple had been originally dedicated to an Indian alligator!

(Enter two Japanese women, each bringing a sick child. They worship at the shrine.)

Margaret: And these poor women, why do they come?

Mrs. Brown: See, they come to worship at that shrine. Each has a sick child, and each one has probably brought her last penny to pay the priest to pray for the child. Anything free in religion is outside their power of thinking, and the priests wish it so. (Priest enters and stands by the shrine.) See her drop her money into the box.

Margaret: Is he going to pray for the children?

Mrs. Brown: No; he says the children are so sick that many prayers will be needed, and he must have more money. I'll go and see if I can do anything. (Goes over and talks to Japanese women and leads them toward front of stage.) I want to tell you women of a doctor at our mission who can cure your children, and who will help all of you to have happy hearts and glad faces; and he will tell you much about how to keep your children well. Won't you come to a woman's Bible class this afternoon and see the doctor then? (The Japanese women nod assent.) You will come? I am so glad, and you will be glad, too. I will write the address for you. Don't forget. And bring any friends who will come with you. (Writes and hands them the paper.) Good-bye till this afternoon.

(The Japanese women go out.)

Margaret: Aren't they interesting women?

Mrs. Brown: Such careworn and de-