



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF NIKKO TOWN.

## HOW THE JAPANESE LIVE.

BY DOUGLAS SLADEN.\*



IT is not easy to describe how the Japanese live, except the very poorest of them, for it is etiquette among the refined Japanese to keep their home life absolutely private. As

Mr. Lafcadio Hearn, in his exquisite "Out of the East," has just pointed out, the Japanese gentleman in inviting you to his home does not for an instant intend to show you anything of his home life. In England or America you invite a stranger to your home to prove that you think well enough of him to introduce him to your family. The Japanese does nothing of the kind. He asks you to his home in the same way as you would ask a man, *whom you did not mean to introduce to your family*, to dine at your club.

In Japan, when your *riksha* pulls up in front of the gate of your host's compound, you are ushered in with a good deal of ceremony and mystery, and if the household be managed in a purely native fashion you find your host alone. By-and-bye, at some point of the dinner, his wife, a graceful, gracious, gentle apparition, may appear for

one moment to pay you the compliment of waiting on you with a single dish, and she will just show herself as you are saying good-bye. Your host, as Mr. Hearn points out, may probably have aged parents in the house, and though you are not likely to see them on that occasion, still, if you become intimate in the household, you will get to know them before you get to know the wife, and the children will make friends last of all.

The exceptions are the grown-up daughters, if there be any, who, even at your first introduction to the household, may come in for some time to show you their handiwork or accomplishments; and you may compliment them, with reserve, on their accomplishments, but not on their dress or appearance without a breach of good manners.

Of the way in which the upper class Japanese live I shall have a word to say later. To me the life of the coolie and small shopkeeper class was always more interesting, as the struggle for existence compels them to be more human. The upper classes—the women at any rate—prostrate themselves before the car of the Juggernaut—Duty. To them the love of

\* Copyright, 1895, by Douglas Sladen.



the husband for the wife, of the parents for the children, is self-indulgence; to them the fifth commandment is the greatest of all the commandments, and the fifth commandment is interpreted so arbitrarily that a married woman's devotion must be consecrated, not to her own parents, but her husband's.



A "RIKSHA" AT THE GATE OF A COMPOUND.\*

This exaggerated idea of duty has its honourable compensations, for though one marriage out of three in Japan ends in a divorce, the lower class is, to an overwhelming degree, responsible for this state of statistics. In the upper, a man only divorces his wife after relatives and family councils have done their best to avert the catastrophe. It is considered a disgrace to all parties concerned. It is unusual for a divorced woman to be able to marry again; and it is a distinct breach of etiquette for a widow to marry again.

In the lower classes it is different; a man marries lightly and divorces lightly, and women not infrequently divorce their husbands—a thing unheard of among gentlefolk. This is partly because Japanese ladies—except where Western ideas have corrupted—bring no dowry to their husbands, and have, when they are divorced, neither their children nor any alimony, however innocent they may be. The woman of the people, being accustomed to live by her own labour, has only the loss of her children to consider. In Japan the father always has the custody of the children, because heredity is only

\* This illustration represents a private *riksha*, with the owner's crest on its side, drawn by two runners, waiting outside the gates of a wealthy Japanese. One of them has been buying *chow* (food) from the portable chow stall, which is after the manner of the coffee stall in a cabman's shelter, except that it is carried about on its owner's back.

supposed to be transmitted through males. Concerning the inequality of the two sexes, Mr. Daigoro Goh, late Chancellor of the Japanese Legation in London, has a terse *résumé* in his admirable article on "The Family Relation in Japan," in the last *Transactions of the Japan Society*:—

Unfortunately the inequality of the Japanese husband and wife in their rights and liberties is rather excessive. Every restriction is imposed on her. She has to wait upon him at meals in the absence of the servants. She has to salute him first on every occasion, and he merely returns her salutation. She walks, sits, eats, sleeps, all after him, and rises before him in the morning. She has to sit up and wait to any hour, in principle, but up to a reasonable time in practice, when he is out. She addresses him as *Danna sama*, or "My lord," whereas he calls her by name. If any friend of the husband calls while he is conversing with the visitor in the drawing-room, the wife in the next room has to attend to, or superintend a servant in serving, the guest with *futon*, or cushion, *tabako-bon*, or smoking-tray, *hibachi*, or fire-box, tea and cake, but she seldom joins in the conversation unless the visitor be a lady. Housekeeping is her sole duty and responsibility—governing and directing the whole of the household affairs; but this is done rather for the benefit of the husband than for herself. In arranging rooms, preparing meals, employing servants, shopping, all his ideas, his tastes, his will, his requirements, are thought of first by the wife.

Generally Japanese wives are good tailors and dress-makers—I do not mean by profession, but as housewives. The wife makes, or prepares, *kimono*, not only for herself and her children, but also for her husband. He may not know anything about his own clothes, but she must know all about them. If any untidiness or want of cleanliness is found in her husband's attire, it is her fault not his.

A good many glimpses of the life of the poor Japanese will be gleaned from the



THE LAKE OF CHIUSENJI.

pictures with which this article is illustrated, which I am about to describe in some detail. Deeply implanted in the Japanese nature is the love of an exquisite view, or exquisite flowers, and it is the bed or grove of blossom



which they admire more than a single flower however magnificent. To see at their best a famous bed of the purple iris in a suburb of Tokyo, or the acres of wild azalea in a certain gorge; to see a view like the Lake of Chiussenji, with the big black *torii* (Japanese arch) in the foreground and the sacred mountain Nantaizan in the background, even the humblest will make expeditions of many miles, that take them days on foot, carrying their simple luggage in little cardboard boxes, the size of a stay box or a macaroni box, wrapped in oiled paper. All Japanese, down to the very lowest, have a passion for beauty and an eye for art, as the simplest articles of domestic use in households, which have escaped European innovations, show.

Even the richest Japanese live in houses which are neither large nor expensive according to our ideas. The poor live in houses that cover only a few square yards, made of the very simplest materials. The frames, consisting only of a few posts and rafters, are of light fir beams, which support a roof of thick, deep-channelled, purplish tiles. The re-

bad weather, and panels of wooden frames covered with stouter or thinner paper, according as they are to be used for windows or dividing walls. These, both the wooden shutters and the paper panels, slide between



MAKING SILK THREAD.

grooves in the floor and the roof beams, and with the panels the house can be divided up into any number of rooms the occupant chooses.

In the native inn at Nara—described in "A Japanese Marriage"—for instance, the entire inn formed one large sitting-room during the day and as many bedrooms as guests required at night. The kitchen and living rooms of the hostess and her servants were in another building. You even had to wash and bath in the veranda formed by the space between the paper shutters and the wooden ones; wash in a sort of brass shaving basin, and bath in a round wooden tub, heated by some mysterious apparatus with a mere handful of charcoal.



AT THE SHOE SHOP.

mainder of the house, if there be no upper story, consists of a floor of outside wooden shutters (*amaido*) of unpainted fir-wood, which are only put up at night or in very

being tea houses for the entertainment of pilgrims to Nikko, especially the pilgrims of the picturesque, who are here apt to be more well-to-do than religious pilgrims. There,



as in most country places, the roofs are, many of them, of a fine close thatch, and a few of wooden shingles. The floor is raised about a foot from the ground, and no Japanese ever steps upon it without taking off his shoes. To use his own picturesque expression, he does not make a street of his home. The shoes are left at the door; no one molests them. At a theatre or other large public assembly-place he will receive a wooden tablet (what the Americans call a check) from a man left in charge of them, to save confusion rather than robbery.

The view of the Japanese shoe shop on the previous page gives an idea of a Japanese floor which is covered with mats of fine yellow straw, always 6 feet by 3 feet. (The Japanese in giving the measurements of a room describe it, not as being so many feet long by so many feet wide, but as consisting of so many mats.) Underneath the floor may be seen the shoes of the people who are in the house. The principal varieties of Japanese shoes are the high kiri-wood clogs, shown in the foreground, used for wet or dirty streets, and fine straw sandals, both of them held on by one loop round the big toe and another loop round the other four toes, as shown in the picture.

Besides these there are the coarse rope-soled sandals, costing a penny or three half-pence a pair—used by riksha boys on rough roads and by other Japanese for country walking—and *tabi*. Of *tabi*—divided socks—there are two kinds, one made of very coarse,

boy has the inevitable *hibachi* or charcoal fire-box in front of him. His shop is neither of the better nor the poorer kind—just average.

A good idea of how the paper shutters



THE GOOD HOUSEWIFE.

(*shoji*) look from the inside may be formed from the other illustration on the same page, in which a woman sits reeling silk thread. The floor also gives a good idea of the texture of the coarser matting used by the poor. The little box in the foreground with a square handle is a *tabako-bon* or pipe stove. Silk being one of the principal articles of export in Japan, the making of silk thread occupies a number of thrifty housewives. Her dress shows her to be very poor.

After this we see a woman in much better circumstances surrounded by her household utensils. She is engaged in cutting up the *daikon*, or gigantic radish, which enters so largely into Japanese diet. It tastes like a coarse, pungent turnip, and will grow about a yard long and as thick as a man's arm. The woman has on her head one of the pale blue head-towels (with a design on it in darker blue), twisted into a kind of sun-bonnet, which the Japanese women wear when they are working



IN THE KITCHEN.

in the fields, picking tea, transplanting rice and so on. I have chosen this picture partly because it shows in its background one of the opaque paper panels (*shoji*) used for dividing a house up into rooms.

strong, dark-blue cotton studded on the soles, used for out-of-doors, the other fine and white for indoor wear. The big boy in the background is kneeling—as the Japanese kneel in lieu of our sitting—and the small



Next we have the good housewife waiting to bargain with the vegetable hawker as soon as he has served the *mousmee* (girl) who is buying apples from him. I have chosen this picture partly because the woman (the *mousmee*), the children and the hawker are all typically dressed, partly because it shows his piled-up baskets, slung at each end of a bamboo rod, ingeniously balanced on a short pole, while he is selling his wares, and partly because the house—quite a poor one—in which the woman lives is not built with movable *amado*, but, like a good many even of the poorer houses in towns, of weather-boards, in imitation of foreigners' cottages, or the *yashiki* of the old Daimio.

The illustration below shows the bad housewife playing *go-bang* with two well-dressed women, whose *kimonos* are made of a fine gray woollen material. Behind them is a *kakemono*, or hanging picture, and in front a box of bean-flour cakes, a tray of tea, a basket of fruit and a *tabako-bon* (pipe-stove) of rather a different shape. The room is finely matted, the players are sitting on silk princess-cushions, and the left-hand one is wearing a very handsome *obé* (sash) of heavy brocade.

With economical housewives the pipe-mender is a popular institution, though pipes which are made with bamboo stems and brass bowls and mouthpieces (in defi-

a rackful of second-hand pipes which he sells at any price from a penny upwards, even to a European. The pipe-mender in the picture is very typically dressed for a poor Japanese. On his head is the white



THE PIPE MENDER.

solar *topee* beloved of riksha boys, who however almost invariably take them off and sling them on the shaft when they are running, however hot the day may be. He wears the outer and inner *kimonos*—the latter held in by a cotton *crêpe* sash at the waist—breeches, leggings of stout blue cotton wrapped round his legs after the manner of the Sardinians, who used to make London streets hideous with their bagpipes, thick *tabi*, and the rope sandals secured by tying round the insteps and ankles. He is engaged in filing a new pipe-stem to put into an old bowl and mouthpiece.

This dress is also shown very well in the picture of a brush and basket peddler on the next page. He has only the coarser kind of baskets. The Japanese excel in the manufacture of all kinds of them. This picture is also interesting as showing at the top the heavy-channelled roof-tiles so much used in Japan.

The appearance of a dwelling-room in a Japanese house cannot fairly be gauged by the houses of the very poor, who are compelled to crowd all their possessions into such a tiny space, and whose houses—so many of them—act as shops in a humble sort

of way. But the houses alike of the well-to-do trader and of the gentleman are furnished on the lines of this dainty little description of Mr. Hearn's:—

“There is no furniture (according to the



THE BAD HOUSEWIFE.

ance of the cancerous tendencies of brass) are extremely cheap. These pipes only hold a thimbleful of tobacco and can be smoked out in a few whiffs.

The pipe-mender carries about with him



European sense of the term) in a Japanese home—no beds, tables or chairs. There may be one small bookcase, or rather bookbox, and there are nearly always a pair of chests of drawers in some recess hidden by sliding paper screens, but such articles are quite unlike any Western furniture. As a rule you will see nothing in a Japanese room except a small brazier of bronze or porcelain, for smoking purposes, a kneeling-mat or cushion, according to season, and, in the alcove only, a picture or a flower vase. For thousands of years Japanese life has been on the floor. Soft as a hair mattress, and always immaculately clean, the floor is at once the couch, the dining-table, and most often the writing-table, although there exist tiny, pretty writing-tables about one foot high. And the vast economy of such habits of life renders it highly improbable they will ever be abandoned, especially while the pressure of population and the struggle for life continue to increase."

The furniture of a Japanese room, reduced to a minimum as it is, does not differ from our furnishing of a room (which seeks to

make it contain as much comfort, if not luxury, as possible) more than their idea of life differs from our idea of life. And to see how these differ one has only to take up a Japanese novel, which will not contain one word of the language of love addressed by one sex to the other, not one allusion to kissing, embracing, or pressure of the hand, not a word of devotion of husband and wife, and probably not a word of the devotion of lovers, unless it be intended to show that the young people, by being so irregular as to wish for a marriage of choice instead of a marriage of arrangement, evoke misfortune and early death.

But I do not agree with Mr. Hearn in ascribing this state of things altogether to the Japanese's overmastering sense of duty, especially duty towards his parents. I fear that it is partly due to the Japanese not yet having sentimentalised the relation between the sexes, and this sentimentalisation is, in my opinion, the second, if not the first, of the great distinctions which separate human beings from the other animals.



THE BASKET PEDDLER.