YOSHIDA YONE, LOVER

By Onoto Watanna

IT was five years since Yoshida Yone had come to New York. He was essentially a son of New Japan, eager, ambitious, intensely curious and interested in all pertaining to learning and advancement. Everything in the Western world at first enthused and delighted him. He began at once to master the English language thoroughly, then to study the people. He adopted their dress, copied their mannerisms and habits, and even endured the misery of initiating himself into the mysteries of what his suite termed "barbarous food." At the end of three years he was a typical Americanized Japanese.

Now it must not be thought that Yoshida Yone was determined to adopt American ways and lay aside his old mode of living permanently. Like most Japanese who come to this country, Yone was anxious to be as nearly as possible like the people among whom he lived, even if only for a short season, but he had no fixed intention of making his home permanently in America. Only, he did not wish to leave the West until he had seen and learned all he could, and this would take time. It was part of his education, in fact, and he went at it as earnestly as he had once studied the classics in the old Imperial University of Japan.

He installed himself with his secretary, valet and personal butler in a very luxurious suite of rooms in a hotel on the Avenue, and with occasional trips to different cities, Yone for a season lived an apparently pleasant and happy life. His acquaintance was limited to a few favorite friends, for he had never lost that retiring, somewhat unapproachable part of his character which was not Japanese pride, but rather modesty, even shyness. At all events, life ran very smoothly and evenly for Yoshida Yone.

"I ought to be very happy," he spoke aloud one day, as he looked out from his window on the ceaseless procession of carriages.

"Eh?" said the assiduous secretary, starting and turning an attentive face.

"I said," repeated Yone, with emphasis, "that I ought to be happy;" then he added, slowly, "but I am not."

The secretary permitted a polite curiosity to creep into his face, though his attitude continued gravely attentive and respectful.

"Perhaps your excellency is lonely," he suggested, gently.

"Yes," said Yone, "I am very lonely;" and he sighed.

"It is because your excellency has not married," said the secretary, in an insinuating voice.

"Married!" Yone looked at the speaker with startled eyes; "married! Why, to whom?"

He had never even thought of the subject before.

"Yes," said the secretary, "why not? Youth will otherwise glide by you unrealized. You are even now twenty-five years of age."

"Why not?" repeated Yone, softly, and stood there musing and dreaming.

The secretary permitted a short silence to ensue in order to give his master time fully to weigh the matter. Then he continued: "Your ex-

cellency should live in a house and have a family. You would not be lonely then."

"Ah," said Yone, "I had not thought of it before."

He laughed an embarrassed, pleased laugh. He was still hardly more than a boy. After a moment he said, with a joyous tremble in his voice, "Yes, yes, of course—why, of course I must marry." Then he laughed, the fancy pleased him so well.

He sat down opposite his secretary, smiling. "But whom," he said, "whom shall I marry?"

"Oh," said his secretary, reproachfully, "I will attend to all that. If you can spare me I will return to Japan, negotiate with some *nakoda* (professional matchmaker) or with the girl's parents, and will secure the best to be had."

Suddenly Yone rose to his feet and turned his back on his secretary, staring, moodily now, out of the window.

"No," he said, "I will not have such a wife. I don't like those old customs. They are barbarous. I will choose my own wife."

"Yes? Then you will go to Japan yourself?"

"No." He paused a moment, and then continued, slowly: "I shall marry an American girl. Yes, I prefer them. They are so bright, so clever, so beautiful! She shall have hair the color of the sunbeams, and eyes like yonder sky; she shall be the sun-goddess to me," he breathed.

His secretary made an impatient sound under his breath, but when Yone turned towards him his face was enigmatical and unreadable in expression. He simply bowed submissively, formally expressing a wish to serve his master the rest of his life.

The lobby, waiting-room, halls and offices of the hotel were crowded with guests eager to catch a glimpse of the naval hero who was soon to pass by in the procession. A number of knowing women had come into the hotel waiting-room at an early hour and availed themselves of the chairs by the window. How could anyone know whether they were guests or not? In fact, a couple of them sitting close by the window had even removed their hats. The younger one leaned her head towards where the sunshine was pouring into the room, and it lighted her hair to a rich, living gold. Right at her back, staring with fascinated eyes at the mass of golden hair, done in extravagant fashion, was a little man, pale-faced, wistful-eyed, immaculately dressed in frock coat and high hat. He was a foreigner—Yoshida Yone.

There was a stir outside, a rumble and noise, and the people were cheering far down the line. A number of little boys climbed on the railings outside and shut the view from those within.

"Oh, dear! Oh, what a shame! Just look! Those horrid little wretches! The little imps!" came in a volley of angry exclamations from the disappointed and excited women grouped by the window.

The girl with the golden hair rose to her feet and then sat down again in bitter disappointment.

"I can't see a thing, mamma," she said to the other woman; "and after waiting all day like this! It's all your fault! It's a shame, and I'm so tired!"

Someone touched the older woman lightly on the arm. She turned. A small, pale, foreign gentleman stood at her elbow.

"Pardon. May I offer my assistance?"

The lady, who was large and overdressed, looked at him sharply, her eyes traveling quickly over him from head to foot. Apparently she was not displeased with the survey, for she smiled very graciously. "Why, how very kind of you, to be sure," she said.

At that the girl also turned round. She was really not at all pretty, her face large and long, and fretful in expression; but Yone saw only that the eyes were vividly blue, the complexion pink-and-white, the hair as

bright as the sun itself, and he was all cold and white in flashes.

"I have most excellent rooms overhead. Pray accept them for a short time," he said.

"Delighted!" said the mother, before the girl could open her lips to frame a denial.

They followed him out of the sitting-room; he put them in the elevator, and soon they had passed through the hall into his rooms and out on a delightful little balcony.

The acquaintance thus begun progressed rapidly, and the end of a week found the Japanese a victim of the older woman's worldly wiles and tact and of the girl's big blue eyes and bleached hair. Yone made the girl an offer of his soul, and the mother accepted it, since that meant also his gold.

The room they were sitting in was a back parlor, but it was used as sitting-room, sewing-room, dining-room and sleeping-room in one. Only large, heavy curtains separated it from the front room, which the daughter had fixed up, not inartistically, to entertain, receive and deceive their friends and guests in. They occupied these two rooms together in a second-rate boarding-house. Life was dull, melancholy, stupid. They were very poor. The mother canvassed for books, the girl helping her spasmodically when it suited her, or more often depending altogether on the mother. And now, while the mother sat patiently sewing her wedding finery, the girl was crying, crying wildly.

"Now, Mamie, pray bear up! It isn't so bad as all that. Some girls would envy you. He is really quite good-looking—for a Japanese—and so kind. Then, too, think of all it will mean to us!" she sighed.

The other groaned, hysterically. "Oh, I know, I know!" she wailed, lamenting. "You can't tell me. I am tired of it all—this trying to eke an existence out of life by our wits. And it would not have mattered whom I married—so long as he could have saved us from the misery of it all, if it hadn't been for that other one." Muffled sobs ensued for a few minutes; then the girl continued, her voice raised wrathfully as she sat up in her petulant misery: "I tell you, mother, I never can, never will forget him! Oh, you can look like that! I know it—it was all impossible—he will marry some woman in his own set. But I can't help it—I go on loving him more and more—and hating—yes, loathing that other. *He* used to say that—that—oh, oh, oh!" She had flung herself full length across the couch again, only to spring up in a moment. "And now to have to sell myself—" she was hissing the words between her chattering teeth, for the room was cold and she had been trying on dresses all the morning—"yes, to sell myself," she repeated, "to him! —a little, brown, ugly manikin like him, when with all my heart and life and soul I love that other!"

"That other is impossible for you," said her mother, bitterly.

"Yes, yes, I know. He even told me so. And just think, mamma, if I had had a fair chance, if I had met him as other girls will, he might have married me!"

"Oh, come now, Mamie, you know he never would. See how lovely this lace falls. Mr. Yoshida is very generous. He must have spent a mint on your trousseau, my dear."

But the girl was back on the couch, sobbing brokenly.

"There, there," urged the mother, soothingly.

"Mamma, I detest him!"

"He is awfully kind."

"When he touches me I could scratch him, kill him—as perhaps I shall some day!"

"He's so gentle, and doesn't thrust himself on you."

"I hate the sight of him—a *Japanese!*"

"Now that's foolish ignorance. Everyone knows that the Japanese——"

There was a tap on the door. The girl sat up quickly, then rushed be-

hind a screen. But it was only a dirty maid, who handed a letter into the room. The girl took it from the mother, but at sight of the writing threw it down on the table with an ugly expression on her face. "He's always writing! Makes me sick!"

"See what he says, dear," her mother suggested, mildly, and the girl broke the seal and read:

"'My Sun-Goddess—Come and see you again, you say? I shall be delightful!' The girl sneered, and muttered, "'Delightful!' Idiot!"

"He means 'delighted,'" her mother interposed, gently.

The girl finished the letter: "'I will come at two of the clock.'"

"Two! Mercy!" She looked quickly at the clock. "It's half-after now. I must dress."

The mother had risen to her feet, a sickening fear tugging at her heart-strings. She went to the curtains dividing the two rooms and drew them apart.

The man was standing cold and still, his face livid and ghastly, his hands clenched, his thin lips parched and dry. He had grown old suddenly.

The woman shrieked and almost fainted. The girl rushed to her, and seeing the man, seized the situation at a glance. The slovenly maid, whom they bullied, tyrannized over and quarreled with constantly, had forgotten to announce him. He had heard all. A savage joy flamed in the girl. She faced him with half-closed, defiant eyes, eyes that smiled cruelly.

There was not a word spoken by any of them, for the mother was too stunned to recover her terrified senses in time to restrain him. He found his way blindly to the door and out into the street.

Late that night Yoshida Yone dressed himself in the richest and rarest of Japanese-silk *hakatas*. Then he searched deep in the huge trunk for something hidden at the bottom. He drew it out and looked at it steadily. It was cold and gleaming. Its handle was all gold and ivory, of wonderful workmanship. On the blade was the family name—one of the oldest and bravest in Japan. Yone himself had been taught the *Samourai* art with the sword. This was a sword he held now, an old-fashioned, rare, priceless sword. It had been in the family hundreds and hundreds of years. He ran his hand up and down the blade, caressing it—then of a sudden he raised it and laid it against his neck.

He began pressing it into the side, gently at first, so that it was a mere pin prick that started the blood, which dripped slowly down and down the deeper and harder he pressed. Yone shuddered and groaned, which was not at all right or correct. Alas! his hand had lost the *Samourai* cunning, and life was not taken so easily. And also he had lost the invincible endurance of his forefathers. He was not dying as became one of his family and nation—intrepidly, fearlessly, bravely. In this great Western world he had become poisoned with a dread of death, and this dread began to mingle with his repugnance of the terrible pain that now beset him. He tried to draw the sword out, but his arm had grown weak; he tried to call, but his voice failed him. Then he sank down.

A bell-boy with a white, terrified face rushed pell-mell down the stairs of the hotel the next morning and up to the clerk's desk.

"Someone has murdered Mr. Yoshida!" he cried, shrilly. "I took him water this morning, and he is lying all cut up to pieces in his blood!"

Yone was dreaming. It seemed to him that he had sunk downward into immeasurable depths of space. A terrible blankness and numbness paralyzed him, save where an unending pain throbbed and pounded and beat in the side of his neck and head. The pain never ceased, was dull, excruciating, killing. But of a sudden it seemed that a breath of perfume strangely familiar and dear was wafted to him, stole into his

senses, possessed him. He was conscious of a presence, a sweet breathing, delightful presence, leaning over him, touching, soothing him, and then slowly all the pain died away. Yone saw a vision, and over his weary brain swept a sense of infinite peace and rest. And the vision he saw was a woman's face! To his poor, fevered mind it was an angel's. It was as pale and small and sweet and gentle and motherly, as consoling and loving as the face of Kwannon, the sweet goddess of mercy. In the long, dark eyes he saw the invitation to rest; the gentle mouth was moulded to comfort, the soft, slim hands to soothe and caress. It was a face familiar, and inexpressibly dear to the sick, fever-wrought, pain-wracked man, for it was the face of one belonging to the mother country, a Japanese girl's sweet face! Back to his mind drifted the old dream days that had seemed so far away as to have withered and died. Once more he was back among the scenes of his boyhood; the perfume-laden fields thrilled him with their sweetness, the soft, glad winds caressed and called to him, the dance of the sun on the waters, the glow of the heavens and the tinted fields, and far off in the distance the sinuous, symmetrical grace of the snow-clad Fujiyama. It was all part of and belonged to the vision of the Japanese girl with the little mother-face. And then she removed her hand from his head and he felt her gliding, fading from him. With a rush all the agony and pain and longing surged back. He sat up in bed, shading his eyes with his hands, and called out to her, called with such piercing yearning and entreaty that she returned quickly, and again he felt the light touch of her hand on his brow. His wistful eyes beseeched her not to leave him.

"Sleep," she said, gently; "sleep, sleep," and she spoke in the soft accents of the home tongue!

His feeble hands tried to draw hers to his lips. She saw his intent, and smiled softly, soothingly.

"You are the moon-goddess!" he breathed. "All the gods bless you!"

A little tremulous smile faltered in her eyes and then flickered away. She understood. He was lonely, as she had been for many weary months now, and he was—oh, so infinitely glad to hear his native speech once more. But he was a nobleman of wealth and power, and she but a poor little hospital nurse.

It was a month later. The tiniest nurse in all that big hospital came softly down the wide staircase, her delightful little nose buried in a huge bunch of early Spring blossoms.

The pale young man waiting in the nurse's private reception-room for visitors thought he read her answer in her shining eyes, and gladness trembled in his own eyes, on his lips and in his heart.

She inquired with extravagant solicitude after his health, as he had been her patient. "You are feeling better to-day?"

The young man ignored her inquiry as to his health, but took her two little hands and held them closely in his own. "*Yuki-san*," he said, with eager earnestness, "for the time of this life and the next, and as many after that as may come, will you be my wife, and take me for your husband?"

"But your health!" she said, distressedly, trying vainly to withdraw her hands; "you did not answer as to that."

"Do you not wish to go back to Japan, Yuki-san?" he asked, with reproach in his voice.

She caught her breath with an inward sob. "Ah, I have saved through many months for that," she said.

He laughed joyously. "And I have sufficient for a thousand such little maidens."

"But I am not so little, *ani-san*," she denied, valiantly.

Again he laughed, and she went daringly a little nearer to him.

"You shall not call me *ani-san*," he said, softly.

"No? That is the most enduring word in the language," she breathed.

"Nay; it means only brother."

"And——"

"There is another dearer."

"Ah, what is it? I know none dearer."

"*Otto!*" (husband) he whispered; and she did not deny him.

IN COURT

WHEN Cupid prosecutes a cause
Before the court of reason,
The way he waives aside the laws
Of commonwealths is treason;
And e'en uncommon wealth he'll face—
A fellow much in favor;
For poverty he'll urge the case
Without a qualm or quaver.

Though many causes Cupid wins,
He never figures gainer;
To love of love his faith he pins,
And asks no big retainer.
In fact, it may be said that he
For love within a cottage
Will ever make his strongest plea,
And asks no "mess of pottage."

And yet, if one should seek a heart
Without true love's petition
On which to base his cause, in part,
He'll ne'er condone omission.
For when he's tricked by scheme so base
He'd scarcely be love's saint if
He did not straightway move the case
Dismissed at cost of plaintiff.

ROY FARRELL GREENE.

THE REASON

"WHAT caused Cranksmith to attempt suicide?"
"Oh, he was beaten by himself at a game of solitaire."

AS a rule, the plainer a theorem in geometry is to a woman, the plainer she is.