



# MAGAZINE SECTION ST. PAUL GLOBE.

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## THE SPARTAN WOMEN OF JAPAN

**PROUDLY and cheerfully, they give their husbands and sons to the State with smiles on their lips and in their eyes**

**T**HE Adam and Eve of Japan first met by chance on the Floating Bridge of Heaven. He had been stirring up the troubled sea of Chaos with the Jewel-Spear of Heaven. The foam of Chaos dropping from the Spear created the islands of Japan, and they took advantage of the dry land. Setting the Spear up like a pillar, He, whose name was Izanagi, turned to the left, evidently counting on meeting her on the other side of the Spear. True enough, she had set out from the right. When they met, She, whose name was Izanami, exclaimed:

"How perfectly lovely! I have met a beautiful young man!"

But Izanagi was not pleased at being first addressed, even in so complimentary a manner.

"This is not as it should be," he said. "I am a man, and should have spoken first. We will go around again."

This they did, and when they met, she held her tongue, and he exclaimed:

"What luck! Here is a pretty girl!"

Thus the proper relation of the sexes was secured, and they married and lived happily ever after.

So runs one of the old Japanese legends translated in not exactly these words by Basil Chamberlain.

From that day women in Japan have accepted their places as ministers to the happiness and comfort of their lords and masters. It accounts for all that is lovely and attractive in the character of the Japanese women, in whom graceful submission is carried so far beyond the province of art that it is now instinct.

The Japanese man has not hitherto asked for companionship or intellectuality. He even expects to address his wife in other words and phrases than he uses to his equals. But the spirit of the new civilization has not left women untouched; and his embarrassment at the proper course to be observed with this new creature is sometimes amusing.

For example, when his wife wears her kimono she trudges humbly behind him. But when she puts on her bonnet and foreign gown he offers her his arm, and they proceed awkwardly down the street. At home in her kimono, she serves him; but when she has on her foreign gown he stands until she is seated. For a woman in her kimono to express before men her views and opinions would shock him inexpressibly. But in a Paris costume it, or anything else, might be reasonably expected. Unhappily, Carlyle died too soon to witness such a confirmation of Herr Teufelsdröck's philosophy.

### Her Exaggerated

#### Idea of Duty.

But low voices, smiling lips, drooping eyes and bowed head, the childish giggle and toddling steps, which convey to the Occidental mind the idea of grown-up children, is only a one-sided view. The Japanese women have never been enclosed women, shut-up women, like the other women of the Orient. This has given another side to their characters. No women have a more exaggerated idea of duty, of a certain sublimity of public service and self-immolation, and a preparedness for it.

There was an interesting instance of this a few years ago when a half crazed policeman attempted the life of the present Czar, then a guest of Japan. His sister, Oskukasan, hearing of the grief of the Mikado that the nation's honor should have been imperiled by the attempt on the life of a guest, conceived that she might wipe out the stain by the voluntary sacrifice of her own life. Going to Tokio she presented herself at the door of the Government buildings and there cut her throat. Tucked away in her obi, or sash, were the letters explaining her act, and a memorandum of her preparations, even to the pen paid for sharpening her razor. Then, having tied a girdle about her knees, that she might fall with dignity, she ended her life. This it is to be a true Japanese woman.

In the old feudal days every Japanese woman of position was taught fencing, and the use of the shield, so that when the samurai, who were the Daimio's retainers and soldiers, were off to the wars, she might defend the women's apartments and her own honor. Those days are past, but the will, the courage, the spirit remain. Patriotism in Japan is a passion. It is the strongest emotion a Japanese can feel. To die for the Emperor is the most blessed of deaths. The stoicism with which the women of Japan met their bereavements in the China-Japan War is a matter of history.

There is one oft told story of the old woman who lost her husband and oldest son in battle, and learned of their deaths with a smile on her lips. When her second son died of disease in the hospital, and it was told her, she burst into tears, because, she said, she had no other son to die for his country.

All Japan was moved when the young bugler, Shentiro, fell near Asan with his bugle at his lips blowing its last charge to advance. But his mother said:

"We are poor, and he was our only support, but I would rather live in a hut and have my rice but once a day than to have robbed my son of so glorious a death."

Exaltation of this sort goes to a height that few women in any country attain. No woman in Japan approaches intellectually the Empress Dowager of China or the late Queen Min of Korea. The latter

**FROM the Empress down, every Daughter of the Chrysanthemum works for her beloved land when it goes to war**

was one of the finest Chinese scholars in Korea, as well as a woman of great astuteness in public affairs. Literally, she was the power behind the throne. Hence, her untimely taking off. Korean women of the upper class in their privacy, which exceeds that of China, are both accomplished poets and painters, but they have no interest in public affairs. In China, where the military are looked down upon, no patriotism, in the Japanese sense, could be expected, although the Empress Dowager contributed lavishly to the comfort of the Chinese soldiers in the Chinese-Japanese War, or at least tried to.

The profession of arms in Japan is the greatest of all professions. It is so highly regarded that in the late war numbers of women volunteered for field service, and were much chagrined when their services were declined. Their work accomplished in other directions, however, rank with that of any other country in any other war. Japan is a member of the Geneva Convention, and its Red Cross Society numbers over a half million members. To this there is an initiation fee of fifteen yen, and the subscribers pay yearly dues. Thus it is seen that the society starts out very well equipped as to money.

The head of the organization during the last war was the Empress Hara, who is always prominent in philanthropic matters. I have seen a drawing of her presiding at a meeting of ladies, all in uniform, making bandages for the wounded. They wore the field uniform of the Japanese nurses. This is white, cut foreign fashion, with a blouse waist and skirt. On the head is an upright white cap, with the Red Cross badge in front.

This society sent out its people in companies equipped for and capable of caring for two hundred wounded each. These included "surgeons, dressers, apothecaries' clerks, accountants, matrons, nurses, porters, cooks and instrument sharpeners." Observe the last detail. The hospitals were on the islands of Kjusiu and Tsushima, both being most accessible to Korea. The latter is, indeed, in the middle of the Korean straits. In addition to these was the large central hospital in the suburbs of Tokio. The president of the Red Cross Society was the Princess Komatsu, whose husband is a cousin of the Emperor, and she herself is the closest friend of the Empress. To this work she gave her entire time and displayed marked executive ability.

### Their Empress

#### Leads On the Women.

The Empress Hara was lavish in her gifts of money, and she and the ladies of her Court made six thousand bandages with the accompanying lint. The Empress also visited the hospitals, distributing gifts. It is impossible for us to appreciate what such a visit would mean to the Japanese soldier, except we bring down the Queen of Heaven. For to him literally she is the wife of the Son of Heaven—a belief shared by many more wise than the wounded soldier.

The Japanese field hospital as it was organized by these ladies, if we may credit their own representations, were provided with cots. This fact, insignificant as it seems, marks Japanese progress as many more important matters do not. The Japanese at home sleeps on the floor. The traveled man will tell you how insecure he felt when he first slept on a foreign bed, and how many times he rolled out and found himself on the floor before he became accustomed to sleeping on a raised platform. To give a wounded soldier a cot seems as fine an exhibition of nerve as that of any other feat in the war, and confirms the report of his superb discipline. The exquisite cleanliness of the Japanese hospital is a matter of course among a people with whom cleanliness is a passion.

But the work of the Japanese women of the Red Cross was not only that of nursing. They arranged for the inspiring "send off" given to the troops and for their triumphal home coming. They sent 50,000 packages of gifts free to the troops in the field and 6,000 to the men of the fleet. It was, indeed, the organized nucleus which roused and kept up the enthusiastic feeling of the nation during the war. As those who were there said, Japan had the appearance of conducting a great festival rather than a war. The streets were continually decorated with lanterns and flags over a period of months. Every child was led to do its part.

There is a pretty story of an orphan asylum which was taken to Hiroshima, where the troops embarked, and went out with teapots of hot tea to the soldiers, crying "Tei Koku, Banzai!" ("Myriad years, Imperial Land!") or playing the national air, "Kimi-ga-yo," whose words translated are, "May our gracious Sovereign reign a thousand years until the little pebbles grow to mighty rocks, thick velveted with ancient moss." Then the people cheered, the soldiers wept, and the Emperor saluted the little band.

But what may not be expected in a country where one of the propositions for discussion at a teachers' convention was, "What shall we do to inculcate the glory of war and the endurance of hardships among the young of the nation?"

The Land of the Geisha—the Land of O Yuchiesan—still remains for the delectation of the globe trotter. But there is also another Japan—the land of heroic women whose supreme delight is to serve their country.

MARY GAY HUMPHREYS.

