

THE AMERICAN YOUTH.

FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH.

A Japanese Love Story.

BY ONOTO WATANNA.

KASAKA YUKA was young, and she was gentle and pretty; moreover, her father had been a samouri, but he had been long since dead. Yet Yuka's mother, Kasaka Onoto, who was but a poor peasant woman with none of the samurai blood in her was very proud of her daughter, whose father had been a samouri. That is why Yuka had such sweet, courteous and refined ways, for what was not inbred in her had come to her from her very knowledge of her blood. So, though Yuka grew up in the midst of the peasant people, she came to be looked upon as one quite different from them.

Yuka's mother was very poor. Since her husband's death her means had been small; but she had great hopes for the future, for she expected to marry Yuka, who was so beautiful and good, to some very wealthy man. With this intent in view, she gave her daughter advantages few of the peasant children enjoyed.

On the exact day Yuka was born there was born only a very little distance from her home a little boy who was named Kirishima Ido. Yuka's and Ido's mothers were girls together; they had played and studied together, so that when the two children were born on the same day it was not surprising that mutual gifts and congratulations were given and exchanged between the two families, although the mother of Yuka was inclined to be a trifle proud, as her child was of samurai blood. Her pride, however, did not prevent her from allowing the two children, as they grew older, to play together and to be with each other constantly. Thus it happened that these two grew to be great friends also, and when Yuka was old enough to go to school so was Ido. They grew up together, as their mothers had done; they shared their little secrets and told each other

their thoughts and hopes for the future. And Ido grew to look upon Yuka as something very wonderful, while Yuka had a strange, motherly love for Ido. Yuka, who had always very high spirits, was fond of playing tricks and teasing people, and Ido, of course, though inclined to be somewhat awed at the immensity of some of Yuka's proposals, always did his share under her direction. Yuka always was the leader.

Now, there lived about half way between Yuka's house and the school one Taka Hasche. This Taka Hasche was said to be a very cross and wicked man. He did not like children, and had built around

his garden a fence with spikes on it, such as the Kirshitan (Christians) often made. Although he was so unsociable to all his neighbors and was looked upon with dislike and distrust by them, yet he was feared and treated with respect, for he was the richest man in Kummamotta. Moreover he was an unmarried man.

One day as Yuka and Ido were going to school together, Yuka said, "Ido, what say you that we do take some stones and break the spikes off these fences?" Ido giggled nervously and said, "He-he." Every one feared Taka Hasche, but he gave in, and the two children set to and began to break off the tops of their neighbor's fence, throwing the spikes toward Taka's house with shrill laughs of triumph.

Whilst they were in the midst of their fun, out came Taka Hasche. Ido turned pale with fright, but Yuka jumped nimbly down and ran swiftly away. Although Ido was left behind, Taka Hasche did not touch him, but he chased Yuka far, far up the hill, though he did not catch her.

"Do not fear, Kasaka Yuka," he cried in a rage, "I will catch you yet."

The years passed. What had commenced in frolic with Yuka, and a desire to tease her neighbor had grown into serious enmity and hatred betwixt the two. Taka Hasche was not an old man, but his mean and thrifty ways made him appear much older. Ido and Yuka were as dear friends

as ever, only that Ido loved Yuka more dearly than a friend. And so he would go down into the streets of Tokio every morning with his basket laden with flowers to sell, that he might earn some money while he was waiting to start to work at some trade so that he might save enough money to make Yuka his wife. He had never broached the subject to her, but it was an understood thing between the two. And every day as Ido plodded back and forth to the shop where he was serving an apprenticeship, his thoughts ran in this wise, "Every day makes me older; every day makes me more a man, and I will earn more when a man. Soon I'll be able to save enough to marry Yuka," and all the rest of the day he was happy and did his work with a merry heart. And, although Yuka always pretended to be very much surprised whenever he got his mother to talk to her on the subject, yet she was very pleased at heart, for she loved Ido dearly, too.

Thus for five long years Ido worked and Yuka waited. Each year Ido's father would come to Yuka's mother and would ask for Yuka for his son and tell her how much Ido had saved, but each time Kasaka Onoto would remind him that Yuka's

father was of samurai blood and it befitted her that she marry well. But she did not refuse Ido altogether. This was to put him off, for although Onoto still cherished the thought of a rich marriage for Yuka, she wanted Ido to fall back on in the event of her failing to marry Yuka to a rich man. Then Ido would turn sorrowfully back to work and toil on for another year.

One day Yuka had been heard to make much fun of her neighbor Taka Hasche, who was very ugly. This made Taka the more spiteful than ever. He felt he never could forgive Yuka. He sat in his little garden sometimes and thought how best he could pay her out, who had openly made fun of him in public. So he thought and thought, and then his thoughts grew into shape, and his face cleared and he jumped to his feet delighted at a sudden idea that had come to him. This was what he had thought. He would make Yuka his wife. Nothing could be better. She who had always flaunted him so should be made to submit to him; Ido who had helped her, should have her taken from him. He knew how poor and yet ambitious Yuka's mother was, and he also knew of the advantage to be gained by him in the eyes of the people by having a wife of Samourai blood. He began at once to take steps. He did not go himself to her mother and ask her in marriage; he hired a professional Nakoda, (a matchmaker) and this man did the business for him.

It takes a great deal of tact to be a Nakoda. They must never be known as such if they wish to succeed in their business.

Taka Hasche's Nakoda was a very discreet man. First he began simply to stop to chat with Kasaka Onoto; then in a quiet manner he praised Yuka's beauty; then he spoke with respect of her blood; then he hinted that she ought to make a rich marriage; finally he expressed surprise at the idea of Kasaka Onoto thinking of giving her to Ido. Of course, this could not but have effect on a weak, vain woman like Kasaka Onoto; but it had none whatever on Yuka, because of the blood of her father, which would not be influenced by flattery. So Kasaka grew to be discontented. She found fault with Ido, grew positively to hate poor Ido - in a fit of petulance she forbade him to come any more to the house to see Yuka.

So the lovers did not see each other often, but only at intervals, when they met at friends' houses, and then Ido would look so sad that Yuka grew impatient with him sometimes, and said "Kitishima Ido,

what think you - that I be untrue to you? !"

They did not dare to arrange meetings whereby Yuka's mother would not know, for it is so strongly a thing of duty to obey the parent, that they never dreamed of doing otherwise. Besides Ido's parents had taken umbrage at the slight cast upon their son, and there had been words passed between the two families. But Ido knew instinctively the places Yuka would be most likely to be, and Yuka went more often to one place when Ido had chanced to be there before, and thus they met, and were dearer to each other than ever. Ido often grew despondent, but Yuka, never. Her sharp mind had made her understand what had caused all this, and true to her race there was growing up in her heart an honest desire for revenge. Just as Takahashi had wanted to punish her, so now she wished to punish him, only her feeling was deeper and more intense, for she was a woman.

Things went on in this way for some time. The Nakoda went back and forth from Takahashi's house to Onoto's. Soon he had Onoto in his net, and they began to make terms by which Yuka should be given to Takahashi. Finally all was completed, and Nosse Onoto betrothed her child to Takahashi.

When Yuka first heard it she only bowed her head gracefully, and so well did she hide her true feelings, that her mother thinking she had become resigned, was delighted, for Takahashi was a very rich man. She was mistaken. No true Japanese will allow themselves to

show anger or pain. They will smile and assure you they are grateful when they mean the opposite, and their smile may mean vengeance. Nosse Onoto was only a peasant woman and could not grasp at this, but her daughter was a Samourai and acted as became a Samourai.

So Yuko was married to Takahashi, and in the joy of having such a young and beautiful wife, and of Samourai blood for himself he almost forgot his spite in his pride. But Yuko never forgot for one little moment.

Yuko did not go to her husband at once, for, although he had married her in a hurry for fear he would lose her, he wanted to rearrange his house, and was having new fusuma or sliding screens of opaque paper between the rooms fixed in, and having the place generally renewed. So Yuko stayed with her mother, as though nothing had happened to change her life, only she looked strangely quiet and almost happy.

At last the day came when the house was ready. It was a beautiful spring day. Yuko walked slowly across the rice fields towards the river. As she walked a little way along its banks another figure joined her. It was Ido. He was very much changed. He looked worn and haggard. Yuko took his hand gently and whispered "I love you Ido-San", and then said something in his ear. They wandered hand in by the river bank, till the moon came over the hills and peeped at them gently, and the skies began to darken, and the stars winked and blinked at them; until gradually night came on around them.

"Ido said Yuko gently 'I will free myself from Taka-
and this will be our bridal eve, but first I must go to him and do that
which will free me from him, and make me completely thine". Then she
took her hand from his, and told him to wait there for her, and he
waited his face grown suddenly bright and happy.

Takahashi had been expecting his bride all day. He had
prepared a great feast, and even invited some friends in, and they
awaited her arrival with her nearest male relative; but no Yuko came,
and he had risen and gone to her house to seek her, and force her to
come. But there he was told already had she left. Then he was very
wroth and swore at Nosse Onoto and Yuko, for he did not truly love her;
but only desired her for his wife because she was beautiful and the
daughter of a Samourai, and greatest of all for spite. Then he had
returned to his house where he had drunk much wine and insulted to his
friends the name of his wife; so that when Yuko meekly entered the
house he slept from excess of drinking.

The guests were gone; the lights were out. Yuko glided
softly from room to room, looking at everything in the house, and push-
ing aside the paper screens between the rooms. Then she came to
where Takahashi had lain down in a deep drunken sleep. There was no
light in the room, but the moon threw a straight ray across the sleeping
man, and Yuko smiled as she looked on him. Then with a soft sweet
cry she raises her hand; something flashes in the moonlight; a fearful
cry of "HOTOGOROSHI!" (Murder!) from the startled man. Then all is
still.

*has entered - there is almost a holy smile
a her pale sweet face. Down to the bottom
idea she goes where she is waiting for x the
where the death from her throws it for out-
over + when they slowly walk into the room, and
the thing and to the moonlight.*

She goes from the room as silently as she