



THE OLD JINRIKISHA

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Concluded in this issue

XII.

KOTO was an arrant coward. That was why she shivered and cried at the thought of having to go to Jack and tell him that she had been mistaken—she did not care for him, could not, would not marry him. So she put it to Natsu:

"How can I tell him now, Natsu? You see I as good as told him that I'd have him. He is so assured about it all now, and—and, oh, I do hate to hurt any one."

Natsu thought the question over very seriously, sitting at Koto's feet, her own little ones drawn under her, looking very quaint and pretty.

"Well," she said, finally, "whad kin you do? You jus' gotter tell him. I onerstan' thad you nod lig' me? I nod lig' needer, bud whad kin we do?"

Koto didn't see any more than Natsu that there was anything for them to do but face it out.

"He'll feel dreadfully, I know," she said, moodily.

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"Yaes—tha's true. Sa-ay, don' you thing' I feelin' thad dreadfully tarrible also, when thad ombel Jag Cuthers tellin' me he don' luf me. Whad you thing? Well, sa-ay I thing' thad Jag he gotter git over thad tarrible pain and mis-er-able-ness jus' lig' me—I gittin' over. He bedder go git nuddler gell ter luf with, jus' lig' me—I goin' git my august hosban' to luf with me, tha's same thing."

Koto laughed, a trifle provoked. Natsu certainly was a poor consoler.

"Well, I suppose I'll have to tell him," she admitted, with great distaste. "He's coming at four o'clock."

"Sa-ay, I tellin' you somethings."

"Yes?"

"Led me telling him thad!"

"Oh, Natsu, will you?"

Here was a way of escape Koto had not thought of.

"Oh, you darling, and you'll tell him so gently and kindly, won't you?"

But Natsu would not be advised, and informed Koto that if she were to have charge of the matter she preferred conducting it her own way.

And so when Jack Carruthers came for his answer he was confronted in the zashishi (or guest room) by Mrs. Komatsu Taro, who welcomed him with the most extravagant politeness.

"Ah-h! How do do! Tha's such nize days. How is your health, augustness? Ah-h! Pray be seated, excellency, deigning to overlook the augustly miserable seat."

Jack looked at her suspiciously. She did not often indulge in such voluble politeness; moreover, he was nervous and eager to see Koto.

He sat down, however, on a little stool she placed for him, his hat in his hands, looking anything but comfortable or good-tempered. Natsu sat down, also, almost at his feet, and clasped her little hands in her lap.

"Your health is good?" she repeated assiduously.

"Excellent," said Jack, briefly.



"WHEN JACK CARRUTHERS CAME FOR HIS ANSWER, HE WAS CONFRONTED BY MRS. KOMATSU TARO"

"Hah-h! Tha's nize! An' also thad health of all your honorable parents?"

"They're all right, I suppose," still more shortly this time.

"Tha's nize also. An' your friens'?"

"Oh, pshaw!" He lost patience, wondering savagely whether she intended to ask after the health of all his individual friends and acquaintances. Maybe after that she would inquire solicitously after the health of her august majesty, the Queen of England, and so on down the whole royal family. Jack wished Koto would come down.

"I thing you lig' something to dring' an' eat; mebbe?" suggested Natsu, very politely.

"Er—what's that? Ah, yes, very well." He threw his hat and gloves down on a small table, and strode over resignedly to a window, his hands deep in his trousers pockets. He was feeling nervous, and Koto's non-appearance made him more so.

Natsu clapped her hands briskly, and one of her maidens came through the shoji.

"Bring tea for the honorable guest," said Natsu. Then she walked over to him.

"Excellency," she said, just a trifle timidly, "I lig' speag' at you."

Jack turned about and faced her, half good-naturedly, half irritably. He was still sulking over Koto's prolonged absence, for had she not promised to be in the zashishi at four, and it was nearly five now?

"What is it, Natsu?—er—something important? If not—ah, I say now—er—won't you like a—er—good little girl run off and tell your sister that I've been waiting an—ah—unconscionably long time for her?"

"My sister asking me to mag' her eegsuses to-day."

"What?"

The maid had returned with the tea, and Natsu was pouring it slowly out into the tiny cups.

"Bring' this first and be refreshed."

Then I kin eegsplain."

"Oh, damn the tea! Did Koto tell you to—ah—excuse herself to me?"

"If you kin nod be perlite with me," quoth Natsu with offended dignity, "I nod tellin' you aevything. Then you goin' away nod onerstanin'. Tha's mos' hard ter suffer than if you onerstan'."

"Understand what?" He took the tea and feigned to drink it to pacify her.

"My seester nod luf with you aeny longer," Natsu informed him quietly.

The young man looked at her steadily a moment, with half puzzled, uncomprehending eyes. The hand that held the little cup, however, trembled. He put it down.

"What do you mean?"

"She tellin' me thad."

"She—what do you mean?" he repeated stupidly.

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"Jus' same thing you tellin' me, 'bout nod luf with me account you luf elsewhere."

I had never given Natsu credit for any maliciousness in her make-up. She had always seemed too artless and innocent for that. But it is the nature of the Japanese women beneath all their submissive sweetness, when actually hurt, to retaliate with all their might whenever opportunity presents; indeed, they will seek such opportunity relentlessly.

I hated to think that Natsu, the gentle, lovable, sweet little girl I loved so well, could be capable of absolute cruelty in deliberately taking this opportunity to retaliate against Jack Carruthers for any pain he may have caused her.

She sat before him on the mat, coolly sipping her sake, and she told him all about Koto and Philip Evans, her voice very sweet and gentle, as she watched the color fading from his face and the young man biting his quivering lips. Then she added:

"Tha's mos' sad thing I aever have to tell. Tha's same thing with you—thad time you tellin' me about nod lufing with me."

"Ah!" The exclamation was wrung from the young man, and was fraught with pain. Then he broke down, and put his head between his two hands.

"My God! What can I do?"

I saw a white wave of fear and contrition cross Natsu's face. She had never seen a man, more par-

ticularly a big strong man, break down, and weep, yes, actually seem to weep. No Japanese man ever could do that. She did not know what to do. Her conscience was paining her dreadfully now, and yet, she knew if she had not told him, Koto would have had to.

"Mister Jag—Jag—Omble Jag Cutthers," she said, kneeling beside him; "oh! all the gods in the skies, forgive me that I mek you suffering so."

The young man lifted his haggard face from his hands, and tried bravely to smile at her.

"Oh, don't, Natsu," he said shakily, "it wasn't your fault. I—I understand."

"Ah-h, yaes, alas, you onerstan'. Tha's breagin' your heart all daed."

"Oh, I'm all right," he pushed his fingers wearily through his hair, "I don't know what else I expected," he groaned and walked across the room with a slow, uncertain stride. Natsu trotted after him, wringing her hands with sympathy and distress.

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"Sa-ay, Omble Jag—Mister Jag—excellency—sa-ay I goin' tell you something—lo, I—I kin comfort with you."

He smiled through his misery at her concern.

"Sa-ay—suppose you gitting nudder nize beautifullest ladies to luf with you. My seester," she threw a disparaging note into her voice now, "she nod vaery nize—nod vaery—jus' liddle bit. No—nod liddle bit whicheven—mos' augustly homely womans in-all the whole worl'. Now I eggspeg some nize beautifullest ladies goin' to lig' with you if you letting. No, don't shake your honorable heads, you thing nod? Well me? I thing' nod also thad times you—whad is thad? ah, yaes—jilting with me. Well me? I git my august hosban to luf with me jus' same way, an' lo, I am jus' same habby also." She ended triumphantly.

Jack picked his hat, stick and gloves up, and held them in one hand as he took Natsu's little ones, which were both outstretched, in the other.

"Good-bye, Natsu—tell her that—that you delivered her message, and ah—I said—" he broke down here, and went out with the sentence unfinished.

Koto came through the shoji, shivering. She flung herself down on a couch and burst into tears, sobbing bitterly.

"Oh, oh, I heard it all. It was cruel. I—Natsu, how could you do it? How—"

"Thad is cruel," said Natsu, gravely, "bud whad could I do? You ask me to telling, an' I telling. Tha's all." There was a guilty tremor to her voice, however.

"But—but your voice—you seemed cold and unfeeling."

Natsu shrugged her shoulders.

"Tha's nod me he luf," she said.

She poured out a delicious cup of hot sake and gave it to her sister, brushing the hair tenderly back from the somewhat fevered head, as she made her drink it.

When Phil Evans finally arrived he found the two girls sitting together in complete silence. There were tear traces on both their faces.

"I met Jack in the road," he said gravely.

He sat down close by Koto. "You told him?"

"No, I could not. Natsu did so for me."

"Natsu!"

"Yes, I hadn't the courage."

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Phil Evans made no comment, and after a moment the girl continued, her voice breaking, "Oh, Phil, I feel so conscience-stricken and wicked about it all. I almost wish I had seen him myself, though it might not have mended matters."

"No," said Phil slowly, "it would not have altered things. I only wonder he did not insist on seeing you."

"He never was entirely sure of me, you know."

After a moment she said, "Phil, dear, you—you don't think he will do anything rash," with a girlish vivid recollection of the sensational love stories the girls had indulged in at the school.

"Oh, no, of course not. He'll get over it. An Englishman generally has plenty sand and grit."

When Phil Evans returned to the hotel that night some lounge about the hotel told him that Jack Carruthers had left only a few hours before for Nagasaki, from whence he proposed sailing for England.

And that is the last I heard of the Honorable Jack Carruthers.

XIII.

L'ENVOI.

And now I have told you all there is to tell of those dear ones, whom I have loved in my day. Maybe when I started out to prattle and gossip of the fleeting memories of the past, I intended to tell you of others besides those who came nearest to my own heart, but like most old people my mind will run constantly to those I love most, and whose lives I have played a larger part in. Others have come and gone before me—many a love story, tragedy and comedy of one chapter only have I been the silent witness of, among those who flashed but once into my life and then passed out. Of the ones I have told you, I picked up the threads of their careers and because they were dear to my heart, how could I forget them?

I am old, so very, very old now, and slowly but surely I am going to pieces. You see, my master overrated my strength and that ride Koto took in me all the way to Tokyo and back with her lover, practically ruined my health for the rest of my days. There is nought in my life to-day that I can cry out against. The gods have seen fit to indeed bestow all good blessings on me in my old age. I am surrounded by those I love most on earth. I serve the descendants of my beloved master of the past. Furthermore, I know that when my bones (pardon an old jinrikisha's conceit in referring to his parts thuswise) shall fall apart, they will not be vulgarly scattered, but gathered together with great reverence and care, for am I not beloved by my dear master and his gentle wife? They always hold that I am partially responsible for their happiness, as it was through me they first met.

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They are very happy, these two. The gods have smiled on them also, and blessed them with a truly wonderful man-child. This is the greatest of the gods' gifts—a little child. The child bears an odd name, that is, odd for a Japanese child. "Philip" is its first name, after its new uncle. The child in no way looks American; when it shall grow to years of understanding it will question the honorable meaning of its name, as all Japanese children do, and its parents will answer, "The name means all that is good and true," for so are they pleased to regard their august brother-in-law.

The child pleases me much, and I feign would talk of him also, but I am feeble and tired—tired of talking of others. Mayhap had I spoken only of myself there would have been no ending to this, for what subject can be found to interest oneself more than that of oneself?

And now methinks I am launching out and talking somewhat unnecessarily; whereas I promised in the beginning not to dwell on myself, and so I pray your august pardons, and offer no apology save that of my extreme old age.

My beloved master has entered the room now. He is standing by my side, resting one hand tenderly on my calash-top. He notes that I am weary, and in spite of all the outer dressing and finery he has been pleased to bestow on me, I am, surely losing my strength and health. My heart is, however, warmed with the gentleness and tenderness of his glance and the touch of his hands.

"Poor old jinrikisha," he is saying to his little wife, who has come in also, "see how shaky it is getting. Alas, I am afraid we can no longer repair it. This is lamentable, for I have indeed learned to love it. I know not why, save perhaps that it brought me you, an-san. There always was something warm and good and inviting about it, moreover. The old thing looks as if it had a soul."

THE PLAYTHING OF A KING

The Emperor of Germany has a toy that would gladden the heart of the most exacting boy. It is a miniature frigate, a full-rigged three-masted warship, fifty-five feet in length, drawing but four feet of water and having a capacity of thirty tons. The ship is an heirloom in the Imperial family of Germany, having been presented by William IV., King of England, to the present German emperor's great-grandfather, Frederick William III. It gave the reigning monarch his first taste of life on the wave, and in his boyhood days one of his favorite amusements was to sail on the watery Potsdam, in company with his brother Henry, in this tiny man-of-war.

At a distance the ship's dimensions are very deceptive, but a man at the rail or a boat moving alongside soon brings out, by contrast, the smallness of the craft. The frigate can be sailed in the same manner as the largest ship, but the crew must be Lilliputians in size and scanty in number; a seaman of ordinary build would be totally out of place on the yards of this vessel. He would probably be in grave danger of bringing the spars down to the deck with his own weight. "Royal Louise" is the name of this kindly toy; she was christened after the Prussian Queen Louise. The little frigate was built on the Thames river, at Woolwich, in 1832.

NEVER TOO OLD TO LEARN

Socrates, at an extreme age, learned to play on musical instruments, for the purpose of resisting the influences of old age.

Cato, at eighty years of age, began to learn the Greek language.

Plutarch, when between seventy and eighty, commenced the study of Latin.

Boccaccio was thirty years of age when he commenced his studies in polite literature, yet he became one of the three great masters of the Tuscan dialect, Dante and Petrarch being the other two.

Sir Henry Spelman neglected the sciences in his youth, but commenced the study of them when he was between fifty and sixty years of age. After this time he became a most learned antiquarian, and lawyer.

Colbert, the famous French minister, at sixty years of age returned to his Latin and law studies.

Ludovico, at the great age of one hundred and fifteen, wrote the memoirs of his own times. A singular exertion, noticed by Voltaire, who was himself one of the most remarkable instances of the progress age may make in new studies.

Ogilvy, the translator of Homer and Virgil, was unacquainted with Latin and Greek till he was past fifty.

Franklin did not fully commence his philosophical pursuits till he had reached his fiftieth year.

Dryden, in his sixty-eighth year, commenced the translation of the "Iliad," and his most pleasing productions were written in his old age.

THE PLACE DE LA CONCORDE

There is said to be no equal in the world to this grand and imposing square of Paris. On one side of it is the Tuileries, on the opposite side the Champs Elysees, and on a third the River Seine. In the center stands the obelisk of Luxor, a magnificent monolith of red Egyptian granite, seventy-four feet high and weighing five hundred thousand pounds. This obelisk was one of two of the same shape and size, erected in 1350 B. C., by Rameses the Great, at the entrance of the Temple of Thebes. Mohammed Ali, Pasha of Egypt, presented it to the French Government, and in 1836 it was removed to its present position in the Place de la Concorde. The removal and erection on the new site required an outlay of eighty thousand pounds, the obelisk being transported to France in a vessel built specially for the purpose. The Place de la Concorde is rich in historic interest. It was there that the guillotine was erected in the "Reign of Terror," and there that the signal was given for the attack on the Bastille. Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were beheaded there in 1793, and it was the scene of great rejoicing in 1888 when the Republic was proclaimed.