

FLOWER OF THE IRIS---By Robert Wells Ritchie.



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AMESAN pillowed her chin on her two plump arms, crossed on the low windowsill, and watched the falling of the night. Over the hills of Negishi, purpled like the flag, floated the night robes of Fuji-marsh mists and cottony vapors. High above these, unsupported by earth or heaven and glowing rosy with a light now gone from earth, the Holy Mountain. Rose and cherry and shell tint burned this evening lantern of the Heavenly Ones then—the stars and the sudden dark. Lights pricked out in the streets of Yokohama down below the bluff. Iamesan heard the wailing, minor flute note of the blind musician who senses the coming of night and is early on his rounds.

Below Iamesan's window lay the long garden in shadow. There were the faint scarlet lines of the azalea hedges passing down and down under the blotting branches of the pines. Over by the lotus pond the soldiers of the bamboo patch stood all in mass keeping their tasseled spears rigidly erect, faithfully on guard. The thread of the gravelled paths were cowbells. The little cascade over the lotus pond plop-plopped with a lapping insistence. Out of the bamboo grasses and the azalea hedges came the noises of small strings and sudden rustlings—the night people awakening. A tree toad on a branch of the camphor tree cleared his throat and then began to chant.

"Namu, Namu," the tree toad sang. "Namu—Namu Amida Butsu!"

Iamesan listened then, "Namu Amida Butsu" (Behold Amida the Buddha), she repeated. She whispered it first, then, as the tree toad continued to hail the Buddha of Boundless Light, she answered in stronger antiphonal. Just then the bell of the temple down on the canal side beneath the bluff spoke once. The silver notes crisped in a swift crescendo and thinned to silence. "Namu!" croaked the voice in the camphor tree, then stopped abruptly.

The child at the window lifted her chin from the pillow of her arms and drew in her breath sharply. Oh-h! the heaven people, the Honorable Unseen Ones, were abroad. Did not the tree toad talk as Amahsan had spoken that day in the temple, standing before the Amida Butsu? There had been a gold light about the head of Amida Butsu; on his lips a smile. How could the tree toad know?

"Why, Iame, don't you know dinner is ready? And you up here alone in the dark. Come now, this minute, child." It was Mrs. Kipp who spoke. She stood in the door of Iamesan's room, a lamp in her hand. As the child came slowly toward the light, one hand tiding the folds of the gay flowered kimono that flapped about the tops of her white socks. Mrs. Kipp looked down into her eyes, still wide with wonder. Instantly the eyes were veiled and the oval face, the tint of rose on old ivory, was smoothed of all expression. Iamesan made a little gesture of respect and padded down stairs to the dining room. There Papasan (Mr. Kipp), leaned over in his chair and kissed the cheek that Iamesan turned up to him. Okasama (Honorable Mrs. Mother Kipp) took her seat and gave Iamesan a monitory glance. The child bobbed her head so that all the short cut black hair fell over her round cheeks and Mr. Kipp asked a lengthy blessing.

An odd company, that about the table. Yokohama—foreign Yokohama—elevated eyebrows when it spoke of the Kipp's. Mr. Kipp, once in the early days of the settlement a missionary, now in his retirement an antiquary and student of the lore of sword blades; Mrs. Kipp, who had sternly nurtured the transplanted patriotism of her Massachusetts in an alien soil many years—these two and Iamesan. There had been a son once—a mystic and a dreamer, who alternated his periods of dilettantism with savage weeks of solitary dissipation. He had been the grace always to bury himself far off in some obscure village when he yielded to the call of the courteous devil that owned him; his goings were sudden, and his returnings pitiful. Once the son did not come back. Came instead a formally worded telegram from the police of Kaga, in the gorge of Miyashita, requesting to know what should be done with the body of the angustly departed Kippman. A week afterward a little old man in the straw raincoat of the rustic uncovered his bald head, wrinkled like the head of a land tortoise, before the servants at the Kipp home in Yokohama and begged to inflict his unworthy presence upon their master. The master came out to him. Thereupon the little old man spoke rapidly, though with great reverence.

ence. He was a charcoal burner of Kaga—Kaga is the vale of Miyashita. There was hardly a rim to buy rice in his hut back there in the mountains. His daughter, alas, had angustly departed, even as the honorable Kippman, but before a year before him. And now there was hardly a rim to buy rice—winter was coming—ah, angust—

"Then, why do not you design to excuse, I see God?" She asked. Then the charcoal burner looked into the eyes of the child and bowed low so that the head of his coarse kimono, almost touched Mr. Kipp's trembling hands. She was three years old, perched the charcoal burner. Her name was Iame-no-Iama (Flower of the Iris), for she had come in the month

pale cup of a dragon lily, wind tossed, nodded to her through the uncertain space of the window. The dragon lily was called; Hinaru and Iwa-Zaru wanted her out there in the garden. "Now, Iame," said Okasama, when dinner was over, "to-morrow is Sunday school day, so get out your lessons."

"But, Okasama," "Iame, I said get out your lessons." There was no compromise; Iamesan knew that. She curled up on a hassock at Mrs. Kipp's feet and counted the pages of her lesson, illustrated with pictures of the Shepherd and His sheep. Iamesan suddenly looked up from her text. "Okasama, why am I a child of God?" There was guileless innocence in her voice.

"Because, my dear," Mrs. Kipp answered easily, "God is Father of us all." "Then why don't I see Him?" Iamesan's eyes narrowed just perceptibly.

"Because, child, He is—because He is far off in heaven. Little girls eleven years old cannot understand all these things." Iamesan continued her reading. She did it contraindently. For five minutes she fidgeted, then with her head still bent over her lesson she said very low, "Okasama."

"I'm not bad—I'm not a heathen, Amida B-Butsu an' B-Binuru—they is, too, alive. I—I've seen them—all gold and beautiful—I never see God-Father-Mighty away off in the sky. He don't—He don't love little girls He can't see. An'—an'—oh—ho—ho—ho!"

Iamesan whirled about and raced up stairs to her room. Mrs. Kipp, who had witnessed before such a sudden shaking of this little vessel of mixed clay, knew better than to follow. The poor child, she was not—she was—different. Further analysis was baffling to the Massachusetts woman.

Her head pillowed again on the easement open to the wive night, Iamesan sobbed till tears slackened, then once more the little voices of the dark began to call. Such little voices that first they were drowned by the sob, but persistently, soothingly, they spoke, all in whispered tremble and sighing half speech. Iamesan grew attentive. The night-wind touched her hot cheeks. She watched the tiny flashings of the fireflies, the lanterns of the Heavenly ones to light their way to earth. High, high and far were white stars, where God-Father-Mighty lives, but near, so near, those lanterns of the Golden Good, who come at dark to walk among the azaleas and to sit in the yellow gold of the lotus cups. Down, down from the far heaven, over the paths of the winds, flickered the wavering lights in the hands of Kishi Bojin, Heavenly Loving Mother, and of her five hundred children.

Iamesan tiptoed in the dark to her treasure box and she took from it to tuck into her kimono sleeve some scraps of cherry ribbon, an old Chinese copper cash with a hole in its middle and a silver chain with a little pendant cross. Then down the back stairs in bare feet and softly to the servants' rooms in the back of the house. There Amahsan, the old nurse, was taking a bit of a smoke alone; that Amahsan who, in the years of her mothering, had secretly instructed Iamesan in the love of all the gods of the land. The withered grandma listened to the whispered confidences, then "Hah," she assented and bustled to a closet. She returned with a bowl, heaped with boiled rice, two saké cups, fashioned in the shape of morning glory trumpets, and a pot of cold tea. Iamesan took these things in her arms.

"Do not forget Amida Butsu, my little flower," Amahsan whispered. "He loves the pine tree; there you will find him. And," she added hastily, "old Binuru, who has care for the fatherless." The camphor tree, which stood sentinel of the garden, said, "Sh-h-h-h!" to the little shadow that hurried under his boughs. "Sh-h-h-h!" echoed the stiff japonica across the path. Then Amahsan quietly closed the door behind and Iamesan was alone with the Honorable Unseen Ones and the night.

The pebbles of the paths were cool to her bare feet as she passed scrutiny of the four dead eyes of the stone lantern and on down to the murky shadows in the vale below. "Excuse, if I intrude my unworthy self," Iamesan whispered as she panted and bowed before the soldiers of the bamboo patch. The captain of the soldiers—who was the tallest and who stood in advance—bent his tasseled spear in gracious salutation and Iamesan passed. "Che-sai—Che-sai!" (Little One—Little One), the bamboo soldiers all chorused in sibilant whispers. A firefly glowed right before Iamesan's eyes. She bobbed her head with a little gasp. "Only

live in blood. If I ever hear you—"

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Iamesan," she murmured. Hugging the rice bowl and the teapot closer in her arms, she followed the dim red line of the azaleas down to the black pillar of the great pine. One of the lanterns of the heavenly visitors was hung low on the bark; it burned bright as a star. Amida Butsu, whom the tree-toad had invoked at sundown, was there at his pine, waiting.

The child dropped on her knees before the pine and eased her burden to the naked root that pushed up through the soil. She set the rice bowl in a mossy cranny between the root and the trunk, put one of the saké cups beside it and filled it with tea. At that instant came, sharp and vibrant, the voice of the tree-toad off in the odorless dark—"Namu—Namu, Amida Butsu!"

The devotee at the pine felt a tingling of delicious awe. She cast a glance, half of fear, up to the Buddha's lantern. It glowed cheerily. Iamesan softly clasped her hands as she had seen worshippers in the temple do, then she jumped up, gathered the remaining saké cup and the teapot in her arms and found her way through the darkness to the arbor of the wistaria. There Binuru was—a bland little stone god, with scales of green lichens on his face. Once Papasan had bowed Binuru, quite furiously, in a deserted temple in Biwa-ken and had brought him to the sweet communion of the garden.

Binuru wore a single purple butterfly of the wistaria cocked over one ear, where it had lodged in drooping. Like a playful grandfather he suffered this prank of the flower children. Even in the dark Iamesan could see his mossy smile. She knelt before the little stone god and first she whisked the irreverent wistaria blossom of Binuru's ear, then from her kimono sleeve she brought out her treasures. The silver chain snapped comfortably around Binuru's neck, the little pendant cross glistening from the god's stony bosom. The Chinese cash fitted into his opened palm, where it lay across his knees. Iamesan stood tiptoe and broke from the lower of sweetness; she laid them reverently in the lap of the god. A cup of tea she poured for him and then the cherry ribbons she tied in streamers from the gnarled stem of the wistaria at Binuru's back.

"Honorable Kind One, who loves fatherless children," Iamesan whispered, "please accept."

All the thousands of the pale butterflies above her needed approval and the god of fatherless children smiled his mossy smile over the little cross beneath his chin. The soul of Iamesan was weighted with the pain of much imagining. The near presence of all the Honorable Unseen Ones, speaking out of the darkness and of the scented blossoms, was overwhelming. She thought fearfully of her sin that night when she had denied God-Father-Mighty, who lives behind the far white stars. He is not close—in the pine and under the wistaria—but Okasama had said that he is a Mighty. His are the stars, anyway. There before Binuru and the heaped up blossoms Iamesan felt guilt. As she brooded she heard the plop-plop of the little cascade over the lotus pond.

"Was it old Binuru who whispered the suggestion to her—old Binuru who knows that sinners in the land of the gods wash away guilt under falling water? Who can say? But there at the edge of the lotus pond, where the long, green awnings of her own name flower bent beneath her feet, Iamesan doffed her kimono. For a minute she stood in the starlight, a wonderful little pagan of the tint of rose on old ivory, then boldly she waded through the pads of the lotus to the cascade and crouched where the lip of the fall would spout fair on her bent shoulders. As the water chucked and splashed Iamesan prayed to God-Father-Mighty, to Amida Butsu and to Binuru that hee sin be washed away.

There, under the cascade, Okasama and Papasan found her when they came with a lantern, calling through the garden.

KEEPING UP WITH TRENTON---What a Year of Commission Government Has Done

New York, Saturday. THAT'S typical of Trenton," said a man of that city, pointing out to a stranger the paintings on the wall of the Council chamber, in the fine marble Municipal Building.

"Yes, I see," replied the stranger, "the potteries on one side and iron workers on the other; it is splendid."

"It's more than that," said the Trentonian. "Don't you see the smoke?" "Certainly, it looks real, too."

are everywhere apparent, and there is a remarkable dearth of persons hanging around who have no definite business or who have just come to see an official on behalf of a friend. Yet there is no red tape. If a man has business to transact he is referred to the proper department and can see the chief without delay.

The head of the government is Frederick W. Donnelly, who received the most votes of any of the Commissioners, and was elected president and Mayor by the Commission.

That election woke up Trenton as nothing had in recent years. It was the first city to adopt the commission form of government under the new law, and there was a free field with about eighty candidates before the primaries, which eliminated all but ten of them. Five of that number were elected after a bitter campaign, and they were inducted into office on August 22 of last year.

water front at Trenton. He was one of the first and foremost supporters of municipal government by commission and waged an energetic campaign after his nomination. The result was that he was far ahead of any other candidate when the votes were counted.

An effort was made to defeat him for the presidency of the commission and the Mayoralty, but he was finally elected by his fellow members and started in at once to take the city government out of the hands of the politicians and the grafting contractors, as he had promised to do in his pre-election speeches. It was his contention that the meetings of the commission should be held in the open.

"Graft is impossible," he said, "when every one can see what is going on and be heard on any subject that affects the taxpayer."

and encumbrances handed over to us when we came into office. Although we have begun a campaign to minimize this scourge. We fitted up a hospital that had been closed since the days when small-pox was common and equipped it with modern conveniences, put in a corps of doctors and nurses and are taking care of tuberculosis cases and are especially looking after methods of prevention.

"We have organized a bureau for the consolidation of public charities, which is to be far reaching in its scope, and will save the city thousands of dollars. The Protestant, Roman Catholic and Hebrew charitable organizations are to cooperate, and no city aid will be extended until applicants for help are passed upon by one of these organizations. There will be a vigorous checking system to prevent duplication of help and the extension of aid to the undeserving."

"In the basement of the Municipal Building we have established a well equipped dispensary and we are improving the service of the hospitals and the almshouses. In the latter we have been able through businesslike administration to effect a saving of several thousand dollars and at the same time to give the inmates better food than they ever had before."

less has been done than in almost any city of its size in the country. Now we have begun a campaign to minimize this scourge. We fitted up a hospital that had been closed since the days when small-pox was common and equipped it with modern conveniences, put in a corps of doctors and nurses and are taking care of tuberculosis cases and are especially looking after methods of prevention.

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Street signs have been put up, and all parts of the city are being better lighted. How can there be opportunities for graft when everything is being done in an open and above board fashion? Besides, the initiative, referendum and recall are great safeguards. I admit that I have the recall in mind whenever I take an important step. I think it is a good thing to have hanging over the head of any official.

"Yes, I am more firmly convinced than ever that government by commission is the only way out for the modern city. Just think what it would have meant to New York to have had an administration conducted on business principles during the last fifty years! Can you estimate what the saving would have been?"

Mr. Donnelly's distinctive province is Public Affairs, and he is a kind of adviser to each of the other Commissioners. The other four departments of the city government are those of Revenue and Finance, Public Safety, Streets and Public Property. The heads of each of these departments had had experience long before he was elected a Commissioner. The inevitable friction of the early months of the commission has disappeared and the members are now working harmoniously, each striving to make a record in his department.

There was at one time a movement to recall those of the Commissioners, this arising among the farmers, who thought that the commission was not sufficiently liberal. The leaders of the movement, however, dropped it without formulating their objections, having been advised that their grievance would not constitute a legal charge against the Commissioners in question.

Since Trenton started its experiment several other New Jersey towns and cities have adopted the system, but the capital city is still the one that the East is watching to see if commission government will work.