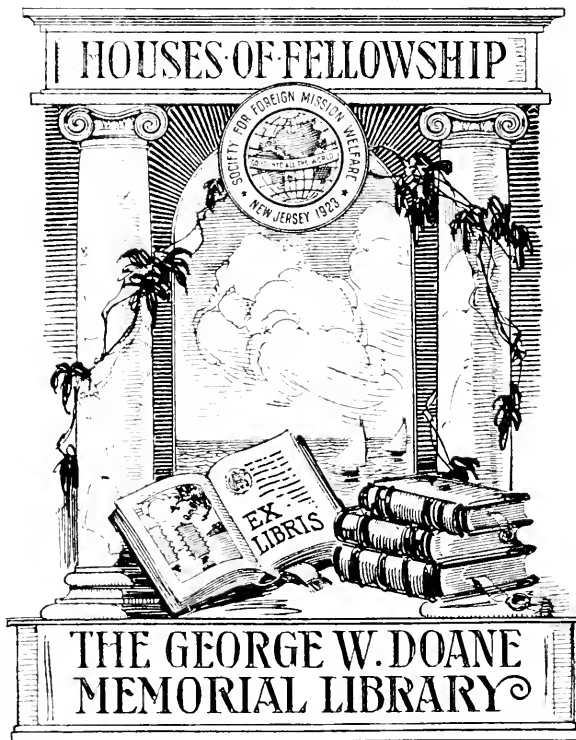




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O M U R A S A N



MIYAMOTO O MURA SAN

O MURA SAN

WITH A GLIMPSE OF
THE COUNTRY IN
WHICH SHE LIVED



By

ANNA MARGARET SCHNEDER

BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS
REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES
1306 ARCH ST., PHILA., PA.

1905



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PREFACE

The life whose story is briefly told in the following pages seems, to the writer, to have been too rare to be left to oblivion. This simple narrative of facts is written with the double hope that it may encourage others even in Christian lands to a greater zeal, and that it may be the means of awakening a deeper interest in Japan and the work of bringing that great nation into the Kingdom of God.

A. M. S.

SENDAI, JAPAN, August, 1905.

I

COUNTRY AND PARENTAGE



MATSUSHIMA BAY.

Country and Parentage

THE City of Sendai, which lies within a few miles of the coast on the east side of North Japan, is seldom visited by travellers. Those who do come are interested not so much in the city itself as in the quiet little Bay of Matsushima near by, which is called by the Japanese themselves one of the three most beautiful spots in all their beautiful country. Here the sea has carved out of the soft yellow rock hundreds of curious little islands, most of which are covered with pines. The name Matsu-shima means Pine-islands. At the end of one of the inlets may be found the town of Shiogama, the seaport of Sendai. This is the gate through which most of the travellers from the south used to enter the city. Now they go direct by railroad; but still the journey is a tedious one, twelve hours being required to cover the two hundred and thirty-three miles from Yokohama to Sendai.

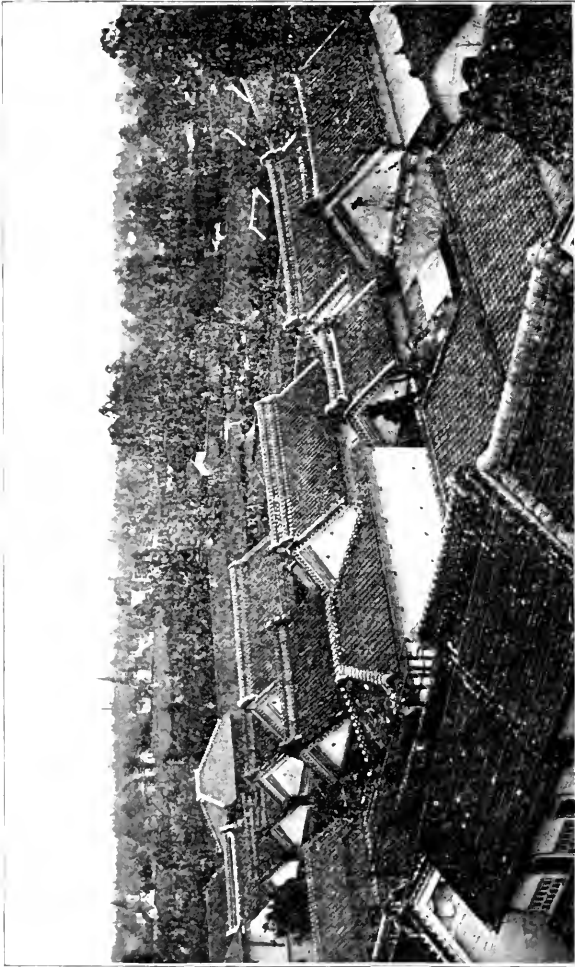
O MURA SAN.

The city itself is pretty, and well worth visiting. It is set just where the Hirose River runs out from between the mountains and hills, and begins its more sedate course over the great, fertile plain of Miyagi, down to the ocean, whose roaring may be heard plainly



SHIOGAMA.

from the streets when there is not too much other noise. Back of the river, which half encircles the city on the side toward the mountains, are high bluffs and hills, from which one may look over the city and the plain to the blue Pacific beyond. Seen from one of the bluffs, most of the low houses and



VIEW OF SENDAI—NIBANCHO CHURCH AND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN THE DISTANCE.

O MURAI SAN.

narrow streets of the city are hidden by the numerous trees for which Sendai is famous. Here are the shops and homes of eighty-five thousand people; for Sendai is the largest city north of Tokyo.

In this city there lived, about fifty years ago, a family by the name of Miyamoto. The Miyamotos were well-to-do, and dwelt on one of the main streets, called Omachi. They had but one child, a daughter; and in order to keep up the family name, they had adopted a son from another family, who was to become her husband. It was the custom in such a case to select a little boy, adopt him into the family, and let him and the daughter, who was to become his wife, grow up together as brother and sister, until a marriageable age was reached. Even today some such matches are still made. When the proper time came, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Miyamoto was married to the young man whom her parents had selected for her. However, their married life was brief. The husband soon died, leaving the young widow with an only son. If young

Mrs. Miyamoto had been one of several daughters, she might have done as many other widows have done,—cut off her hair close to the head and put it into the coffin of the dead husband, vowed to his spirit never to marry again, put up on the god-shelf a tablet to his memory, set offerings before it and worshipped his spirit daily to the end of her life. But as she was the only daughter, Mrs. Miyamoto could not do this. She had to marry again in order that there might be some one to become head of the house.

The parents looked around for another young man who would be willing to become a *yoshi* (adopted son), marry the widowed daughter and take the name Miyamoto. Now-a-days it is hard to find a young man who is willing to become a *yoshi*. To be a *yoshi* means that one must be the head of the house, which implies taking care of the whole family and all relatives who may need help. The *yoshi* inherits everything; but often there is not much to inherit, and sometimes when he enters a home as a *yoshi*, he falls heir, not to a

fortune, but to a great burden of debt. In the case of the Miyamotos, however, there seemed to be no trouble. They were supposed to be wealthy merchants, and soon succeeded in finding another husband, a man by the name of Ohashi, of Fukushima.

In an ordinary marriage, the bride has to go to the groom's home for the wedding, and not go empty-handed either. She has to have a bureau full of clothes, so that on the day after the marriage she can make a change of clothing at least five or six times. She is also expected to bring bedding and cooking utensils,—in fact, almost everything that is needed for housekeeping. Of course, this is true only of the middle classes. The father of a poor girl cannot do so much. Years ago, when the bride was a country girl, she went riding on a white horse, beautifully decorated, and carrying a string of bells around his neck. The go-betweens accompanied her on horseback, and another merry party followed on foot, keeping time to the jingling of the bells. The city bride used to be carried to her new

home in a *kago* or palanquin, and had the same merry party accompanying her. Even today one sometimes sees a bridal party of the old kind, though the horse is not always white, nor so elaborately decorated as in former days. I have also seen Sendai brides in their gay attire accompanied by a merry bridal party on the way to the wedding, riding, not in palanquins, as these are no longer in use, but in *jinrikishas*.

It used to be believed by young women, and is still a superstition in some places, that if a girl had her mouth open when a white horse passed, it would be hard for her to get a husband. So when a miss saw a white horse coming, she would cover her mouth so that the horse could not see that her teeth were white, not having been blackened, as is the custom after marriage. All wanted to get married; for it was considered a disgrace to be left a maiden lady. Girls were married at the age of fourteen and fifteen, and, although the law now forbids such early marriages, they still take place in some rural districts.

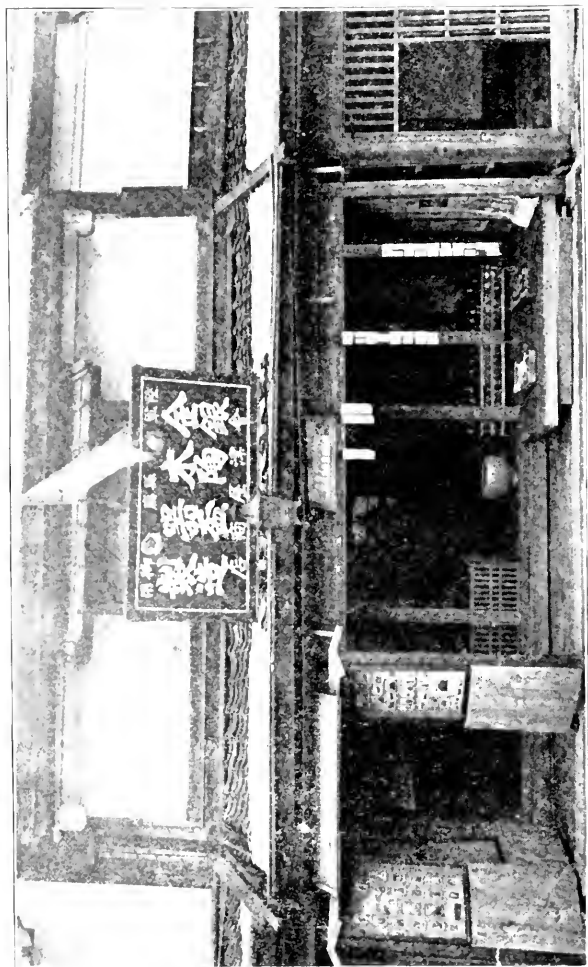
O MURA SAN.

But the educated of today get married in the twenties.

A young lady who is being married for the first time is usually dressed in a beautiful black crepe, from beneath which two white silk dresses peep. Her face is powdered a snow white, and her lips are painted a dark red. Over her head she wears a hood called the "cotton bonnet," made of silk. The bride sits on one side of the room on a square silk cushion, and beside her sits the wife of the go-between and the bride's mother. On the other side of the room sits the groom in stiff silks and beside him are the go-between and the bride's father. At the other end of the room sit a few relatives that have been invited. The only decorations used at a wedding are plum blossoms, pine and bamboo. The crane and the tortoise, too, may be seen, being emblems of long life. In the center of the room stands a pretty little table, on which are placed three earthen wine-cups decorated with white and red paper, emblematic of marriage, and beside the table

stands the earthen winepot, looking somewhat like a teapot, and decorated in the same way. The marriage ceremony consists of drinking wine out of three cups in a very formal way. It is first passed to the groom, then to the bride. After both have drunk from the three cups, the ceremony is considered over. The hood is now removed from the bride's head, and the groom gazes upon the blushing face of his new wife. Formerly, it was often the case that when the hood was removed, the groom saw for the first time the one who was to be his companion for life; but such marriages were apt to prove very unhappy. An educated man of today wants to see and know a lady before he becomes engaged to her.

The ceremony now over, the wedding feast is in order, after which wedding cake is sent around to all friends. The new wife has to put up her hair in married ladies' style, and blacken her teeth. Formerly, all ladies had to blacken their teeth after marriage, although



SHOP OF THE MIYAMOTOS.

very few who live in cities or towns of any size do so any longer.

But the marriage of Mr. Ohashi and the young widow Miyamoto was not of the ordinary kind. As he was a *yoshi*, he had to go to the home of the bride to be married, and there was no bridal party. Moreover, as she was a widow, not much was made of the ceremony. She did not need to change the style of her coiffure or blacken her teeth; for all that had been done at the previous marriage.

Our new couple next settled down to real life. But the young Ohashi, now Mr. Miyamoto, found himself not in a home of wealth, as he had supposed. He discovered that he had nothing to inherit but a great deal of debt and trouble. However, being a brave and energetic young fellow, he tried to bear the burden now resting upon him with a courageous heart. But still harder times were before him. For in the year 1868 the War of the Restoration took place. Many fought to restore to the Emperor his rightful authority as ruler of the nation. Others, and Sendai

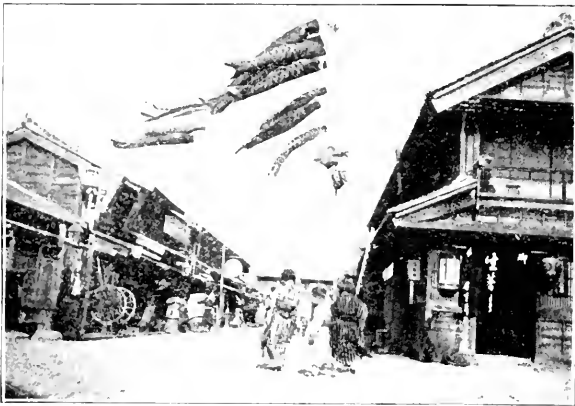
with them, vainly fought for the Shogun, who was the actual ruler at that time. The war, of course, made havoc everywhere. Where once there was wealth, poverty now prevailed. The feudal lords and their retainers had to give up their power and privileges, and be just like other people. This was indeed hard for them. Everywhere things had to be re-adjusted.

The Miyamotos at this time suffered with the rest. They lost almost all they owned, so that, five years after the war, they found themselves very, very poor. But, fortunately, it was not disgraceful for a merchant to work, and young Miyamoto now worked hard to support the large family depending upon him. He was not the kind to give up in despair. He courageously toiled on until he found himself out of deep water again.

In the course of time, two little boys came into the home, of whom the parents were very proud, and the pride of the grandparents was just as much in evidence. If you could have passed the home of the Miyamotos about that

O MURA SAN.

time, on the 5th of May, you might have seen two large paper fish, painted in gorgeous colors, floating in the air from the top of a bamboo pole, put there by the proud father, to let people know that he had two sons. The



THE BOYS' FESTIVAL.

paper fish are images of carp, which the people say are the strongest of all fish. They are believed to be able to swim up waterfalls, and so they are a good emblem of the strength which parents wish their sons to enjoy.

II

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

II

Birth and Childhood

ONE beautiful day, on the fourth of April, in the year 1872, a little girl was born to the Miyamotos. Little was said about it, and no congratulations were sent in, because it was only a girl. But as the Miyamotos already had two boys, they took real interest in this little mite of a girl. As was the custom, and is yet in many places, the child was given its name on the seventh day after its birth. The name Mura was selected, and then there was written on a large piece of white paper this notice: "To Mr. Miyamoto was born a daughter named Mura," which was then posted up in the parlor, where everybody that happened to come to the house could see it. The family call her Mura, but everybody else must call her Omurasan (Honorable Miss Mura). Many families, when a girl is born, plant a tree called "kiri," with the idea that this tree will grow large enough to furnish the wood for

the bureau that she will need when she becomes a bride.

Now would you not like to see this little baby Omurasan take her bath? A large wash-tub is brought into the room, half full of almost boiling water. The little one is undressed and rolled into a white cloth, and then is held down in the fearfully hot water to soak. She screams as loudly as her little lungs will allow. After a little while, she is lifted out, the wet cloth is taken off and she is laid on a dry cloth lying on the floor. She is carefully dried and laid into her bright red or yellow wadded dresses, and the two strings that are attached in front are tied to fasten them around the little body. She is then put into her bed, which consists of a single *futon*, or comfortable, three inches thick, and one of the same thickness for cover. Here on the floor the baby sleeps while many visitors are calling on her mother, and perhaps bringing gifts. If for the baby, a dress; if for the mother, some fish. Such visitors begin to come when the baby is only a day old.

O MURASI SAN.

When the baby is twenty-one days old, the mother is considered quite well and strong again. So the day is celebrated with a feast. The relatives and some friends are invited to join the family in celebrating the occasion. For this dinner, rice with red beans is prepared, also some black seeds called *goma*, and a little salt. Some of this rice is put into beautifully lacquered boxes with a little bag of the *goma* seed and salt, and then the boxes are placed on trays and covered with handsome, often embroidered, silk or crepe squares, and sent around to the friends who have presented the child gifts.

When Omurasan became thirty-three days old, she reached what to most babies was an important day. As her mother worshipped in a different way from many others, however, little Omurasan was not carried to the temple. But other mothers would have dressed their baby in a gorgeous red-flowered dress and carried it to the temple, taking a little bag of rice along to please the gods by the way. When they crossed the bridges

O M U R A S A N .

over the little streams leading to the temple, they would throw rice into the water, hoping thereby to get the good will of the gods. On reaching the temple, they would slip out of their wooden clogs and climb the steps to the temple door. There they would ring a little bell by a red cloth cord, to awaken the gods within, who were supposed to be sleeping. Then they would clap their hands and prostrate themselves before the images, and ask them to be good to the child and give it a long and prosperous life. They would then wend their way home feeling assured that the gods would answer their prayers.

Parents who had lost a child and were blessed with another, in order to make sure of its having a long life, took the following plan: The mother begged from each of one hundred people a patch of material, and from these patches she made a dress for the child. This dress was supposed to secure the child's life.

Omurasan is now one hundred days old, and she is given her first meal, by proxy. A

feast is prepared, and the oldest one in the house—if the grandmother is living, she is the one—eats the meal for the baby. Holding her in her lap, she takes some of the food with chopsticks and puts it to the mouth of the baby, and then she proceeds to eat it all herself. This act is supposed to make the child grow to a good old age.

Omurasan's mother was not very strong, and could not nourish her child. As there was then no fresh cows' milk or condensed milk in Japan, the only thing to do was to find a wet-nurse and give the child to her to raise. This wet-nurse lived some distance from the Miyamoto home, and the mother saw very little of her child. When Omurasan was about two years old, the nurse failed to bring the child home to see her mother as usual, and the mother began to feel anxious. She went to the home of the nurse to see what was the matter. To her amazement, she found that the nurse had moved away and her whereabouts was unknown. Mr. Miyamoto was away from home at the time, and some

days passed before his return. Jinrikishas were then their trains, and there were no telegraphs nor telephones as there are now. So by the time the father reached home and the nurse's whereabouts was discovered, it was found that Omurasan's eye was destroyed by a disease which she had contracted from the nurse. If the nurse had brought the child home for treatment as soon as she saw that the eye was inflamed, the member might have been saved. But neglect and fear of the parents caused her to hide, and so poor Omurasan was given back to her mother with but one eye. The parents were heartbroken over the loss their child had sustained.

As Omurasan was now able to eat other food, such as rice gruel, eggs, and so forth, she was kept at home. While her mother was busy with her work, Omurasan could be seen tied to a little nurse's back, her poor little head dangling back and forth as the girl who carried her played hopscotch or battle-dore and shuttlecock. No matter how great the heat, Omurasan's little head was always



THE DOLL FESTIVAL.

exposed to the hot rays of the sun. I believe that a large part of the blindness of which there is so much in Japan is caused by this practice. But now-a-days mothers are beginning to shield their babies' heads with either a hat or a parasol.

The third of March comes. This is a great day for little girls. It is the doll festival. A stand specially prepared for the occasion is put up in the parlor, and on this are arranged beautifully-dressed dolls, little images of the Emperor and Empress seated at the very top. On this day the children are given quite a feast. A part of the feast is a white wine and some *mochi* cakes in three colors,—green, red and white. *Mochi* is a ceremonial dish made of rice paste. The little girls look forward to this day with much joy. But our poor Omurasan did not have this pleasure. Her mother said that as they had lost their money she thought Omurasan would have to do without the doll festival.

By and by we find Omurasan eight years old, and her parents send her to school. She

finds her first day at school hard indeed, and every day grows harder, because the children tease her unmercifully about her blind eye. They call her "Teisansama." Teisansama was the first lord of Sendai. He had an eye just like that of Omurasan. A word about Teisansama may be interesting, by the way. He is buried in a large mausoleum on one of the beautiful hills near Sendai, on either side of which are ten tombstones that mark the graves of his retainers who killed themselves when he died, in order to accompany him to the spirit land. Teisansama made an image of himself and said that when he died his spirit would enter into it. This image is now standing on a high altar in one of the famous temples at Matsushima. Candles are burning before it all the time, and hundreds go there to worship.

Poor Omurasan disliked being called Teisansama and other ugly names, and her parents found it very hard to get her to go to school. The teasing that she endured at school, and the severe chastisements that she



THE FIRST LORD OF SENDAI.

O MURAI SAN.

received at home hardened the child so that she became almost unmanageable. Several times her mother resorted to the extreme punishment of burning. This was done by putting a little powder of a certain kind on the skin and then setting it on fire with a red hot iron, burning a deep wound into the flesh. The mother thought this would cure her of her badness and at the same time be good for her weak eye. But many times since has the mother looked at those scars with tears rolling down her cheeks, and saying: "How could I be so cruel?" Omurasan cared little whether she learned anything or not, as she found no joy either at school or at home. One morning her mother said: "Today we must go to the temple. This is the day for the worship of our ancestors." Preparations were made, and they started off with their lunch. They soon reached the temple and found many others there, among them many friends and relatives who had also come to worship at the shrines of their ancestors.

Rev. Mr. Oshikawa and Rev. Mr. Yoshida

were now in Sendai proclaiming the message of a Savior who had died for all, and is willing to save all who give themselves to Him. Our little Omurasan had attended a few of their Bible classes without the knowledge of her parents, and the little that she had heard bore fruit. While the friends and relatives, both old and young, drunken with liquor, were dancing before their ancestors' shrines, one of the priests came to little Omurasan and said: "Why do you not do like the rest, and dance too?" and threatened to punish her if she would not. But she refused, knowing by what she had heard from Mr. Oshikawa that such things were wrong. She ran to her mother crying and telling her that she did not want to dance. Her mother then excused her, knowing that when she made up her mind in such a matter there was no use in trying to compel her. Really, we might say that this was the beginning of Omurasan's Christian life.

Once a year this public worship of ancestors took place, and on that occasion one



HACHIMAN SHRINE.

could see men, women and even children intoxicated. Ancestor worship is the hardest thing for the Japanese people to give up when they want to become Christians. The ancestral tablets are held so sacred that when the people become Christians it is indeed hard for them to destroy them.

Sendai is still full of heathenism. On a hill in the northwestern part of the city is a famous temple called the Hachiman Shrine. The temple itself is not at all pretty; on the contrary, it is a very simple affair. But it is the manner in which the people worship there that attracts one's attention. Every year on the fourteenth of January, the coldest part of the year, one may see crowds gathered at this temple, both young and old. They all come with a lot of *sake*, or rice-liquor, and offer it before the gods. Then they undress themselves and pour water over their heads and down over their naked bodies. This is done to cleanse themselves of the offences committed during the year. Then they prostrate themselves before the gods and ask them to

be good to them during the new year, after which, as a sort of penance, they parade through the streets, carrying paper charms and other things, and almost freezing themselves. To keep the teeth from chattering, they all have a piece of folded white paper between them. The *sake* that the gods cannot drink they drink themselves. Now-a-days, these worshippers are not allowed to go nude through the streets any more, yet all they wear even now is a very thin white gown, and some of them dip this in water before putting it on, so that it fairly freezes on their bodies. When, last January, I saw such a procession it made me feel sad indeed. I saw in the newspaper, the following morning, that educated young women were among the worshippers. This is the only temple in Japan, that I know of, where the people pray for anything like the forgiveness of sins. Would that they might believe in Him Who alone can forgive them!

There is another temple on a hill near Sendai where people go to pray for loved



SACRED WATER FALLS.

O MURASAN.

ones who are ill. They will pray to the god to cure the sick one, and then go and stand under a sacred waterfall, sometimes for several days and nights at a time, neither eating nor drinking, thinking thereby to please the gods sufficiently to get their loved ones restored to health.

These things are hard to see and hear. But we are thankful for these worshippers, as they are the most easily brought into the Kingdom. Those who worship nothing are the hardest to win. Infidelity is growing in Japan, especially among the young men. Later, our dear Omurasan worked hard for the girls of Japan, but she was at the same time especially anxious for the young men, as we shall soon see.

III

CONVERSION AND EARLY
USEFULNESS

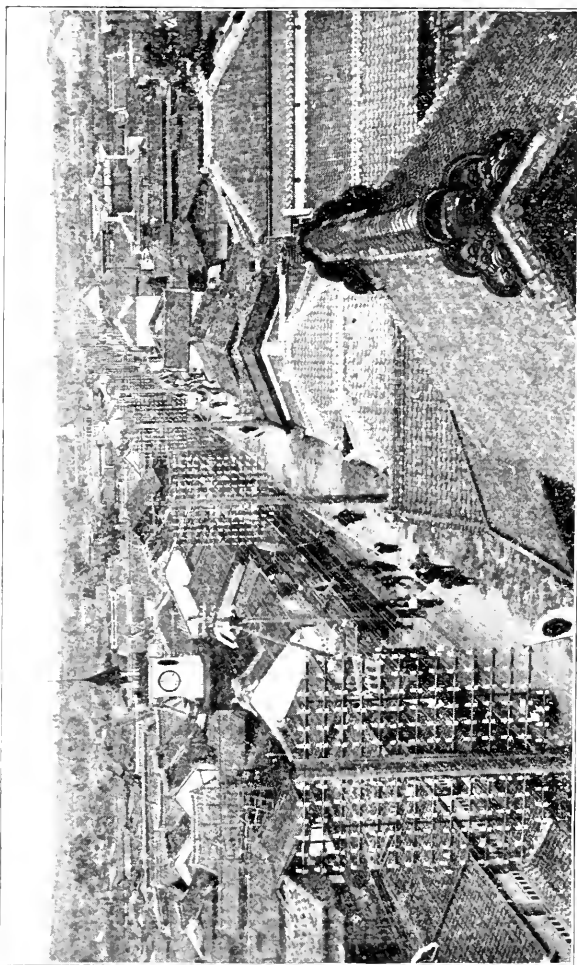
Conversion and Early Usefulness

ABOUT this time a family moved in next door to the Miyamotos by the name of Kodaira. They had been attending the meetings of Mr. Oshikawa and Mr. Yoshida, had become very much interested and were about to be baptized. They had heard from the Miyamotos what a time they had with their child Mura, and what an unmanageable girl she was. Mrs. Kodaira said one day to her parents: "Let me take her along to the Jesus meetings." "All right," said the father, "you may if you like." But he did not believe in the least that it would help his daughter to be a better girl. Mr. Miyamoto was a very proud man, and hated this new religion, the "Jesus religion," as everybody called it. At the center of the city, at a place called Banana Crossroads, where four famous corner houses stood, were affixed the placards denouncing the new religion; and all who had anything to do with

it had to suffer. Three of these houses have been destroyed by fire during the last fifteen years. Only one remains to tell tales of the old times. Our little Omurasan paid no attention to these placards, and little did she care what people said. The first day she went with Mrs. Kodaira she was so much pleased with what Mr. Oshikawa said that she made up her mind to try to practice just what she had been taught. The lesson that day was on the fifth commandment, and made quite an impression upon little Omurasan's heart. She at once made up her mind to be a better girl. She now went to school without a murmur, and studied faithfully, and also became obedient and kind to her parents. This all began to make an impression upon them. One day the father said, "Don't the children tease you any more at school?" They had been teasing her more than ever before, because they knew that she was attending the Jesus meetings. She was not only teased, but persecuted. But her quiet answer to her father was, "Yes, they do tease me; but they



FAMOUS CORNER HOUSE.



THE MAIN STREET, KOKUBUNCHO.

O MURASAN.

can only hurt the body, and not the soul." The more Omurasan grew in her love for the Lord Jesus, the more she had to suffer. The children would spit on her, gather together on street corners and refuse to let her pass, hit her and call her all kinds of names. When they saw her praying before she ate her lunch, they would take what she had to eat and throw it into the street and trample it into the dirt. Many a day she would go without food for Christ's sake, and with all these persecutions our little Omurasan was growing stronger in her faith. They only drew her closer to Him.

The parents were much pleased with the change that had taken place in their daughter, and wondered how this Jesus religion could have such an effect. One day, Omurasan's father took a walk up the main street, and as he saw a large crowd standing before the house where Mr. Oshikawa was preaching, he stopped to listen. He heard men, women and children weeping over their sins. The sermon that they were hearing touched every

heart. But Mr. Miyamoto, being a proud Confucianist, turned away with a sneer, and said, "This religion is good enough for women and children, but it is of no use to men." Mr. Miyamoto was now beginning to lose his eyesight, and dared not use his eyes to read. So one day when he had nothing to do and was feeling depressed because he had been told by the doctors that nothing could be done for him, he asked Mura to read to him. She asked him if she might read to him from the Bible. "Yes," said he; "read me anything." And the child read to him the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John. The words that he now heard set him to thinking, and he decided to go and have a talk with Mr. Oshikawa and Mr. Yoshida. They succeeded in making him feel that he was a sinner and must seek a Savior. This pleased Omurasan very much. She felt that God was answering her prayers. She prayed most earnestly for her parents' conversion. Her prayers at the Christian meetings would make the tears come to many an eye. Her



HOUSE WHERE MR. OSHIKAWA PREACHED.



THE MIYAMOTO FAMILY: OMURASAN ON THE RIGHT.

pleadings had their effect. One day the father said again, "I and three other seekers are going to see Mr. Oshikawa." Mr. Oshikawa's talk had a wonderful effect upon them. Mr. Miyamoto felt that now he had at last found his Savior, and then, he says, something wonderful happened. "I fell over as one dead, and when I revived I was happy." He firmly believes that at this time he received the Holy Spirit. Little Omurasan now had the joy of hearing her parents say that they too were going to accept her Savior. That week when she attended the woman's meeting, they all said to her, "How happy you must be!" and when she offered her prayer of thanksgiving, they all wept with her for joy. Omurasan was thirteen years old when she, with her parents, received the sacrament of baptism in the little chapel on Kōkubuncho.

Her prayer was now for her brothers, relatives and friends. The Lord soon answered these prayers too. Her brothers and relatives and many friends soon after became

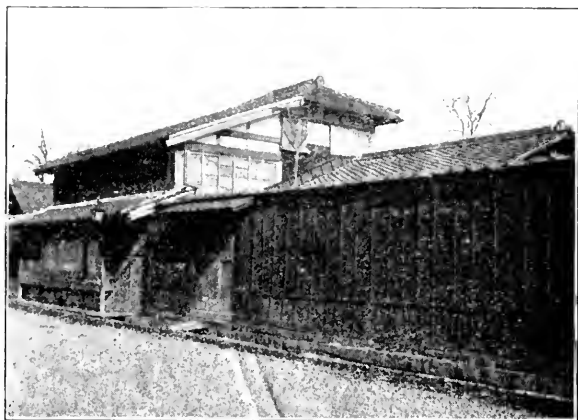
Christians. Can you not imagine this child's joy? Next, Omurasan prayed for her nation; and did not cease to pray until death sealed her loving lips.

When she was fourteen years of age, she heard the good news that Miss Poorbaugh (now Mrs. Cort) and Miss Ault (now Mrs. Hoy) were coming to Sendai to start a Girls' School. Eagerly she looked forward to their coming. It took several days then to reach Sendai from Yokohama. One had to go by boat to Shiogama and from there to Sendai, a distance of about fifteen miles, in a *basha*, or rumbling old omnibus. One day Omurasan was told that they were expected to arrive late that night. The darkness made no difference to her. In company with a few others she walked far out of the city to welcome them. Mrs. Hoy says in one of her letters, "I have always thought of Omurasan as my dear little girl, for she was one of the first to welcome me to Sendai."

In a rented Japanese house on the street called Nibancho, the new school was opened

O MURASAN.

and Omurasan was one of the first pupils. She was very happy in her new studies, and became very fond of instrumental and vocal music. When Miss Emma F. Poorbaugh arrived, the teaching of music was given to her,



THE FIRST HOME OF THE GIRLS' SCHOOL.

and Omurasan became her diligent and devoted pupil. One of her great pleasures was the Christmas serenade. She and some other girls of the school would get up early Christmas morning, take lanterns and go from one missionary's house to another, singing Christ-

O MURASAN.

mas carols. The girls in the School still keep up this custom, and there is nothing that touches the heart of a missionary more than to hear on Christmas morning about three or four o'clock the sweet voices of the girls as they sing of God's love for men. After the song there are calls of "Merry Christmas!" between serenaders and serenaded.

While a student in the Girls' School she taught in the Sunday-school, where she had a large class of boys noted for their badness. These boys were incited by educated people to ask all sorts of difficult questions. Sometimes she could answer them and sometimes she could not. Over her inability to answer all she wept many tears, but did not give up. She looked to God for help and guidance, and her joy was complete when later she saw some of these very boys give their hearts to the Lord.

At the age of twenty-one Omurasan graduated from the Girls' School.

She then became Miss Hollowell's helper. After continuing in this work for two years,



FIRST GRADUATES OF THE GIRLS' SCHOOL; OMURASAN ON THE RIGHT.

O MURAI SAI.

she made known to Miss Hollowell a wish to go to Tokyo and study music. Omurasan looked up to Miss Hollowell as to a mother and loved her dearly. Miss Hollowell loved Omurasan too and took a deep interest in



OMURASAN AND OYUKISAN WITH MISS HOLLOWELL.

her. She approved of her plan, thinking that as she had but one eye it would be difficult for her to marry a man suitable for her, and that if she continued taking lessons on the piano she could then be independent and

O MURASAN.

make her own living. So she made arrangements for her to go to Tokyo.

Omurasan entered the Government Music School at Ueno, but she stayed only one year as she did not like the school. Miss Hollowell then made arrangements for her to enter a girls' school established by the Canadian Methodist Mission, as this school had a very fine teacher of music. To pay for her lessons Omurasan was to teach. This she gladly did, and was very happy in her new work. She was also much loved by the girls. She was passionately fond of music and she gave her hands so little rest that twice they became quite nerveless. Later on there appeared a still more serious difficulty. Her remaining good eye began to ache. Miss Hollowell then urged her to go to see Dr. Whitney, a well-known oculist, who told her the terrible news that unless she gave up studying music she would lose her sight entirely. This was a great disappointment. However, she thought it wise to obey the physician, gave up music and was then made assistant matron

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in the school. A lady friend who loved Omurasan was anxious that she should marry a friend of hers, a young man of rank. A meeting was arranged between the two and soon an engagement was made between them, but with the understanding that she would not marry him unless he became a Christian. He seemed to her to be a sincere seeker, but one day all her joy was turned into grief when she heard that the night before he had spent his time with a singing-girl. She immediately sent him a letter asking to be released from the engagement. He confessed to having done wrong and said he never would repeat the offence. But Omurasan said, "No, you have been untrue to me once, and I can never trust you again." The engagement was then broken and she said she would never become engaged to an unbeliever again with the hope that he would become a Christian. "If I marry, it must be to a Christian, and one that has been tried."

Having been in Tokyo about two years and a half she returned to Sendai, and for a

O MURASAN.

short time was my own helper. During this time she became very dear to me. She was worth her weight in gold and was ever after a great help to me in my life and work as a missionary.

The ladies in our school were at this time in need of a teacher of the Japanese Bible and music. Omurasan was asked to take this position, and accepted it, as her eye now seemed perfectly well again. She went into this new work with much joy and worked very hard. She was especially interested in her Bible classes. Many times she would come and tell me her joys and sorrows. She never went to teach her classes without preparation and prayer. She always had a hard time to get the new girls to listen to her. They would talk and laugh at things she said, and this hurt her very much. One day she came and said, "I had a new class to start in the Bible today, and the girls were so bad. Before beginning to teach I did as I always do, ask God's help and guidance. I said, 'Girls, I want to teach you about the one true God

and the only Savior of the world, and in my own strength alone I cannot do it. So I am going now to ask for His help to guide me in teaching you to see and know Him. I beg of you, please be quiet for just a few minutes.' " But as she offered her fervent prayer the girls made a great deal of noise, and when she began teaching they pretended that they did not hear a word she said. But they did hear some of it, because a few weeks after that she came in with such a happy look on her face and said, "My girls are so much interested," and told me some of the earnest questions that they would ask her. But Omurasan was equal to the occasion. She would get so interested in her Bible classes that she not only taught them in school hours, but invited them to her home on Saturdays and gave them special instruction. She was profoundly interested in the Christian growth of her girls, and it gave her unspeakable joy when she saw them one by one entering the Church. She was an excellent teacher of the Bible and was much loved by the girls, many of whom called her "Mother."

IV

MARRIAGE AND HOME LIFE

IV

Marriage and Home Life

IN the graduating class of the Theological Department of North Japan College in 1900 there was a young man named Suekichi Yoshimura. Having been a specially earnest student he was immediately after graduation made assistant pastor of the Sendai Church, which was at this time worshipping in an old Buddhist temple, though the new building was then being erected.



REV. S. YOSHIMURA.

After he began his work he felt the need of a wife and, following the Japanese custom in such things, made his wish known to some old ladies of the congregation. He said he feared it would be hard for him to get a lady suitable for the position of pastor's wife to consent to marry him as he had been a poor

boy and had worked his way through college by serving in the Industrial Home. Educated ladies aspired to something higher than being merely the wife of a despised Jesus preacher. But one day his heart was made glad by the news that Miss Mura Miyamoto had consented to be his wife. She had known him many years, seen how he worked and struggled to get his education, and admired his earnestness. But above all did she prize his beautiful Christian character. When she was asked to marry him she came and asked me whether I thought she was worthy to be the wife of a pastor. She said, "I know that a pastor's salary is small and that it is not an easy thing to get along, but if you think me worthy and Mr. Yoshimura thinks me worthy, I am willing to become his wife and help him bear the trials that may come to him in life." I said, "Omurasan, if you are not worthy, then no one is. You can be a great help to him and give him much joy in the life-work which he has undertaken."

Arrangements were then made for them to meet and speak with each other, and the day was selected on which the engagement should be made binding. An engagement is not considered complete until a gift of a dress or *obi* (sash) has been presented to the lady by the gentleman and carried to the lady by the go-between. This took place on the eighth of May. Mr. Yoshimura presented his intended wife with a dress. He was now very happy in the love reciprocated by his chosen one. Soon after the engagement he called to see her. Her home was then at the Miyagi Girls' School, and in the reception-room they had a quiet little talk together. Just before leaving he asked her to play on the piano for him. Her selection was "The Storm," a piece which she had often played for me and of which I was very fond. She said, "You know, dear, that you and I will have to pass through many storms, but after the storm comes peace and calm."

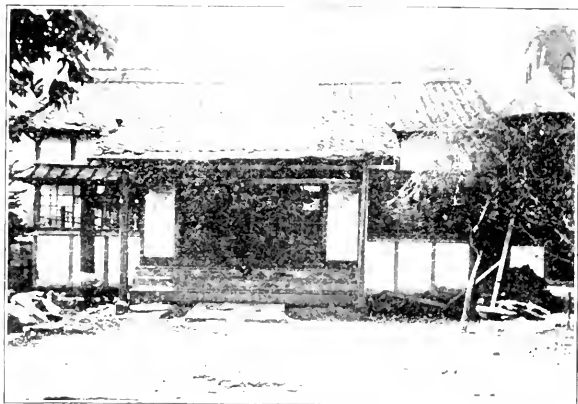
One day she made him a gift of a sprig of

evergreen and a few violets. The violet was her favorite flower and the evergreen meant that her love for him was unchangeable. These tokens of love that she showed him from time to time moved him to write these words in his diary one day: "How strong is the power of love! True love can be broken by no man." Her love letters to him are all written in the English language and are full of encouraging words. Once some one must have criticised him, for in one of her letters she says: "I do not care what people say. The more they say against you the better I love you."

So as the days went by the love of these two grew stronger and stronger until one evening, the fifteenth of September, they were made one. Dr. Schneder had the privilege of performing the ceremony and I that of making the wedding supper. This was the last wedding ceremony performed in the old Buddhist temple. Soon after it was torn down and the best of its timbers used in putting up

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the parsonage that the Hauck sisters, of Frederick, Maryland, helped to build. Omurasan was very deeply interested in the building of the new church and her one regret was that it was not finished in time for her wed-



FIRST CHURCH BUILDING, SENDAI, PURCHASED FROM BUDDHISTS IN 1887. EXTERIOR.

ding. She wanted hers to be the first wedding in the new church.

Mr. Yoshimura's salary being only twenty-two *yen*, or eleven American dollars per month, he could not afford to rent a house for himself and bride, and so one little room,

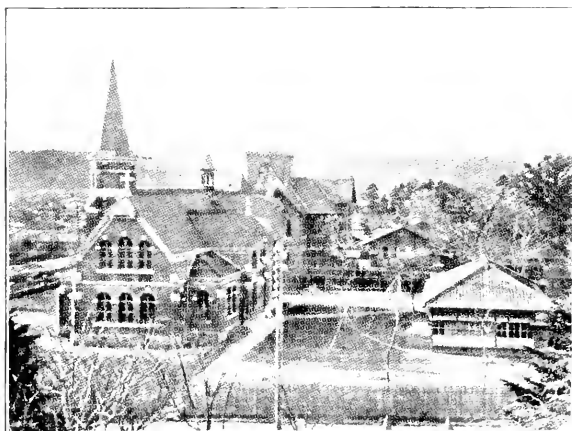
twelve by nine, with a little kitchen, six by three, was rented, with nothing but the paper doors to protect them from the cold winter winds, the room not having the usual wooden doors for closing up at night. This small room was fixed up by Omurasan's dainty hands with so much taste, and made to look so comfortable and cozy that one forgot its smallness and remembered only the happy faces that welcomed everybody into it. A palace could not have afforded more joy than these two found in their little room. Omurasan did not give up her teaching in the Girls' School, as she felt that she must help her husband all she could. So every morning early she was up preparing the breakfast and also the dinner for the day, and attending to all other things that had to be done before leaving for school. As they lived seven squares from the school and as she was on duty at eight o'clock, she found it hard to get all her work done before leaving. Mr. Yoshimura, who wanted to be kind to her, helped her by drawing the water, bringing in the charcoal,

and doing other little things. This kindness created gossip. It was such an unusual sight to see a husband helping his wife, and the unbelieving wives around began to criticise and said that Mr. Yoshimura and his wife were too affectionate. They talked to her about it and also to her father. So one day she came to me and said, "What shall I do? I can not bear to be talked about, and yet my husband says that he does not care what people say; that if he wants to be kind to his wife it is nobody's business, and that it is for us to set an example of how a Christian family should live." I said, "Your husband is right." The gossipers soon saw that this talk could not change the home life of the new couple and they began to look upon them with admiration and envy.

In the spring of 1901, about the middle of April, the new parsonage was completed, and the young minister and his wife moved into it. They found it a great change. Omurasan was delighted with the new home and kept it in perfect order. She was an excellent house-

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keeper and a prudent manager. She could make a very little go very far, and would "conjure nice things out of nothing," as we used to say. She had good taste as well as good common sense. Few American women



NIBANCHO CHURCH AND PARSONAGE.

could equal her. As a wife she was everything a husband could wish. She was always loving and kind, and ever mindful of his health and comfort. When discouragements and troubles came she was always ready with

O MURASAN.

encouraging words of sympathy. Even though at times almost too sick or tired to hold up her head she was always in her pew. Her face cheered and helped him; for she was his most attentive listener. Yet she was also his severest critic, but he always looked forward to her criticisms with so much joy that he could hardly wait to get home after he was through with his sermon. If the sermon was good he received high praise; if poor, severe criticism, always given, however, in such a way as not to hurt. Whether criticism or praise it was always helpful. "At one time," says Mr. Yoshimura, "I preached a sermon that my dear wife thought would turn some of the members against me. I saw that she was right after hearing what she said about it, and then we together with tears asked God to overrule what I had said, so that no harm might be done. I had spoken too freely of some of the church members' faults, and as I was so young my dear wife feared trouble."

Omurasan was proud of her husband and wanted him to be loved by his people. She

also liked him to dress well. They were poor. Although he was pastor of a large congregation, the support his people could give him was small. But with all this he was always well dressed, which pleased the congregation very much, though they little suspected the great sacrifices that were being made by his wife to accomplish this.

On the twenty-fourth of June, 1901, a little boy came into the home. They named him Shinichi, "Faith-first," and called him Shinchan, "chan" being the ending attached to children's names. He was a charming little baby. Many a dark hour was cheered by his presence. But the mother found herself busier than ever.

Besides the care of this new-comer, she had her household duties and her school work to do. She had also undertaken some private classes, which she taught in the evening, as they found it hard to make ends meet. But with all the heavy work and the responsibilities that were resting upon her, she never wearied, but could often be heard singing that



MR. YOSHIMURA, WIFE AND BABY.

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beautiful hymn, "I am so glad that Jesus loves me." She was much opposed to having any debt. If they had had only themselves to support they would not have found it so difficult, but they had Mr. Yoshimura's parents and his niece dependent on them also, and had to help a sick brother of Mr. Yoshimura, who would write every now and then pleading for aid. So at times they hardly knew how to manage. But somehow they always found a way out. And with all her cares she managed to be an excellent mother. She did not neglect her boy, nor did she forget family worship. Every morning and evening together they would go before the family altar, taking turns in leading the worship. She never laid her little boy to rest without whispering a prayer to God for him. She never let her boy see anything but love and kindness. One time she was severely tried and her anger arose within her, but she said nothing. Afterwards a friend said to her, "How could you keep quiet?" "Oh!" said she, "I try never to lose my temper in the presence

of my child." The first word she taught her baby to lisp was "Jesus," and the second word was "Papa." She always kept her little boy looking neat and clean, and spent many precious moments in making some new thing for him. She did not dress him in the ordinary Japanese costume. She felt that that hampered the limbs too much and did not give the child a chance to grow properly. So she invented a new style of dress, in which Shinchuan looked very sweet indeed.

Omurasan took much delight in giving him his first Christmas. A little tree was trimmed and myself and the children and a few seekers were invited to share the Christmas joys. She could do beautiful crochet-work and had made me a handsome white shawl, she and another girl friend of mine sharing in buying the yarn, and dear Omurasan spending the hours even after midnight to do something to show me her love and appreciation.

In the fall of 1901 the new church was completed and was dedicated on the twentieth of

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October. Soon after this Mr. Yoshimura was made the regular pastor of the church and his responsibilities increased. Omurasan, too, found more to do. She took great interest in every one who came as an inquirer. Their



OMURASAN SERVING CAKES AND TEA TO A CALLER.

home was always open, everybody was welcome and a smiling face greeted all comers. I have heard church members say that if Omurasan saw them coming, she would run out to the gate to welcome them. The school

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girls who had no homes in Sendai made Omurasan's house their home. They enjoyed being there and having a romp with Shinchan. Shinchan was idolized by everybody and the petting that he got would have spoiled an ordinary child. But it had no effect on Shinchan. He remained just as good-natured as before.

The students of North Japan College, too, found a home at the Yoshimuras. Omurasan was deeply interested in young men, especially those who were alone in the city. She said that boys need a mother to keep them from evil, and she undertook to mother every boy who came to her home. The boys would come on Saturdays or other days when they had vacation and stay the whole day, and Omurasan would often give them their meals and still they would stay and talk till late into the night. Mr. Yoshimura said, "They would pretend to come to see me, but it was really the talks with my wife that drew them. When I would complain about not being able to spare the time, she would say, 'Pity the poor

boys; they have no other place to go to; we may be the means of saving them and of giving them an idea what a Christian home ought to be. If we send them away, they may go astray and be lost like the many hundreds that are going to destruction in this city every day.'” The city of Sendai is an educational center. Thousands of students come here from all parts of Japan. These students are left to wander about for amusement, and often get to places that ruin both body and soul. There are also thousands of soldiers who are leading the same kind of life. Omurasan and I often talked the matter over, and wished many times that some place of innocent recreation could be opened for these young men, where they might also have good reading matter and where they could come into contact with good Christian people. But we are still without such a place.

During the summer of 1902 Omurasan and I had planned a lot of work for the coming winter. She especially took great interest in the Bible class which we expected to start for

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ladies who were yet ignorant of the Christian religion. Whenever I had a talk with her about the work, I always came home feeling more thankful than ever that it was my lot to be a missionary. But while we were planning work here on earth the Father in heaven was making other plans for her.

V

LAST DAYS

Last Days

ON the twenty-ninth day of September another little baby boy was born into the home. All would have been happy had his mother looked as strong as he did. But her life seemed to be hanging by a thread. On the fourth day a very high fever set in. We at once sent for our good Christian physician, Dr. Yamamoto. When he saw the patient he confirmed our fears. Her case seemed very serious, and we sent for two other prominent physicians, but all shook their heads. On the fifth day she seemed a little better. So Mr. Yoshimura gave a name to the child. He selected the name Kiyoshi (pure) taken from Matthew 5:8, and the mother was very much pleased with the selection he had made. She seemed so cheerful that our hopes greatly revived, and we began to believe that she might recover.

But on Sunday morning she was worse again and on Monday morning a messenger

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came saying that Mrs. Yoshimura wanted to see me at once. I went up hurriedly to see what she wanted. When I came into her presence she looked at me smiling and said: "Mrs. Schneder, you have been so kind to me, and I want to thank you for all that you have done for me. I am going to die, so please listen to what I have to say." I said, "Omurasan, we cannot do without you. You have been so much to me. I need you; and your dear husband and children need you; and there is so much that you can yet do for Christ here." "Yes, yes," she said, "that is so, but I feel that God wants me to come home, and now do listen to what I want to tell you, for by and by I shall not be able to speak to you." So she told me where to find the dress in which she wanted to be buried and other things connected with her funeral, her husband meanwhile pleading with tears that God would spare his wife. While I was yet talking with her, her blind father came in. I led him up to the bedside. He could not look upon his daughter's face, but he took

her hands in his while she bade him farewell, he reciting to her a number of passages from the Scriptures. Though unable to read he knew much of the New Testament by heart. Then the aged, now very deaf, mother came in to say farewell. As they clasped hands Omurasan asked me to tell her mother her last words. This I did through an ear trumpet. Afterwards she bade farewell to her brother and her sister-in-law and a few relatives, after which she said, "Now, Mrs. Schneder, send them all away and bring me my children." At first we refused to do this, as we did not think her so near death's door. But she begged so hard that we at last yielded to her wish. When they were brought in she looked at them lovingly and said, "My dear boys, I want you to be ministers and save souls for Christ," and then said to her husband, "Papa, take good care of them." Turning to me she said, "Mrs. Schneder, please take care of my children," and then when she gave them a parting kiss she for the first time broke down and wept bitterly. She said, "Oh,

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my poor babies!" The little ones were taken away and while she was alone with her husband the rest of us were in another room praying. Afterwards she seemed so happy and peaceful. We really thought she was better and began to have a little hope again.



B A B Y K I Y O S H I .

As she lingered in great pain, having much difficulty in breathing, she still thought of the unsaved souls around her and tried to convert the unbelieving doctor and the nurse who were attending her. Often as they came to her bedside she would plead with them. She said

that some one must work for Jesus in her place and asked the doctor if he would not do so. Only after she got the promise of both of them that they would attend church and try to learn of Christ did she feel satisfied.

O MURASAN.

Our dear sufferer each day grew weaker, so that at times we could not understand what she was trying to say. On the ninth day she could neither hear nor see well any more, and on the morning of the tenth we saw that she was nearer heaven than earth. She said nothing, but whenever one would look at her she would be smiling as if communing with the saints.

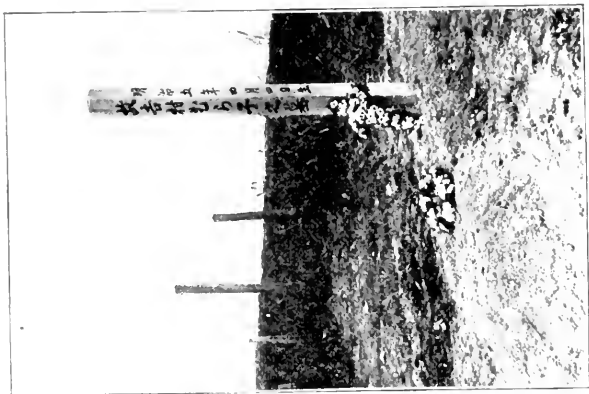
On the morning of the eleventh day about eleven o'clock, her speech and sight all came back and she seemed strong. She had all her dear ones called around her once more and told them that she was going to heaven. She said, "I have already been drinking of the water of life." Then she asked that they read to her the twenty-third and the fifty-first Psalms. After they had finished she looked around on them all and bade them farewell, and looking toward her deaf mother she pointed up to heaven. All pain had left her. Her breathing was natural, and in this peaceful way, her hand still pointing toward heaven she simply closed her eyes and fell asleep. The Christian doctor who stood by when she

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breathed her last said, "What a glorious witness for Christ."

We now all gathered into one room to weep over our loss. Soon we heard her father say, "God has been good to us, mother. Omurasan led us to Jesus, and now He has called her home first so that she can welcome us at the gate of heaven when we come." Both said: "We want to die now, too. We are ready to go any day that Jesus may call." Then the aged couple together thanked God for His goodness.

Omurasan was laid in a pretty coffin clad in the dress which she had chosen and holding a white rose in her hand. She was carried into the new church by some of the students she had mothered. Here was, not the first wedding, but the first funeral to be held in the new house of worship. It was crowded with Christians and unbelievers. There were about six hundred people present, among whom were many that had never been inside of a house of God before. Many prominent ladies of the city had learned to love and honor Omurasan, some of whom she had hoped dur-



GRAVE OF OMURASAN.



HUSBAND AND CHILDREN.

O MURASAN.

ing the winter to bring into the Church. After the sermon, which was preached by Dr. Schneder, the hymn that she had selected was sung, "Jesus, lover of my soul." She thought this the most beautiful hymn ever written, and often sang it while doing her work at home.

After a walk of two miles we reached the spot that had been assigned to the Christians for a cemetery. It is a beautiful place on a high hill which overlooks all Sendai and the plain beyond on to the sea. Here close by the grave of Mrs. Allen K. Faust was laid to rest all that was left of Omurasan.

The day after the funeral I went to see Mr. Yoshimura and the children. I was not surprised to find the father ill with grief over his great loss and over his motherless children. He spoke sadly of his loneliness; yet he was thankful to God for having had such a wife even for a short time. I did what I could for the comfort of the little motherless boys, and many times since have I visited them. The older one, Shinchan, could often be seen pointing to his mother's picture and saying,

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“Mama,” and then pointing to the Saviour’s picture, saying, “Jesus.”

A week or so later I called to see Omura-san’s parents to give them a word of comfort.



“GOD HAS BEEN GOOD TO US, MOTHER.”

I found them happy in the thought that the time was not distant when they too could go. “And there,” said the father, “she will meet me and I shall be able to see her.” “Oh!”

O MURASAN.

said he, "if I had not become a Christian when I was about losing my eyesight, I should have committed suicide. I could not have endured it. But my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ keeps me happy now and I am comforted by the thought that I shall be blind only for a while."

The father just before Omurasan's death was teaching a large Bible class consisting mainly of the clerks of a dry goods store. Because they were busy during the day he taught them after nine or ten o'clock at night. From these classes he always returned so happy that he found it difficult to sleep. Growing weakness at last compelled him to give up the work. Through him one of his nephews was converted, who has since been the mayor of Fukushima and is now one of our most active workers in the Church there. The mother is one of our stand-bys at all women's meetings.

My dear Christian friends, when we think of this dear old couple, and of the saintly life of Omurasan, must we not say that it is indeed worth while to work for the salvation of Japan?

