

The Kingdom of Slender Swords

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Barbara, left alone for the evening, amused herself at the piano. Duke Daunt, passing by, hears her playing, and, unconsciously, begins to sing. Barbara hears him and steps to the piazza just as the Ambassador's wolf-hound breaks his chain. Daunt saves her and the dog mysteriously disappears when time student in Monterey, Calif., now in special secret service, but acting as the Doctor's servant, learns a little more of the expert's plans.

shelf, her glad soul swelling the numbers of that ghostly legion whose spiritual force was the true vitality of her nation.

"Perhaps that, too, might be," she said presently in a low voice. "Should I augustly marry one not of too exalted a station, he could receive adoption into our family."

He looked into her deeply flushing face. "You think of the Lieutenant Ishida Hetero," he said. "It is true that the go-between has already deigned to sit on my hard mats. He is, I think, in every way worthy of our house. I would rather he were in the field, with a sword in his hand—I know not much of this 'Secret Service.' What are his present duties? Doubtless—with a spark of mischief in his hollow, old eyes—you are better informed than I."

"He is in the household of one named Bersonin, a man-mountain like our wrestlers, whose service Japan pays with a wage."

His scamed face clouded. "To cunningly watch the foreigner's comings and his outgoings, and make august report to the Board of Extraordinary Information," he said, with a trace of bitterness. "To play the clod when one is all eyes and ears. Honorable it is, no doubt, yet to my old palate it savors too much of the actor strutting on the circular stage. But times change, and if, to live, we must ape the foreigners, why, we must borrow their ways till such time—the gods grant it be soon!—when we can throw them on the dust heap. And what am I, to set my debased ignorance against my Princes and my Emperor!" He paused a moment and sighed. "Ishida is well esteemed," he continued presently. "He has dwelt in America and learned its tongue—a necessity, it seems, in these topsyturvy times. Yet, as for marriage, waiting still must be. These are evil days for us, my child. From whence would come the gifts which must be sent before the bride, to the husband's house? Your mother"—he paused and bowed deeply toward the golden but-sudan in its alcove—"may she rest on the lotus-terrace of Amida!—came to my poor house with a train of coolies bearing lacquer chests; silken f'ton, kimono as soft and filmy as mist, gowns of cloth and of cotton, cushions of gold and silver patternings, jeweled girdles, velvet sandals and all lovely garniture. Shall her daughter be sent to a husband with a chest of rags? No, no!"

She leaned her dark head against his blue-clad shoulder and drew the scroll from his trembling fingers. "I wind your words about my heart," she said. "Waiting is best. Perhaps the evil times will withdraw. I have prayed to the Christian God concerning it. But your eyes are augustly wearied. Let me read to you a while."

He settled himself back on the mat, his gaunt hands buried in his sleeves, and, snuffing the wick in the andon, she began to read the archaic "grass-writing." It was the Shundai Zatsuwu of Kyuso Moro.

"Be not samurai through the wearing of two swords, but day and night have a care to bring no reproach on the name. When you cross your threshold and pass out through the gate, go as one who shall never return again. Thus you will be ready for every adventure. The Buddhist is for ever to remember the five commandments and the samurai the laws of chivalry."

"All born as samurai, men and women, are taught from childhood that fidelity must never be forgotten. And woman is ever taught that this, with submission, is her chief duty. If in unexpected strait her weak heart forsakes fidelity, all her other virtues will not anote."

"Samurai, men and women, the young and the old, regulate their conduct according to the precepts of Bushido, and a samurai, without hesitation, sacrifices life and family for lord and country."

CHAPTER XIII.
When Barbara Awoke.

When Barbara awoke next morning she lay for a moment staring open-eyed from her big pillow at the white wall above, where a hanging shelf projected to guard the sleeper from falling plaster in earthquake. The room was filled with a soft light that filtered in through the split bamboo blinds. Then she remembered; it was her first whole day in Japan.

From a distance, high and clear, she heard a strain of bugles from some squad of soldiers going to barracks, or perhaps to the parade ground, where, she remembered, an Imperial Review

of Troops was to be held that morning. She felt full of a gay insouciance, a glad lightness of joy that she had never felt before. Slipping a thin rose-colored robe over her nightgown she threw open the window and leaned out.

As she stood there bathed in the sun light, her hands dividing the curtains, Barbara made a gracious part of the glimmering setting. Her thick, ruddy hair sprang curling from her strongly modeled forehead, and fell about her white shoulders, a warm reddish mass against the delicately tinted curtain. There was a thoroughbred straightness in the lines of the tall figure, in the curve of the cheek and the round directness of the chin; and her eyes, bent on the lucent green, were the color of brown sea-water under sapphire cloud-shadows.

Barbara started suddenly to see on the lawn just below her window, a figure three feet high, with a round, cropped head, gazing at her from a solemn, inquiring countenance. He wore a much-worn but clean kimono, and his infantile toes clutched the thongs of clogs so large that his feet seemed to be set on spacious wooden platforms. The youngster bent double and staggeringly righted himself with a staccato "O-hayo!"

Barbara gave an inarticulate gasp; in face of his somber dignity she did not dare to laugh. "How do you do?" she said. "Do you live here?"

"No," he replied. "I lives in a other houses."

"Oh!" exclaimed Barbara, aghast at his command of English. "What is your name?"

"Ishikichi," he said succinctly. "And will you tell me what you are doing, Ishikichi?"

A small hand from behind his back produced a tiny bamboo cage in which was a bell-cricket. As he held it out, the insect chirped like an elfin cymbal. "Find more one," he said laconically. "And what shall you do with them, I wonder."

He took one foot from his clog and wriggled bare toes in the grass. "Give him to new little sister," he said.

"So you have a new little sister!" exclaimed Barbara. "How fine that must be!"

A glaze of something like disappointment spread over the diminutive face. "Small like," he said. "More better want a brother to play with me."

"Maybe you might exchange her for a brother," she hazarded, but the cropped head shook despondently. "I think no can now," he said. "We have use her four days."

Barbara laughed outright, a peal of silvery sound that echoed across the garden—then suddenly drew back. A man on horseback was passing across the drive toward the main gate of the compound. It was Daunt, bareheaded, his handsome tanned face flushed with exercise, the breeze ruffling his moist, curling hair. She flashed him a smile as his riding-crop flew to his brow in salute. The sun glistened from its Damascene handle, wrought into the long, grotesque muzzle of a fox. Between the edges of the blue silk curtains she saw him turn in the saddle to look back before he disappeared.

She stood peering out a long time toward the low white cottage across the clipped lawn. The laughter had left her eyes, and gradually over her face grew a wave of rich color. She dropped the curtain and caught her hands to her cheeks. For an instant she had seemed to feel the pressure of strong arms, the touch of coarse tweed vividly reminiscent of a pipe.

What had come over her? The one day that had dawned at sea in golden fire and died in crimson and purple over a file of convicts—the dreaming platforms. The youngster betn double through silver mist and violet shadows—these had left her the same Barbara that she had always been. But somewhere, somehow, in the closed gulf between the then and now, something new and strange and sweet had waked in her—something that the sound of a voice in the garish sunlight had started into clamorous reverberations.

She sat down suddenly and hid her face.

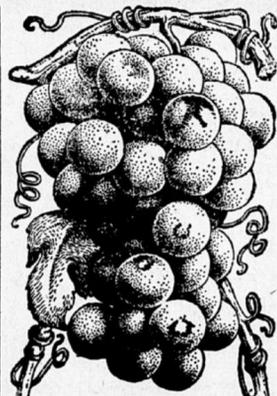
CHAPTER XIV.
A Face in the Crowd.

They rode to the parade ground—Barbara and Patricia with the ambassador, behind a pair of Kentucky grays—along wide streets grown festive overnight and buzzing with rickasha and pedestrians. Every gateway held crossed flags bearing the blood-red rising-sun, and colored paper lanterns were swung in festoons along the gaudy blocks of shops, as wide open as tiers of cut honey-comb.

The horses trotted on, to drop to a walk, presently, on a brisk incline. High, slanting retaining walls were on either side, and double rows of cherry trees, whose interlacing branches wove a roof of soft pink bloom.

"Why, there's little Ishikichi," said Patricia. "I never saw him so far from home before. Isn't that a queer looking man with him!"

The solemn six-year-old, Barbara's window acquaintance, of the morning, was trotting from the inclosure, his



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small fingers clutching the hand of a foreigner. The latter was of middle age. His coat was a heavy, double-breasted "reefer." His battered hat, wide-brimmed and soft-crowned, was a joke. But his linen was fresh and good and his clumsy shoes did not conceal the smallness and shapeliness of his feet. He was lithe and well built, and moved with an easy swing of shoulder and a step at once quick and graceful. His back was toward them, but Barbara could see his long, gray-black hair, a square brow above an aquiline profile at once bold and delicate, and a drooping mustache shot with gray. Many people seemed to regard him, but he spoke to no one save his small companion. His manner, as he bent down, had something caressing and confiding.

At the sound of wheels the man turned all at once toward them. As his gaze met Barbara's, she thought a startled look shot across it. At side view his face seemed a dark olive, but now in the vivid sunlight it showed blanched. His eyes were deep in arched orbits. One, she noted, was curiously prominent and dilated. From a certain bird-like turn of the head, she had an impression that this one eye was nearly if not wholly sightless. All this passed through her mind in a flash, even while she wondered at his apparent agitation.

For as he gazed he had dropped the child's hand. She saw his lips compress in an expression grim and forbidding. He made an involuntary movement, as though mastered by a quick impulse. Then, in a breath, his face changed. He shrank back, turned sharply into the park and was lost among the trees.

"What an odd man!" exclaimed Patricia. "I suppose he resented our staring at him. He's left the little chap all alone, too. Stop the horses a moment, Tucker," she directed, and as they pulled up she called to the child. But there was no reply. Ishikichi looked at her a moment frowningly,

then, without a word, turned and stalked somberly after his companion.

"What an infant thunder-cloud!" said Patricia, as the carriage proceeded. "That must be where our precious prodigy gets his English. Poor mite!" she added. "He was the inseparable of the son of Toru, the flower-dealer opposite the embassy, Barbara, and the dear little fellow was run over and killed last week by a foreign carriage. No doubt he's grieving over it, but in Japan even the babies are trained not to show what they feel. I wonder who this new friend is?"

"I've seen the man once before," said the Ambassador. "He was pointed out to me. His name is Thorn. His first name is Greek—Aloysius, isn't it?—yes, Aloysius. He is a kind of a recluse; one of those bits of human flotsam, probably, that western civilization discards and that drift eventually to the East. It would be interesting to know his history."

So this, thought Barbara, was the exile of whom Daunt had told her, who had chosen to bury himself—in an oriental land, sunk out of sight like a stone in a pool. When he looked at her she had felt almost an impulse to speak, so powerfully had the shadow in his eyes suggested the canker of solitariness, the dreary ache of bitterness prolonged. She felt a wave of pity surging over her.

Continued Next Week.

REAL ESTATE TRANSFERS.

Monday, Nov. 21, 1910.
Frank P. Carl to Tabitha Carl, his wife—Lot 12, block 69, Denison, Iowa, Con. \$700.00.

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 1910.
Christina Dorale and husband, and Sophie Tebbe and husband to Peter J. Paulsen—Lots 6, 7 and 8, block 11, Denison, Iowa. Con. \$775.00.

Wednesday, Nov. 23, 1910.
Iowa Railroad Land Co. to M. J. Keane and Henry Stuck—Outlot "D," Subdiv. NE 1/4 SW 1/4 30-84-37. Con. \$656.00.

Hans Ahrenkiel and wife to Antone Ahrenkiel—NW 1/4 NE 1/4 30-85-37. Con. \$4100.00.

Maria Ahrenkiel, widow, to Antone Ahrenkiel—S 1/2 SE 1/4 20-85-37, conveys her life estate and interest in. Con. \$1.00.

Maria Ahrenkiel, widow, to Hans Ahrenkiel—N 1/2 NE 1/4 30-85-37. Conveys her life estate and interest in. Con. \$1.00.

Claus H. Hass and wife to C. L. Voss—SE 1/4 28-84-39. Con. \$17,000.00.

C. L. Voss and wife to Claus H. Hass—SW 1/4 of Sec. 14 and E 1/2 SE 1/4 15-83-37. Con. \$30,000.00.

Friday, Nov. 25, 1910.
E. W. Houston and wife to Hans Knutzen—E 1/2 NE 1/4 NE 1/4 SE 1/4 of Sec. 9, SW 1/4 NW 1/4 NW 1/4 SW 1/4 of Sec. 10, Twp. 82, Range 41. (No notarial seal). Con. \$10,000.00.

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