

UNNECESSARY SYMPATHY.

I always felt sorry when I met Jim—
Poor fellow, he's married now;
And life is a serious thing to him,
For he lives by the sweat of his brow.

And the cares of a family weigh him down,
And he slaves to run the house;
Why, Jim was the gayest boy in town,
And I'll bet he's as poor as a mouse!

And because he looked so worn and sad,
I tried whenever we met
To talk of the good times we'd had,
In hopes that he might forget.

Till I said I was living at the club;
Then I felt a deep chargin;
Lest he should think I was trying to rub
His misery further in.

But he exclaimed: "That's a horrible life!
No child to climb on your knee;
No quiet home and the loving wife!"
By Jove! He was pitying me!

—Harry Romaine, in Life.

A TRUE STORY OF JAPAN.

I had made my small investments in Japanese curios; I had turned over all the silks and satins and "kimonos" that interested me, both in the modern and native quarters of Yokohama; I had seen Japanese dances and eaten a Japanese dinner in slipped feet reclining uncomfortably on the matted floor; I had been hospitably and regally entertained both by Europeans and natives; I had been up hill and down dale to see all the sights and mountain rest-houses and sulphur springs and snows and sleets of Alpine Japan; I had worshipped Fusiyama from every available prospect; and, anxious for still more information, I looked up an old school friend of Marlborough days who lived in a handsome house in the European quarter of Yokohama, as befitted one of its leading men. We had parted last in the famous "B" dormitory of the Old House at Marlborough, and we met over a quarter of a century afterward at a dinner table in Yokohama.

I was boasting to my old school fellow of the wonderful things I had done in a short space of time; how I had seen Nikko, and Kioto, and Tokio, and Atami; how I had visited Kamakura and Enoshima; how I had walked up snow precipices and scalded my hands in boiling sulphur, and been rickshawed for hundreds of miles and rested at Myanoshita, and had a bird's-eye view of Japanese life in every shape and form, when the good fellow put on his considering cap, and said:

"But you have not seen old Playfort, who lives on the race course and is a Yokohama character?"

At once I owned up that the pleasure of old Playfort's acquaintance had been hitherto denied me.

"But you must see old Playfort," observed my friend, "he is dying to see you; he has talked of nothing else but you since your steamship arrived. He has begged and entreated all the boys to bring you up to him, and if you have nothing better to do, I will drive you up to the race course this afternoon."

I assented; but I was as much in the dark as ever concerning the trade, or occupation or idiosyncrasies of old Playfort.

My friend at once enlightened me. He was an old English actor, he had seen Edmund Kean, had acted with Macready and Phelps and toured and "stocked" in nearly all the best provincial towns of England, had been an actor in America for years, and had now settled down as the landlord of a curious kind of old English inn or shanty on the breezy race course on the hill overlooking Yokohama and the sea.

"But how on earth did an English actor manage to find his way to Japan?" I observed.

"Oh! I don't know; drifted here I suppose; but he must tell you his story in his own fashion. All I know is that he wants to see you, and that I promised to bring you up on the first opportunity."

That same afternoon my old school-fellow and I drove through an outlying gray Japanese village, and found ourselves at the gate of the Shakespeare Inn, a curious, embowered, tumble-down old beer house or grog shop, within a convenient walking distance of Yokohama.

At the rustic gate of the Shakespeare Inn, which title was placarded on a sign-board among the trees, my thoughts were irresistibly taken back to dear old England. The cottage bore no resemblance at all to the gray-boarded and gray-slatted shanties of native Japan. It might have been transplanted from an old Warwickshire lane, and I am certain I have seen dozens of inns of the same pattern in Shakespeare's country.

The illusion of English home life was kept up in the garden, in the shrubberies, in the miniature arbors of the curious little cottage, so distinct from the diurnal bungalows found in a land of paper-covered windows and squeaking shutters.

The pleasant illusion was only lost in the public smoke-room, where sock-headed Japs, and down-at-heel, untidy women, men with scrubbing-brush heads of hair, and girls in frousy-padded "kimonos," also down-at-heel and sloppety, took the place of "Ostler Joe" and the neat-handed "Phyllis" in her pink

print gown, so intimately associated with an English inn.

Old Playfort, the landlord of the Shakespeare Inn, was undoubtedly a character and a favorite. Every Englishman and Englishwoman in Yokohama was familiar with the old actor. Old stagers were wont to turn in to his best parlor with their wives and daughter on a Sunday afternoon to drink a cup of tea and have a chat with the old man, and the youngsters, the stewards, the sailors, the engineers, the captains, and the mates of every imaginable vessel touching at this Japanese port knew that they could find a drop of wholesale liquor, after a long walk, at the Shakespeare Inn, kept by an English actor.

I entered the room and was formally introduced to mine host. He was a fine, tall, handsome old fellow, erect, with a commanding presence, and a noble voice, hearty and vigorous, like the old school of actors. When he came across the room to greet me, and to shake my hand, with a strong grip of good fellowship, I could not help recalling the style and the manner of John Ryder. He had just the same boisterous, breezy manner, the same assertive presence, the same stentorian lungs.

Actors proverbially love to talk "shop," and those whose living is thrown in with actors inherit the same peculiarity. I must own it was a treat to me, after the long severance from the footlights, to plunge into the kind of conversation that was going on at that moment thousands of miles away at the Garrick, Savage, or Green Room Clubs at home.

Here, on the wild, wind-tossed heights of Yokohama, in a semi-English cottage with Japanese surroundings, smoking a pipe over a glass of Scotch whiskey, handed to me by a yellow-complexioned Asiatic, who wiped up the glasses at a rude bar, I was learning from this fine old man experiences of the old Macready and provincial stock company days, and fortifying from the fountain head my recollections of old Sadler's Wells and Samuel Phelps, and Belford, and Fred Robinson, and Lewis Ball, and Miss Glyn and Miss Atkinson, by one who had been their playmate; while the old actor was in turn pumping me about Henry Irving and his splendid Shakespearian revivals, and the advantage or disadvantage, as the case might be, of the new school over the old.

Of course, his recollections dated back far longer than mine. But we were able to compare notes at any rate, over the Phelps period and the Charles Kean period of dramatic art, and I certainly from the lips of old Playfort got an insight into the history of the American stage of the last half century, that strengthened the impressions that I had received from long conversations with actors like Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, Edward A. Sothern, and John Sleeper Clarke, who could all tell a story of the stage as well as they could act a part on it.

How wonderful is the freemasonry of the stage even among amateurs! Directly I landed at Hong Kong, before my arrival in Japan, I received a note from one of the leading and most popular merchants in the English colony, an amateur actor of considerable renown, imploring me to come up one evening to dinner at his lovely villa on the green hill overlooking Hong Kong harbor, in order to chat with him about old times at the play, and to tell him all that had happened in theatrical London since he left it for inevitable banishment in untheatrical China. The amateur as well as the professional actor is fond of a bit of stage shop, and is never so happy as when he is comparing notes with one whose dramatic experiences cover his own exact period of play-going. And so, in the somewhat squalid smoke parlor of the tumble-down Shakespeare Inn, in the seaport of Japan, old Playfort and I fell to talking about the past and the present of the English stage.

He had much to tell me of Macready, and Phelps, and Charles Kean, and the old stock company days in the time of Knowles of Manchester and Harris of Dublin; he regaled me with plenty of good stories, which, strange to say, I had never heard before, for theatrical stories are apt to circulate, as we all know; while from me the fine old gentleman had to learn all about the Henry Irving era of dramatic art, the notable Bancroft accession and too early retirement, and the promise of what is now known as the "new school," headed by such men as John Hare, George Alexander and Beerbohm Tree.

It was a curious scene; the untidy Japanese women and black-eyed Japanese boys bustling about the inn bar, and so far as they were concerned we might have been talking double Dutch, or Chinese, and here to their astonishment were an old actor and a middle aged critic talking away "sixteen to the dozen" about English dramatic art in far distant Japan.

I could not help noticing that the old man was nervously anxious to get me alone in order to discuss some private matter that seemed to agitate him. He knew that my visit to Yokohama was necessarily a short one, as I was bound to be in Chicago for the exhibition, and he also knew, which seemed to be a far more important matter to him, that I was going home to England, that in a

few weeks' time, if all were well, I should be in London again, the England from which the old actor had so mysteriously drifted, the London where I guessed all that could ever have been near or dear to him were living, still unconscious, doubtless, of his existence after these long years of separation.

But all conversation, save on general subjects, was impossible that day. My old schoolfellow was with me, and the public room was full of visitors and strangers, who had strolled in for a glass.

But before I left he called me aside and said in a mysterious stage whisper:

"Promise me on your word of honor that you will come up and see me alone before you sail away from Japan. But you must come alone. I have something very important to tell you, something that weighs heavily on my mind, something that you must know."

I promised. There was a mystery about the place and the old man that I could not at the moment fathom. It was a menace such I had never seen before, although I had been introduced to semi-English and semi-Japanese households that were curious enough.

My school-fellow on our way home helped to enlighten me. Playfort had done what so many Englishmen had done and regretted afterward in Japan. Possibly for a little money, probably for mere companionship, he had gone through a certain form of marriage with a native woman. She it was who presided over his dingy and uncleanly household. She it was who passed as his wife. The children, half Jap and half European, were hers.

It was the old story—the alliance, such as it was, had been, so far as I could see, a complete failure. During my short residence in Japan I saw plenty of such unions, but not one in which anything like married happiness existed. There can be no true union, no marriage in its highest and most beautiful sense, between a European and one of a race so peculiar and distinct from ours as the Japanese race is today.

Cultivated they may be, clever and accomplished they certainly are, affectionate and home-loving they have proved themselves to be; but their lives, their manners and their customs are so distinct from ours that in the end satiety breeds not joy and peace, but sorrow and tribulation.

It is not marriage at all, but exalted concubinage. Englishmen such as these honestly and honorably mean to do the correct thing by the women they have bought or loaned from her parents, who are only too ready to pocket the money, a woman who is, no doubt, for a time sincerely attached to him so far as her life and instincts will allow her. But it is not marriage! The man is always ashamed of his so-called wife, and not particularly proud of his children. He cannot introduce her to the society even of his intimate friends. She is, after all, only a superior kind of servant. There is no real equality between them. No woman in the East, wife, or no wife, is held in such respect, or treated with such chivalry and loyalty, as European women are treated, and the bond-slave feeling in only aggravated when the woman is an Asiatic and the man European origin. The "new woman" should take this important fact to heart.

Here, then, there was only one more instance of the fatal folly of the attachments that begin in sheer recklessness or carelessness, but are tied together by a legal bond. Any religion in the matter is out of the question, for Christians and heathens can no more mix in any exalted or soul feeling than can oil and water.

Three distinct cases of mixed European and Japanese unions came under my immediate notice. In not one of them was there any real happiness. Quite the contrary!

Again and again I went up to the Shakespeare Inn to see the grand old man, but always, unfortunately, in mixed company. Everybody liked him, from the highest to the lowest, and the European ladies of the colony were accustomed, with their husbands and brothers, to visit the old actor in his best parlor, and to listen to his stories and cheery conversation.

On the last day before my ship sailed from Yokohama to San Francisco, true to my promise, I called a swift jinricksha and bowled away to the Shakespeare Inn. The old gentleman was overjoyed to see me, and escorted me to the best parlor, where we could be alone and undisturbed. And there and then he told me the story of his curious vagabond and wandering life.

First of all he told me his real name, or rather quickly identified it with an English actress who is held in universal respect—an old lady now, but one has pursued her honorable and blameless career in London for over five and thirty years.

And with tears streaming down his old gray cheeks, he told me how devoted he still was and ever had been to as good a wife as man ever possessed, and the intense love he felt for the daughter whom he had scarcely set eyes on from infancy, a lovely woman now, happily married, with children of her own—grandchildren that the old man was never likely to see on this earth.

It was a sad story of man's weakness and unfaithfulness. Husband and wife had acted

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together in England; they had toured together in America, and, full of love and hope, they had parted years and years ago at Boston, where he saw her off to England, for she had accepted an important and lucrative professional engagement in the old country. From that hour he had never set eyes upon his faithful and devoted wife. It was a painful story, but he did not flinch in the recital of it. He did not spare himself or excuse himself, but went through it all as if he were in torture or on the rack. In this case also confession seemed good for the soul.

He had drifted!
He drifted into American stock companies, drifted into strange society, drifted no doubt into careless ways. The wife was steadily working away at home; he knew where to find her, he knew what a comfort some tidings of the derelict would be to her. But gradually he forgot to write home. He had omitted to write for so many months, soon so many years, that he became ashamed to do so.

And then the iron entered into his soul, and he crowned unpardonable neglect with the recklessness of despair. He determined to die to the world. He would lose himself, become another being, lead a new life, try to forget a past that no doubt haunted and tortured him. The old vagabond spirit took firm possession of him. He bought an old caravan and a horse, and tramped gypsy fashion from one seaboard of America to the other, stopping at miners' camps and ranches to give recitations and Shakespeare readings. He cooked for himself, lived for himself, thought for himself. This American Robinson Crusoe had no Man Friday. He was alone, doomed to be alone.

Ever and ever he turned farther and farther away from home. He did not dare look back. He must pass on and on. So as the years went by he found himself in the days of gold and prosperity at San Francisco.

Home, wife, child, friends; well, all far away in the dull, half-forgotten background. And so, as the years rolled onward, still frightened to turn back, to set sail once more from America, but not, alas! to seek forgiveness in England, but to bury himself still deeper in the dark grave of forgetfulness in far-distant Japan.

Here he arrived strong, well and hearty; here he tried readings and recitations, here he helped the English amateurs with their private theatricals, here he became a character and a Boniface, here, unhappily, he plunged into new domestic turmoils, and involved himself with fresh liabilities and responsibilities, and here I found him at the Shakespeare Inn at Yokohama, an exile from home after some thirty years' absence from the "dear white cliffs of Dover." He concluded this sad story with the following words as he took my hand, the tears still streaming down his handsome old face:

"You are going back to great old England, my friend, but I shall never see it any more. As I have made my bed so I must lie on it. My journey is almost done—I am, as you see, a very old man. Here I shall die ere long, and here they will bury me when I am gone; away from home, from wife, from child; alone among strangers, forgotten, as I well deserve to be!"

I tried to comfort him, to assure him that I could find the money to bring him back if he still longed for the dear old country.

I suggested how merciful, how loving, how tender and how forgiving good women are, and prophesied a reconciliation with his neglected wife, and a last home in some familiar English churchyard. Let him turn his back on the heathens and come home to die! But he was not to be moved from his resolution.

"Dear friend, I shall never go home, nor do I deserve it; I am an outlaw, an exile, an old derelict, still tossing on the troubled sea

of life. But I shall go under, and get in no one's way at last." And then he came closer and whispered. "But you must see her, my dear old wife, when you get back to England. You must tell her from me that I love her still. You must impress upon her that I am full of repentance for the evil that I have done. You must assure her from me that at the hour of death, which cannot be much longer now, my last prayer, my last thought on earth will be for her—for her—my wife!—my wife!—my only, only wife! And now, goodbye! and may God bless you, and take you safely home!"

He was much affected, but he tottered to the garden gate, still clinging affectionately to my hand.

"Remember, dear friend, this hand-clasp will be for her. Farewell! farewell!"

The sun was setting as I went down the hill, and it seemed to pour a golden benediction on the silver hairs of the old man as he stood waving a last goodbye from the shadow of the trees.

But when I turned round for the last time his venerable head was bowed upon his clasped hands. He was weeping and praying for the woman he had injured—the woman whose face he would never see again on earth. And thus my promise is fulfilled.—
Clement Scott, in the Strand Magazine

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