

DEMOREST'S FAMILY MAGAZINE.

No. 395.

MAY, 1896.

Vol. 32, No. 7.

LIFE IN A JAPANESE BUNGALOW.



ALTHOUGH I have met with many relatives of the English tongue, both near and distant, in my jaunt-about life, never have I striven with such involute English as that so-called antipodal muddle the variegated perplexities of which seem to have been embalmed in the preservatory title of "Pidjin Say-so." This apparently senseless designation has of late been chased to cover, and its complications proved to be nothing less puzzling than the employment of such a combination of consonants and vowels as would unite to resemble vaguely the English word striven for, but which, at the same time, would be easier to articulate, and still retain sufficient similarity to some sound or sounds in the native tongue to render it fairly easy to recall.

Thus it is that "Pidjin" is found to have been substituted for "business"; the first syllable of the word not only being easier to pronounce, but its last, "jin," being unusually easy to remember, it being a Japanese verb of con-

siderable importance, and, in a country where thrives the festive "jinrickisha," almost an indispensability, meaning, as it does, "to pull." "Say-so," the abridged slide down which is toboganned and conveniently shelved the word "English," is not only sufficiently chip-chatter to recommend itself to a tongue versed principally in chip-chatterisms, but nearly enough resembles a host of Japanese words to do away almost entirely with that antipodal bugbear, that hotly detested and seldom-donned head-gear known as the "thinking cap."

Such syllabic analogy is well-nigh exhaustless, and almost always amusing. Sometimes, indeed, without resort to "Pidjin Say-so," we find that the natural likeness of a Nipponese word to one in our language fits its object with such mirth-provoking appropriateness as to suggest pre-determination. Nothing, however, less fraternal than daily converse could acquaint one with all the bypaths of this distinctly vernal jargon, and nothing less intimate and exacting than months and months of housekeeping in Japan, with a bungalow full of Japanese servants, could school one to meet, this laughter-summoning flummery



CHILDREN OF THE FAITHFUL KOBE.



THE PROVINCE OF THE BEDROOM BOY.

without those vexatious twistings of the mouth's corners that show the amusement within straight through the best buttoned-up vestment of exterior command.

But the outlandish, acrobatic-savoring wryness into which the English language is contorted forms but one of the many enjoyable features of housekeeping in Japan. Sick unto death of hotels and all things pertaining thereto, we were utterly incapable of resistance when a bungalow, charmingly situated on that perennially green, upward-swelling shoulder of Yokohama known as "The Bluff," winked to us of a glorious exemption from all *menu* control, as well as of a widespread commodiousness that, treading the heels of our two years' existence in boxes, hand-boxes, and hampers, possessed for us an extraordinary charm; and the broad, low, twelve-room affair is making life indolently sweet for us. We are surrounded all about by the most enchanting little views, here caught through a gracious parting of lovingly interlocked palms, and there through a green-pillared vista of plummy bamboos, or over the camellia hedge and off to the hazy horizon that melts into Yokohama Bay. Through these



JAPANESE GIRLS.

same redolent, verdure-lined peep-holes we also catch our first glimpses of all the incoming American mailsteamers, which set our hearts a-throbbing with a hope that the stately rider of the misnamed Pacific is bringing us news from home which will be promptly delivered by the funny little Upper-Bluff letter-carrier.

But to our *ménage*. While there is no doubt that the large number of servants required to keep the running-gear of Japanese housekeeping in a smooth, well-oiled condition in a great measure accounts for the unruffled gloss of the domestic enginery, this can by no means be said to be altogether responsible for such unwonted serenity amongst the pots and pans; indeed, such a conclusion would be decidedly unjust to the little engineer who, with faithful bronze-brown hand on the throttle-valve, keeps the *ménage* urging smoothly onward, and who

hourly surprises one with fresh evidences of his cleverness in shouldering all responsibility without once having budged from his character of unpretending menial. This telephonic communication strung from mistress to "boys,"—the women of Japan go into service only as children's nurses, and the men remain "boys" until toothless incapacity overtakes them,—this accommodating, a d-

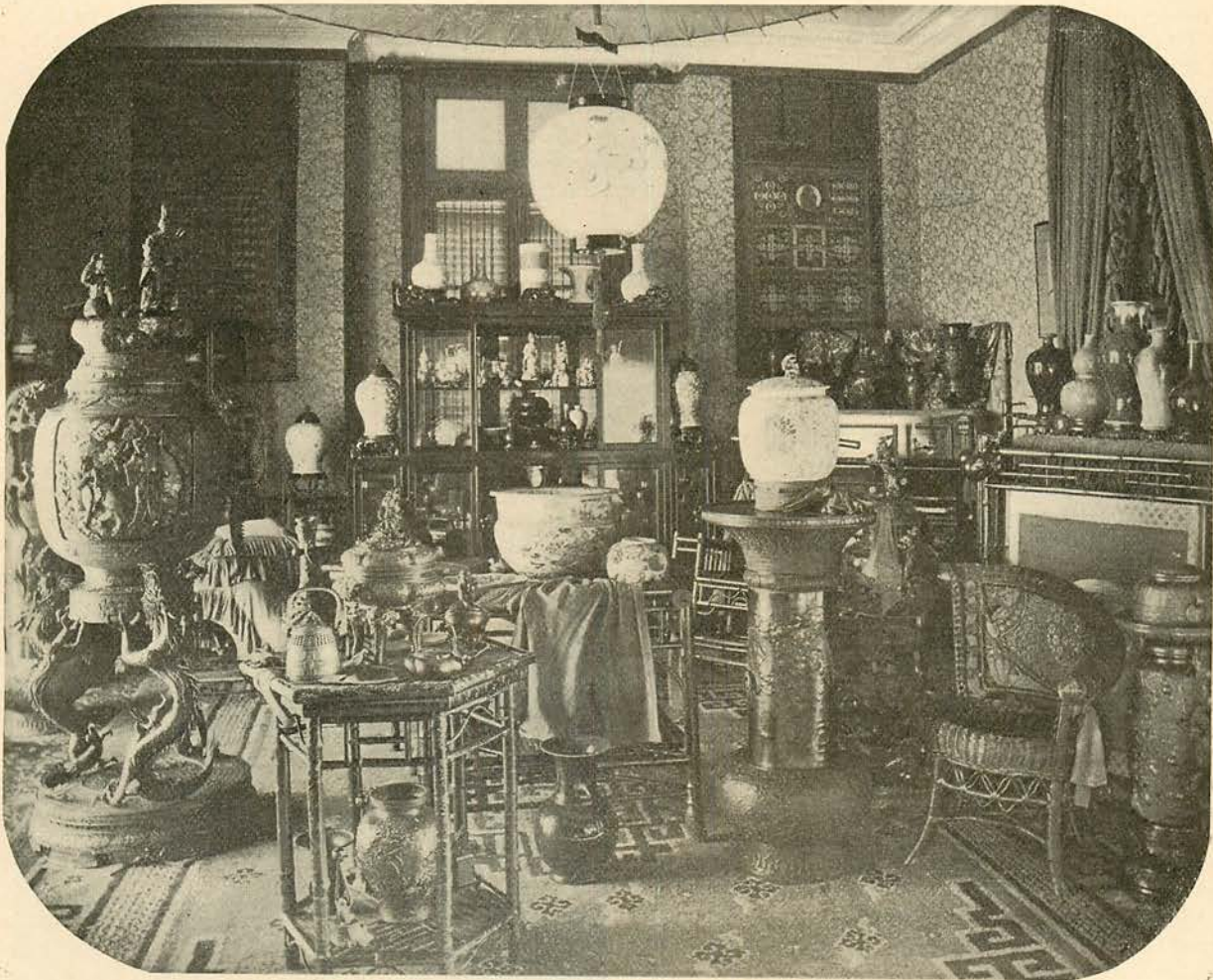


IN THE SERVANTS' QUARTERS.

justable pendulum that briskly wags between, and alternately strews the path of his mistress with roses and flecks the cobwebs from the heels of the under-boys, this foremost paragon of all lesser paragons in bungalow employment, is briefly but exaltedly known as the "head-boy."

"I do not care whether my servants like to perform their tasks or not so long as they perform them," is a common phrase with Mesdames John Bull. But we Americans care so much that we will often nearly double the stipend for the accomplishment of the same amount of work if it be performed to the accompaniment of cheerful faces and with hands that, while busy, are still willing. Hence it is that all good American housekeepers in Japan who delight to have their tasks undertaken and executed, not only well, but cheerfully, quickly, and pleasantly besides, glance homeward with real repugnance.

maculativeness as a saving grace, in a country where were inaugurated and rigorously observed the great Festivals of Purification, at the time of which celebrations the channels, the streams, the lakes, the ponds, and the entire archipelago, indeed, were allegorically cleansed. In point of fact, my little staff of path-smoothers, while they would not so much as dream of even a postponement of the most disagreeable or irksome of tasks, have never yet failed to absent themselves at some convenient hour in every twenty-four, politely hoping, as they withdraw to a nearby bath-house,—great, immaculately clean, sweet smelling plunges, where a dip and a rubbing are to be had for two and a half *sens*,—that they will not be needed during this hour of steaming and cleansing. And the *écru* slavey is as careful, too, as cleanly. In all our long experience nothing has ever been broken; indeed, I cannot so much



A CURIO-CROWDED ROOM IN THE BUNGALOW.

Within the widespread judicature of the lofty head paragon are the prerogatives of both engaging and discharging his underlings, which happy arrangement for the pampered and utterly spoiled mistresses of these exotic households, as can readily be seen, removes, as if by necromancy, any objections the same aforementioned underlings might otherwise harbor to obeying the mandates of a fellow-servant. The little bronze captain is not, however, inclined to tyrannize or in any way to lord it over his subjects.

The myriads of under-boys who dot the housekeeping planetule are careful, obedient, and cleanly; the latter goes without saying in a land where the Shintoist is taught im-

as recall a crack, and this, too, in rooms as uncomfortably crowded as Japanese curios can coax them to be.

When asked during the initial moments of our contact, the very day, indeed, of his queer arrival with his family, pack-saddle fashion, his name, our head-boy swept me a prostrated courtesy, making a cheery little *frou-frou* of silk and brocade, unfurled his gaudy fan, and, waving it languidly chestward, replied, "Boski San." Whereupon I found myself unconsciously tapping my slipper-toe and humming,

"The flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la,
Have nothing to do with the case."

"Boski San," however, our droll little bundle of

pomposity was to us, from that moment on, through two, to him, idealistic weeks; and "Boski San" he would have been to-day, but for the giggling intervention of a kindly disposed neighbor, who, punctuating her information with fragmentary rivulets of laughter, told us that the Japanese word "San" meant "Mr.," and was always, in this *bizarre* vernacular, affixed, instead of being prefixed, to one's name. So it was, then, that, to the secret delight of the entire *maisonnée* Nipponese, and to Boski San's own proud ecstasy, we had been addressing our quaint little model of correctness and dispatch as "Mr. Boski"! Remembering, however, the over-sensitiveness of these "little brown people," we determined to make no comment upon our newly acquired intelligence, but to act upon it as if by accident. Coming suddenly into the breakfast-room, a pigwidgeon-like domicile, out beyond the house proper, among the flowers and palms, the morning following upon the day of our discovery, we espied "Mr. Boski" posed with his usual sphinx-like statuesqueness, patiently awaiting us. His slender figure, in its voluminous folds of russet and blue, standing out on a rich background of palms and cacti in a clear-cut bas-relief, dipped to the creamy rushmats in acknowledgment of our morning greeting; after which, one of us, looking him unflinchingly in the eye, said, "Have the morning papers come,—Boski?"

We had counted upon meeting with considerable embarrassment, and had been at more or less trouble to arrange an immediate diverting of attention from it: we had even prepared ourselves for a transitory flecking of the heretofore spotlessly good-tempered composure that had shed its grateful streak through every department under the mastery of our "head-boy"; but for what really occurred, as is so often the case in instances of prearranged, cut-and-dried speech, we were altogether unprepared. What did our still politely posing little statuette do but place the back of his "velvet paw" over his ripe-cherry lips and give way to a ringing burst of ungovernable laughter, from which he disentangled himself with the greatest difficulty, and only then that he might remark with, we were pleased to consider, pardonable familiarity, "Allie same, two whole week have been just likie gent'man." With this, what seemed to us poverty-poor consolation, he served us a nice little breakfast in his very best style, and without exhibiting so much as the shadow of disappointment's shade at the sudden curtailing of his career grandiose; quite to the contrary, indeed, for he showed oft-repeated evidences of a high glee, once being detected, though he thought he was completely screened, having his laugh out behind a giant palm.

With a sufficient and well-chosen number of servants, a *ménage* Nipponese, so far as the lady of the bungalow is concerned,—the term mistress fitting her so ill as to border on the facetious,—propels itself on a pneumatic tire. All those nerve-nettling angles, against which the most careful of housekeepers at home are continually bumping their heads, are planed to the surface. All that "Oh-what-shall-we-have?" fret, in which we at home are such miserable sisters in experience, is as equally unknown as



BOSKI'S QUEER ARRIVAL.

is our every breakfast, "tiffin," or dinner dish, which goes on keeping up the secret of its identity until its scrupulously polished cap is doffed.

It is another happy departure within the head-boy's province that he does all the marketing and all the "shopping around" for the different household necessities; and the clash of his wooden clog is heard on the gravel walk outside our windows, setting forth on its varied mission long before each rarely beautiful tropical day has even glinted its partial promise to break in its accustomed flood of red-gold glory. One knows that for these antelucan journeyings, while sealing around the misnamed mistress with redoubled security her rose-colored envelope of inert ease, and insuring every palatable delicacy in market, one is not put to a penny extra expense; nor is this wrinkle-dispelling service any additional outlay. One also knows

that they are of serious moneyed value to the Machiavelian head-boy; this latter from the existence of the mute threat—sufficiently time-honored to need no vocal delivery—that unless his little paper establishment in the rear of one's



A VISTA IN THE GARDEN.



THE AUTHOR IN HER JINRICKISHA.

bungalow yard, where usually disport a little butterfly wife and several shaven-pated babies, be substantially "remembered" by the patronized trafficker in succulent supplies, the "honorable account" will be carried elsewhere.

Everything is paid for at the moment of its purchase, out of the path-smoother's own sleeve,—the convenient catchall-Nipponese,—and for the jotting down of all such early morning expenditures a neat little ledger is kept. I have often wondered that the shades of Webster and Johnson have not come sailing through its columns with fiery pitchforks. The last laboriously precise page submitted to me for payment ran as follows:

"Payed Watshurman (watchman) 4 yen.
 "Payed for too duzen Mericum stumps (stamps for American letters) 2 yen 40 sen.
 "Payed for 1 duz. boxts machs (1 dozen boxes of matches) 6 sens.
 "Payed for tin beens (tin can of beans) 48 sens.
 "Payed for tin clean butter (tin of cream butter) 1 yen.
 "Payed for tin mashruns (tin cans of mushrooms) 2 yens.
 "Payed for tin aspurrugus (tin can of asparagus) 35 sens.
 "Payed for 6 piecie peasunts (pheasants) 1 yen.
 "Payed for 1 botl vanellr (1 bottle of vanilla) 22 sens.
 "Payed for 6 tin sarydeens (6 tins of sardines) 1 yen.
 "Payed for six piecie snips (six snipe) 1 yen.
 "Payed for 6 piecie lamp shiveneyns (6 lamp chimneys) 60 sens.
 "Payed for boxt show blaet (1 box of shoe blacking) 22 sens.
 "Payed for 1 piecie tennish net (1 tennis net) 4 yen 50 sen.
 "Payed for 1 piecie jamie pot (1 jar of jam) 1 yen.
 "Payed for 1 tell a grand (one telegram) 60 sens.

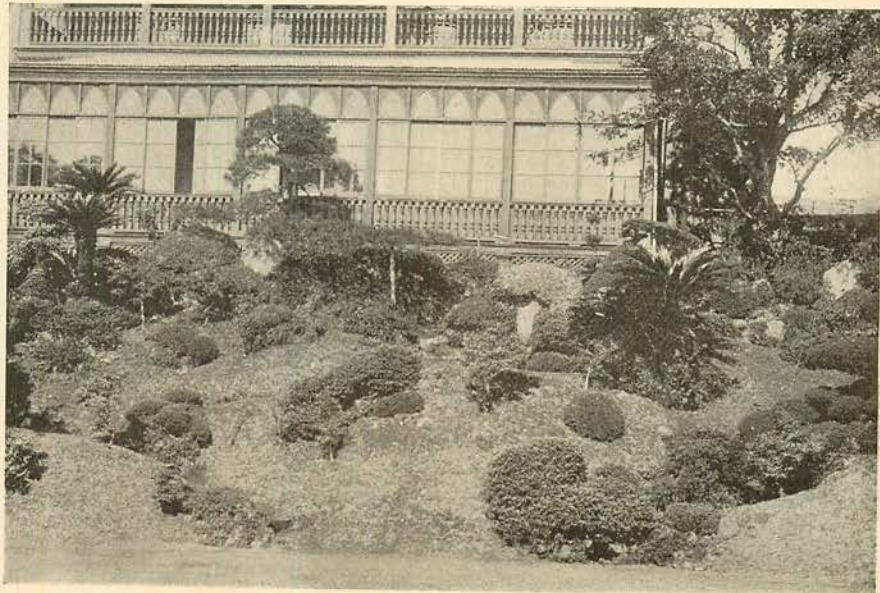
"Thu bove is doo to Boski, longings (lodgings) in the rear."

The poor fellow, with his overweening predilection for conventionalism, and every other ism *à la mode*, considers it always necessary to affix his address, hence the "longings in the rear."

We were told by our neighbors that anything more than the most casual announcement—made, of course, as early in the day as possible—to the effect that there would be five, ten, or fifteen persons dining with us that evening, would not only be unnecessary, but that interferences, suggestions, or even a visible anxiety on our part, would more likely tend to con-

fuse than to facilitate matters. While this fairy-tale way of shifting responsibility had, undeniably, an ensnaring ring to it, it seemed rather too loudly to smack of this same fairyism to be comfortably trustworthy. So before our first trial of the system, as may well be imagined, we underwent no end of misgivings, and one of us—which I protest was not the writer—inelegantly vowed that he had "goose-flesh" all up and down his spine until well into the third course. All this, however, proved to be unnecessary torture, for everything, from the service of the plump little Hakodati oyster to the *café noir*, was both delicately planned and dexterously executed, and not one of the many mysteries that emerged from behind the tall screen could have palled upon the most McAllisterian palate.

I had not dared, under the neighbor's suggested penalty of my being "much more likely to confuse than to facilitate," so much as to glance dining-roomward during the elaborately mysterious prelude to an effort of such grave consequence to Boski's reputation as a caterer, and to my own future peace of mind. Holding this in remembrance, it will be easy for all entertainers to believe that upon the cheery rustling of the parted bamboo portière and Boski's ceremonious announcement of "Dinnie," followed, of course, by the usual pairing off, short parade, and *entrée*, I was not a little surprised to find that in the decorations of both the table and the room a regular scheme of color had been carried out rigidly but with delightfully animating effect. The quaint dinner-service being in only two colors, cream white and cobalt blue, no other tints appeared in the decorations of either the room or the table. Both the blue and the cream, however, were lavishly and precisely duplicated in one glorious profusion of those great, tousel-headed chrysanthemums known here as the "old sleepy head," each of which decapitated beauties measured fully eight inches in circumference. An oblong upheaval of the blue and cream home rarities, flanked by tall blue and cream candelabra, graced the table's centre; at the ladies' plates the



IN THE BUNGALOW GARDEN.

cream - white blooms, with their long, fringy stems, were caught and fashioned into unfurled fans with broad ribbons of cobalt blue that waved to the floor in the faintly stirred, lotus-laden breeze; the tangle-haired monsters alternated in color about the table at the gentlemen's plates as parodied *boutonnieres*; and here and there were deftly fashioned plaques of the blue flower, with cream-white tapers, burning relig-



"THE FUNNY LITTLE UPPER-BLUFF LETTER-CARRIER."

iously low, springing from their centres. The dinner-cards and menus were all of cream-white, with a careless scattering of the blue flower sketched and painted upon them with the unstudied, graceful lightness that characterizes Japanese floral art. Bundles of the ponderous flower, in both colors, with stems fully a yard long, were suspended or cast about the room, tied together with the cobalt ribbons, like great sheaves of wheat. Behind the several screens burned the prayer-sticks, the aroma of which always sends the fancy off on a pilgrimage to the beautiful gold-wrought interiors of the Japanese temples. The effect was cool, and, as the night was warm, very grateful, not to say charming, and was, moreover, the work of our own little bandy-legged gardener, under, of course, Boski's supreme supervision.

It seems almost needless to say that since this event I have completely resigned the housekeeping reins, lash, and spur to my little bronze-brown path-smoother. But he must share his laurels, for my lilliputian cook has studied his art under the vigilant tutorage of the excellent *chef de cuisine* who saw from his distant Paris the malleability of such a people, and had the wit to come out and undertake the molding of all who wished to cater to the palates of the thousands of foreigners established here.

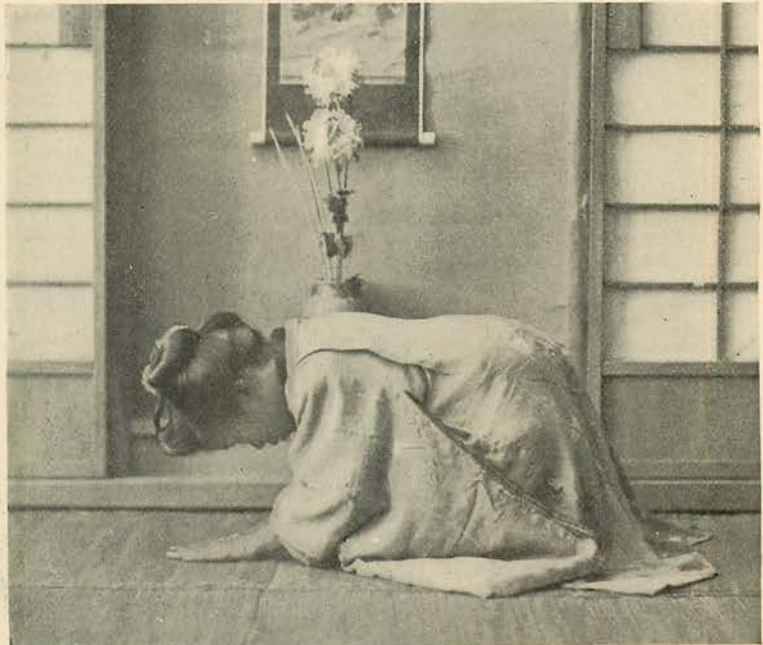
Then there is Massa, the little bedroom boy, whose tiny straw sandals I find every morning at my door, and who disappears at my approach, leaving every polished nook and matted corner as neat as proverbially neat wax. Poor little Massa, who had never until I darkened his horizon had a mistress, his eleven years of service having been spent in dancing attendance to bachelors in a bach-

elors' bungalow, was put to his wits' ends to know how to address me. Commanding, himself, by no means an epitomized compendium of "Pidjin Say-so,"—of which the easily happy Jap is as proud as is a Cingalese merchant of his bundled-up wares, "No speakie Engerish, no can makie pidjin" having unconsciously converted itself into a proverb,—he was much hampered thereby, but was pompously disinclined to beg assistance from the majestic Boski. In consequence, we extracted considerable amusement from his efforts to gain my attention.

There were busy moments when the breathless intervals of waiting to catch my eye must have sorely fretted the habitual calm of my industrious little slavie, as Cousin John would call him; there were elaborate salaams that demanded the query, "Well, what is it?" The very first day of our co-operation in Bungalowville I was sure he dropped his broom purposely to make me look up, for he immediately shot forth his dimpled *écru* chin and inquired if I liked "Vely hot, vely cold, or meejum baff."

Innumerable lunges were then made at my title, only, however, to be at once discarded as unsatisfactory to my little servant's exacting tympanum; hence I found myself "Misherish Yadie" (Mrs. Lady), one day, and "Man-num Yadie" (Madam Lady), the next. But there came an hour of reckoning, and in it this diminutive storekeeper of "Engerish" words was obliged to show up his wares, and that very quickly, too. It was toward the close of a long, hot afternoon, that Massa entered the balcony from behind my low, cool hammock, in which I had swung the day away among the palms, the cacti, and the fountains. Pity, keen excitement, and haste had untied his little pink bundle of a tongue, and out rolled all his poor little stock of bachelor English.

"Oh! oh! oh!" he spurted, clasping his pretty, slender,



THE LITTLE WIFE OF THE LITTLE COOK.

corn-colored hands, "My Dear Sir Missie, what can do? Horsie have step on betto-man's (groom's) footie!"

The sight of the bleeding "footie" coming to me across the lawn of course brushed away from my face any suggestions of amusement that it must have worn at previous attempts at my name, hence he believed his new venture a complete success; and "Dear Sir Missie" I have been

ever since. The neighbors wonder that I do not correct him; but heartaches are so much longer than our projected stay in Japan that I shall not do so.

One happy custom in vogue is that of putting everything pertaining to linen-lavations out of the house. So all-reaching is this release from the worry and fret that "wash-day" creates in a small domicile, that even the very best bungalows are not supplied with either laundries or tubs. But why, indeed, should such unsavory confusion fifty-two times a year punctuate the incoming weeks in a land where one's household and personal linen is returned, at whatever hour one wills it, spotlessly pure and faultlessly polished at \$1.50 per hundred pieces?

All labor, however, is so cheap in Japan, that we have long ago ceased to marvel at the man who keeps house comfortably and, as goes without saying, immaculately,—turning out the while, too, for our astounded inspection, several well-fed, well-dressed, round, and rosy youngsters,—on \$10.00 a month. One of our own jinrickisha boys, the faithful Kobe, who is the father of nine children,—nine clean, well-attired children, all alive, and all too young to do aught but gambol about their bungalow doors in the summer and trot off schoolward on their stately little wooden clogs in the winter,—receives but \$12.00 a month. The night-watchman, the little old man who clatters a pair of hardwood sticks outside our window at short intervals throughout the night, that we may know he is there, alert and watchful, supports a cheery little wife and himself on \$6.00 a month. And so it goes on; the very best of cooks receiving but \$15.00 a month, and the pompous Boski only \$20.00 a month. Out of these meagre wages are not only clothed and fed the servants themselves and their large or small immediate families, but any disabled or aged relative in need of shelter. But withal, a Japanese servant always impresses one as being one's deeply grateful debtor, as being vastly proud of the privilege to have and to hold such positions as are above described as long as his health endures and the "Dear Sir Missie's" pleasure will permit.

Indeed, if the little path-smoother is ever at fault it will nearly always be found to be from his over-anxiety to please. I shall never forget my earliest experience of this strange solicitude. It was at the end of our very first week of housekeeping, and was the curtain-raiser to all the comical situations that ultimately have resulted from this same kindly but immoderate desire, and grew out of a small sentence of praise for a really delicious *consommé* that our little cook had sent in to us. I, thinking

to encourage the kindly little digits that had been making such conscientious efforts to knead their way to our likes and tunnel an escape from our dislikes, told Boski, later on, that he might say to the diminutive cook that the dinner was excellent, and the jelly-broth quite the best he had ever given us; so delicious, indeed, that our guest had begged leave to waive all ceremony and compliment it. This was a speech, I am pleased to think, in itself, sufficiently innocent; but I am willing to wager no shrew was ever more relentlessly chastised for her tartest comment, or had it more directly leveled back at her, or, to speak literally, more forcibly thrust down her throat, than had I, my intended encouragement, for never since has the same friend "tiffined" or dined with us without first having to see himself reflected in the clear depths of this one particular *consommé*. If he is even seen passing in his jinrickisha, the anxious little cook gathers together all his *consommé* condiments and stands, pot in hand, until he is out of sight, when he puts back his utensils with regretful sighs. But if, perchance, he stops for a moment, without, however, the remotest intention of breaking bread with us, the pot is on the range and simmering before his summons at the bungalow bell has been answered.

Relating this incident not long ago to another friend, he replied that he, also, had suffered from this same Japanese determination to please. This he explained by saying that one day the cook had sent him up a most palatable apple-tart, and that after eating it he had sent word to the kitchen to say how very nice it was, and how much he had enjoyed it; when lo! there followed one great uninterrupted inflow of apple-tarts. Not a pudding, not an ice, not, indeed, any one of the hundred toothsome sweets the little *chef à la Japonaise* knew so well how to turn out, appeared. Nothing else broke the saccharine horizon save this monotonous, undiversified influx of apple-tarts. After the first three days the object of the little caterer's effort to please could, of course, only endure a nibble at the outmost edge of the innocently offensive *pâté*; later, he could not tolerate even playing with them thus; and still later he could not abide so much as to glance apple-tartward. But as the cataclysm showed none of the hoped-for signs of a change, much less of subsiding naturally, our friend, driven by sheer desperation, again sent his servant to the kitchen. This time, however, it was to say that apple-tarts were found to be very bad for his eyes,—which was true in one sense, if not in the one implied.

MAE ST. JOHN-BRAMHALL.

ARBUTUS.

I PUSH with eager hands the snow
And thatch of faded leaves aside,
And lo! my gladdened eyes behold
Beauty itself there glorified.

Beauty itself in perfumed robes
Of white and royal rose I see,
Deep in a cloister of the woods,
Beneath a gaunt and black-limbed tree.

"Fair flower," so I softly croon,
"For palaces of ivory meet,—
So delicate thy raiment is,—
Why in this cheerless, dim retreat

"I know thy subtle secret now,
And this it is, thou dainty elf:
Thou art the white and rosy witch,
Weaving for others spells thyself."

M. PHELPS DAWSON.

"Art thou in hiding? Furry things,
Shy squirrels and rabbits skirting go
With quick and startled feet across
Thy lowly roof of leaves and snow.

"Art thou by witch-arts bound to wait
Till some strange prince with potent spell
Thy weird enchantment breaks, and thou
Com'st a fair princess from thy cell?

"As over thee I bend to catch
Thy sweet revealings, perfumes rare
As fairies from sweet woods distill
My senses artfully ensnare.