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THE STORY OF THE MIKADO

“ ALAS, MY POOR LITTLE BRIDE THAT WAS TO BE ”

(74)





THE STORY
OF
THE MIKADO
TOLD BY
SIR W.S. GILBERT



ILLUSTRATED
BY
ALICE B. WOODWARD



LONDON
DANIEL O'CONNOR
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FOREWORD

SOME of those who owe many a delightful hour to the genius of Sir William S. Gilbert may be interested in hearing how this book came to be written. In the pre-war days, that now seem so dim and distant, it occurred to his publisher that the story of "The Mikado," told afresh by its author, would be welcomed by many of his admirers.

Sir William Gilbert accepted the project with even more than his usual geniality, and many talks about it with him will always be remembered by those who had the good fortune to be present.

That its publication has been so long delayed must be attributed mainly to the difficulties which have obstructed the production of books, especially those with coloured illustrations, during the last seven years.

But the evidence of never-failing popularity which recent revivals of the Savoy Operas have afforded, suggests that this last literary work of Sir W. S. Gilbert should be no longer withheld from the public, and it is now offered to his devotees, with fresh illustrations by Miss Alice B. Woodward, whose talented work and sympathetic rendering of all that is humorous and fanciful have made her known to a wide circle of admirers.

D. O'C.

NOY WEB
CLIFF
VIA RAIL

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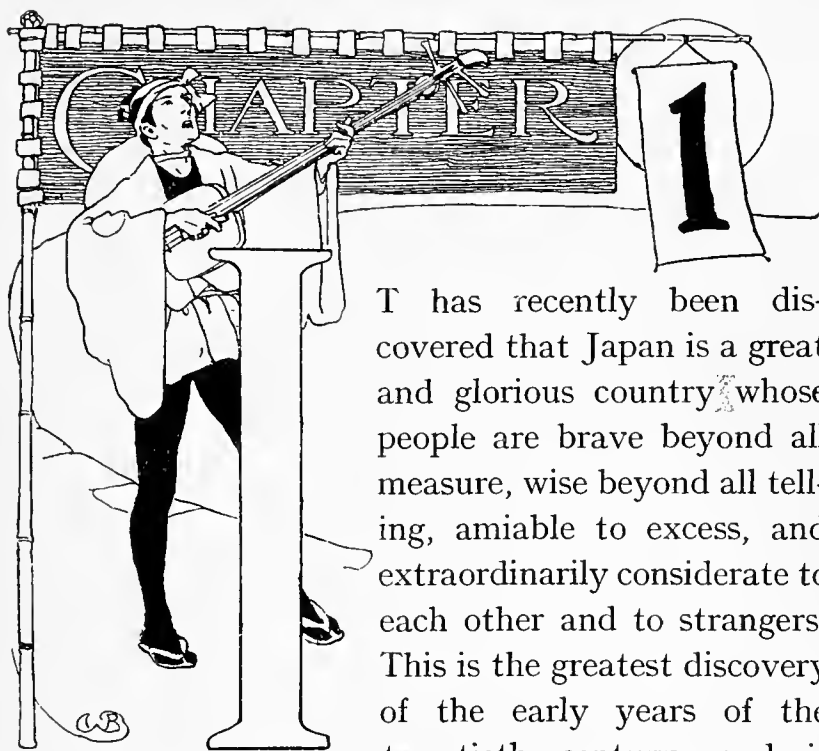
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It has recently been discovered that Japan is a great and glorious country whose people are brave beyond all measure, wise beyond all telling, amiable to excess, and extraordinarily considerate to each other and to strangers. This is the greatest discovery of the early years of the twentieth century, and is

one of the results of the tremendous lesson the Japanese inflicted on the Russians, who attempted to absorb a considerable portion of Manchuria a few years ago. The Japanese, however, attained their present condition of civilization very gradually, and at the date of my story they had peculiar tastes, ideas and fashions of their own, many of which they discarded when they found that they did not coincide with the ideas of the more enlightened countries of

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Europe. So if my readers are of opinion (as they very likely will be) that some of their customs, as they are revealed in this story, are curious, odd or ridiculous, they must bear in mind that the Japan of that time was very unlike the Japan of to-day. It is important to bear this in mind, because our Government being (in their heart of hearts) a little afraid of the Japanese, are extremely anxious not to irritate or offend them in any way lest they should come over here and give us just such a lesson as they gave the Russians a few years ago. My readers will understand that this fear is not entertained by the generality of inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland who, as a body, are not much afraid of any nation ; it is confined mainly to the good and wise gentlemen who rule us, just now, and whose wishes should consequently be respected.

Many years ago (I won't say how many because I don't know) Japan was ruled by a great and powerful Mikado, and a Mikado in those days was regarded as four-fifths a King and one-fifth a god. It has recently been decided that there is less of the god in him than people originally supposed, and he is now regarded simply as an absolute monarch ; but at the time of my story the mistake that his subjects made as to

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how he was put together had not been discovered.

If the existing Mikado had one fault (mind, I don't say that he had), it was a habit of punishing every mistake, however insignificant, with death, and this caused him to be regarded with a kind of respectful horror by his subjects at large. But it must be remembered that he lived a long time ago, and no Mikado of the present day would ever think of doing anything of the kind.

Now, in those days there was a certain musician called Nanki Poo, who played the second trombone in the Purple Tartarian Band, and the Purple Tartarian Band was engaged for the season as the Town Band of a popular seaside resort called Titipu, and Titipu was the capital of an important province called Toki-Saki. The Town Band used to play every morning at the end of the pier, and it was customary for all the visitors at Titipu to stroll up and down the pier, after bathing, just as they do today at Brighton or Weymouth. One of his audience was a beautiful young girl called Yum-Yum, who was betrothed, quite against her will, to her guardian Koko, a cheap advertising tailor in a large way of business. "Yum-Yum" means, when translated, "The full moon of delight which sheds her remark-

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able beams over a sea of infinite loveliness, thus indicating a glittering path by which she may be approached by those who are willing to brave the perils which necessarily await the daring adventurers who seek to reach her by those means," which shows what a compact language the Japanese is when all these long words can be crammed into two syllables—or rather, into one syllable repeated. Personally I should say that this description was a little high-flown for a school-girl home for the holidays, however pretty she might be, but, like most first names, it was given to her when she was a baby and expressed nothing more than her fond parents' hopes that she would eventually grow up to deserve it, and Yum-Yum was after all a very attractive young lady. Now Yum-Yum, who had a delicate ear for music, detected a quality in Nanki Poo's performance on the second trombone which plainly distinguished him from the very inferior artist who played the first trombone, and who, from motives of professional jealousy, blew upon his instrument with all his might in order to divert attention from Nanki Poo to himself. But this ill-natured man defeated his own object, for though Nanki Poo, as second trombone, had nothing to do but to play

Amorosamente, ma non troppo

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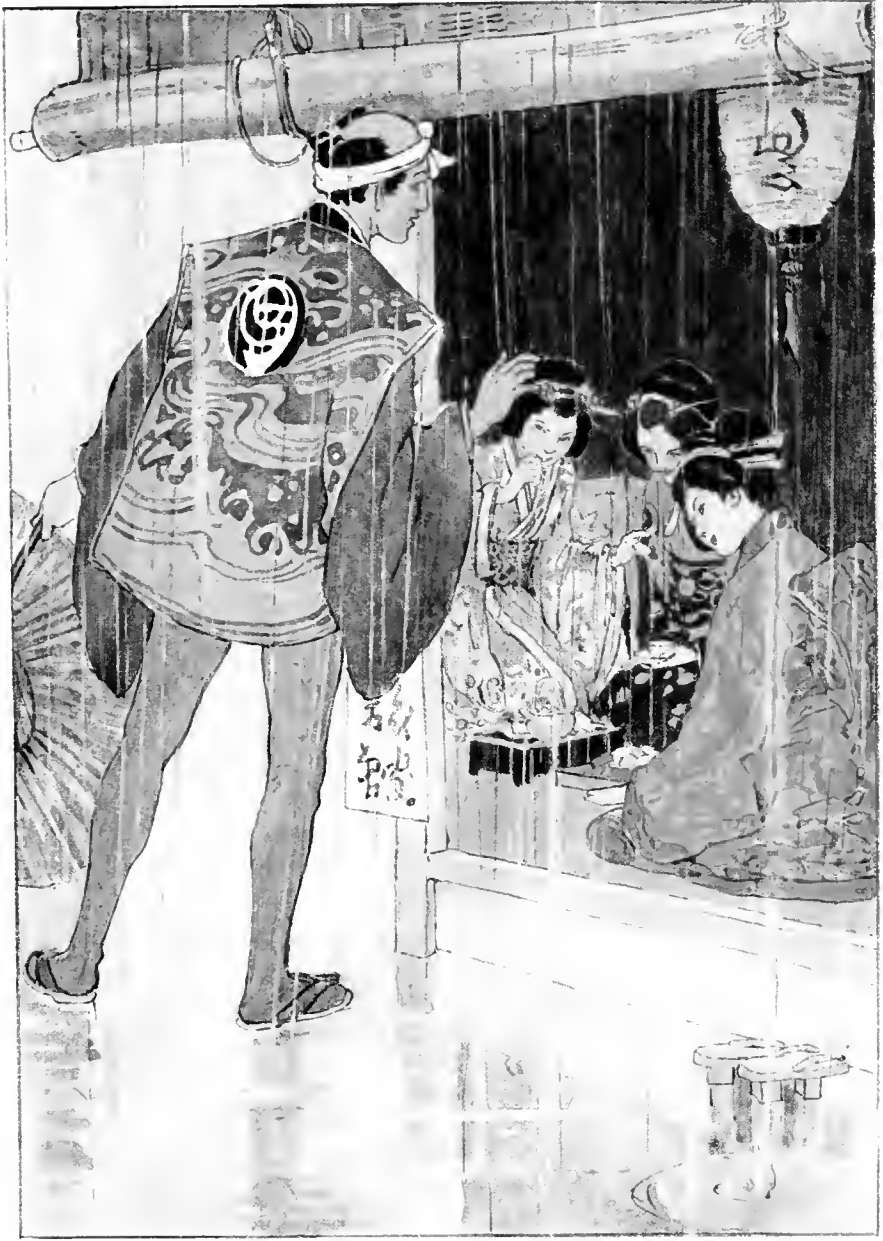
over and over again while his jealous superior played the air, Nanki's "Too, too, too" was given with such tender delicacy and with such an exquisite appreciation of the precise shade of sentiment intended to be conveyed by the composer, that the crowd listened to him with tears in their eyes and simply regarded the first trombone, who only played the air, as an interfering and self-asserting busy-body. This was especially the case when "Home, sweet Home" was played, for after he had blown at "Home, sweet Home" as loud as he could, everybody wished he would go there and leave them at liberty to concentrate their attention on Nanki Poo's delightful "Too, too, too" without interruption.

Notwithstanding the fact that she had been forcibly betrothed to her guardian, Yum-Yum, who at first was fascinated by Nanki Poo's performance, ended by being fascinated by Nanki Poo himself; and this shows what a sensible girl Yum-Yum was. If a young lady is to yield to fascination at all, it is much wiser to begin by being fascinated by a gentleman's beautiful work and then transfer her admiration to the gentleman who created it, than to begin by being fascinated by the gentleman before she knows

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whether he is able to create any beautiful work at all. Now Nanki Poo was such a conscientious musician that he devoted the whole of his attention to rendering expressively the simple but touching music he had to play, and never by any chance did he allow his beautiful purple eyes (which exactly matched his uniform) to wander from the music paper on which his notes were inscribed ; so it came to pass that while Yum-Yum was engaged in the act of transferring her admiration from his work to himself, Nanki Poo was quite unconscious of the effect that he had created. But one happy day while the band was playing as usual at the end of the pier, a drenching shower of rain fell and Nanki Poo ran for shelter, with several others, under a refreshment pavilion in which such attractive delicacies as fried snails and scraped shark's fin were sold at a reasonable rate ; and there he saw Yum-Yum, who had also sought protection from the heavy downpour. Their eyes met, and Nanki Poo was quite as much fascinated by Yum-Yum as Yum-Yum had, for many weeks past, been fascinated by him. From that moment his performance on the second trombone perceptibly deteriorated. His " Too, too, too " was given carelessly and wandered into several keys, for he was

THEIR EYES MET



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always on the look-out for Yum-Yum, and when his eyes met hers the three beautiful notes with which he was entrusted were scarcely recognizable. The First Trombone came into favour with the crowd once more, and Nanki Poo's performance ceased to be generally attractive to the audience at large. Eventually the Titipu season came to an end, but before the Purple Tartarians left for another part of the country, Nanki Poo, in the course of another obliging shower, contrived to tell Yum-Yum of the affection he entertained for her, and I need hardly describe her distress when she told him, with many sobs and endless tears, not only that she was betrothed, against her will, to be married to her undesirable guardian, but that their marriage was to take place in a year's time, as soon as her education at her Finishing School was completed. As the whole band had to fulfil an engagement at a distant part of the country, Nanki Poo and Yum-Yum were necessarily separated. Yum-Yum returned to school, that she might continue her preparations for the Matriculation Examination at the University of Tokio, and, engaged as she was in these absorbing pursuits, she had little time to devote to memories of Nanki Poo, who eventually passed almost out of her mind. Nanki

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Poo, upon whose sensitive heart Yum-Yum had made an indelible impression, had no Matriculation Examination to distract *his* thoughts, and so it happened that when his engagement with the Purple Tartarians came to an end, he found himself without any settled means of gaining a livelihood. So he bought a kind of cheap Japanese banjo, as being easier to carry than a trombone, and earned a poor subsistence by playing and singing at tea houses and other places of rest and refreshment.

Now the Mikado (who after all was a sensible monarch in some respects) had issued a decree that any persons who were guilty of the vulgar and detestable offence of scribbling their obscure names upon Public Monuments should forthwith be beheaded, and Nanki Poo, in the course of his travels, learnt to his delight, that one of the first to incur this serious punishment was Yum-Yum's guardian, Koko, the cheap tailor of Titipu, who had written "Try Koko's fifteen shilling suits" on a highly venerated statue of Buddha, their favourite deity. So Nanki Poo packed up his banjo and without a moment's delay set off on foot for Titipu in order to claim Yum-Yum's hand in marriage, now that she was likely to be free to give it to him.

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The inhabitants of Titipu were greatly agitated at the fate that had befallen Koko, not only because it brought forcibly to their minds the fact that any one of them might be subjected to a similar punishment for really insignificant little mistakes such as any of us might make in a moment of forgetfulness ; but also because the town of Titipu was so entirely free from anything like crime that when the late Lord High Executioner retired on a pension at the respectable age of ninety-eight, it was not thought worth while to appoint a successor. It is true that office was the highest dignity that a citizen could attain, yet the salary attached to it was so enormous that, in the interests of public economy, it was thought better to leave it vacant until occasion arose for a decapitation, when it would be quite time to fill it up. Now, however, the occasion *had* arisen, and the question was, what was to be done ? The Town Council of Titipu met several times to consider it, and eventually they came to a decision, which was that they could not do better than confer the post of Lord High Executioner on Koko himself, because, as they reasoned very ingeniously :

(1). All criminals sentenced to death must be executed in the order in which they are sentenced.

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(2). Koko is the next in order to be executed.

(3). If we appoint him Lord High Executioner he cannot behead anybody else until he has beheaded himself.

(4). But a man cannot behead himself.

(5). Therefore he can never behead anybody else, and we are all quite safe and can do exactly as we please, which is an uncommonly jolly state of things.

So as soon as the Town Council had arrived at this sensible decision they commanded the inhabitants to assemble in the Market Place of Titipu in order that Koko, arrayed in his new robes of office, might be presented to them. I should state that he had already been appointed for several weeks, but his robes took a long time to embroider.

It was a great day for Titipu. Flags were hung out everywhere—a delicious kind of boiled seaweed was served out gratuitously to everyone (there were very few, however) who applied for it, an apple and a bun were presented to all the Board School children, and all the fountains in the city ran with weak tea. Little Japanese fireworks, such as you find in crackers at Christmas parties, were discharged in all directions, and thousands of halfpence were thrown among the crowd to be scrambled for. A great dignitary called

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Pooh Bah who, among many other things, was Chairman of the Town Council (and of whom you will read a good deal presently), formally introduced Koko (who was arrayed in magnificent robes of black and gold and carried an enormous sword, six feet long, which was his badge of office), and the people received him with shouts of "Banzai, Banzai!" which is Japanese for "Hip, hip, hurrah," and sang, in chorus, the following beautiful lines :

"Behold the Lord High Executioner
A personage of noble rank and title !
A dignified and potent Officer
Whose duties are particularly vital.
Defer—defer
To the Lord High Executioner !"

To which Koko replied :

"Taken from the county jail
By a set of curious chances,
Liberated then on bail
On my own recognizances,
Wafted by a favouring gale,
As one sometimes is in trances,
Surely never had a male
Under such like circumstances
So adventurous a tale
Which may rank with most romances !"

Then he made a little speech, which was really an echo of one of his trade circulars.

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“Gentlemen, I am much touched by this reception. I can only trust that by strict attention to business I shall ensure a continuance of those favours which it will ever be my study to deserve. In the highly improbable event of my ever being called upon to act professionally, I am happy to think that there will be no difficulty in finding plenty of people whose deaths will be a distinct gain to society at large.” And then he sang the following song, which he had composed that very morning :

KOKO'S SONG

As some day it may happen that a victim must be found,
I've made a little list—I've made a little list—
Of inconvenient people who might well be underground,
For they never would be missed—they never would be missed.
The donkey who of nine-times-six and eight-times-seven prates,
And stumps you with enquiries on geography and dates,
And asks for your ideas on spelling “parallelogram,”
All narrow-minded people who are stingy with their jam,
And the torture-dealing dentist, with the forceps in his fist—
They'd none of them be missed—they'd none of them be missed.
There's the nursemaid who each evening in curl-papers does your
hair
With an aggravating twist—*she* never would be missed—
And tells you that you mustn't cough or sneeze or yawn or stare—
She never would be missed—I'm sure she'd not be missed.
All those who hold that children shouldn't have too much to eat,
And think cold suet pudding a delicious birthday treat,
Who say that little girls to bed at seven should be sent,

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And consider pocket money isn't given to be spent,
And doctors who on giving you unpleasant draughts insist—
They never would be missed, they'd none of them be missed.

Then the teacher who for hours keeps you practising your scales
With an ever-aching wrist—*she* never would be missed—
And children, too, who out of school are fond of telling tales—
They never would be missed—I'm sure they'd not be missed.
All people who maintain (in solemn earnest—not in joke)
That quantities of sugar-plums are bad for little folk,
And those who hold the principle, unalterably fixed,
That instruction with amusement should most carefully be mixed ;
All these (and many others) I have placed upon the list,
For they never would be missed—never, never would be missed !

Of course this song was only Koko's fun (for he was naturally too delighted at his sudden promotion from the condition of a convict under sentence of death to the exalted position of Lord High Executioner to take anything seriously), and it was so regarded by his audience, who were not so unfeeling as to desire that a severe punishment should be inflicted upon people who, after all, were only doing a kind of duty in a rather injudicious manner. Well, when the people had enjoyed Koko's little joke (the Japanese are a simple people who are very easily amused), Koko proceeded at once to the palace which had been assigned to him as an Official Residence, followed by the populace at large. The wealthy

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but thrifty Pooh Bah, however, remained in the Market Place in order to pick up any of the half-pence which had been thrown among the crowd and which might have escaped their observation. This he did partly with the view of humiliating his family pride, but principally because his maxim was that, as regards a halfpenny, you never could tell when it would come in handy.

Now this Pooh Bah may be described without any hesitation as one of the most remarkable characters in ancient or modern history. He was not a clever man—he was, in fact, an intolerably conceited donkey—but he was such a remarkable donkey that his very donkeydom entitled him to the affectionate respect of his fellow townsmen as being infinitely more remunerative than the very highest form of educated intelligence could possibly be. Personally I would rather be a very wise man than a stupid, but if I couldn't be a very wise man (I have tried and I find I can't) I would rather be so stupid as to excite wonder and admiration on account of the extraordinary and exceptional quality of my stupidity. I do not mean to suggest that I am right in holding this opinion, but if there is one character that I dislike more than another it is that particular kind of

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average person which I happen to be. Well, Pooh Bah was, as I have said, a remarkable character. He got it into his thick head that he was the last descendant of a family of extraordinary antiquity, and this was a matter of which he was so stupid as to be inordinately proud. Whenever he saw, or fancied he saw, the faintest possible resemblance to himself in the personal appearance of any eminent historical personage, he at once concluded that that historical personage must necessarily be one of his ancestors. So he collected all the portraits of dead celebrities that he could find, and managed to detect some resemblance to himself in all of the most illustrious of them. Thus he worked his way backwards through mankind until he had exhausted all the specimens he could find, and having done this he fell back upon the animal kingdom, and by means of fancied resemblances, traced his ancestry through Gorillas, Ourang-outangs, Barbary Apes, Capuchin Monkeys, Marmosets, Lemurs, Flying Squirrels, Bats, Canary Birds, Butterflies, Moths, Ladybirds, Black Beetles, Cheese-Mites, Jelly-fish, Coleoptera, Rotifera, Bacteria, Tollolleria, Twaddleria, Nonsenseria, Absurderia, Ridiculeria and thousands of other queer little creatures whose names I entirely forget (but

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could easily invent and no one but Sir Edwin Ray Lankester, K.C.B., would be the wiser) until he came at last to a Protoplasmal Primordial Atomic Globule (exactly like him) which he found reclining in great state and dignity at the business end of an amazingly powerful microscope ; and as fifty million of these gentry can be comfortably accommodated on the point of a needle, he considered (and I think that in this he showed a glimmer of sense) that it would be pedantic to pursue his researches any further. His Family Tree was quite a curiosity in itself, and I wish I could reproduce it here, but as it was about fifteen miles long it would make this book too bulky, and it's bulky enough already, goodness knows.

But this was only one phase of his complicated character. He was sufficiently intelligent to know that it was not only very illogical but extremely wrong to be inordinately proud of his long family descent (for *he* had done nothing towards it except to be the last of them all, which wasn't much), so he virtuously resolved to mortify this family pride at every opportunity that presented itself. Consequently when all the High Officers of State (who were also very proud people) resigned in a body because they would not bring themselves to serve

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under a Lord High Executioner who had formerly been nothing more than an advertising tailor, Pooh Bah unhesitatingly accepted all their offices, to which extremely handsome salaries happened to be attached. Of course his income from these appointments was enormous, but that circumstance was in itself a dreadful indignity, because it constituted him a salaried minion, and for all salaried minions and other people who earned their own living he

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entertained an unbounded contempt. He was undoubtedly a silly, because what he did was open to misconstruction, but in doing it he meant well, and moreover it paid.

As Pooh Bah was busy mortifying his family pride by looking for overlooked halfpence, Nanki Poo, who had just arrived at Titipu in search of his beloved Yum-Yum, accosted him, and I ought to explain that it was the rule in Titipu that when you addressed a gentleman in prose he had to reply to you in prose, but when you addressed him in verse he had to reply in verse. So Nanki Poo sang :

“ Good nobleman, I pray you tell me
Where an enchanting maiden dwelleth
Who's named Yum-Yum, the ward of Koko?
In pity speak—Oh, speak, I pray you ! ”

To which Pooh Bah replied :

“ Why, who are you who ask this question ? ”

And Nanki Poo proceeded at once to sing a song descriptive of himself—a song which he had ready because he had often sung it at tea-houses and other places of entertainment :

“ A Wandering Minstrel I,
A thing of shreds and patches,
Of ballads, songs and snatches
And dreamy lullaby.

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My catalogue is long,
Through every passion ranging,
And to your humours changing
I tune my supple song !

“ Are you in sentimental mood ?
I'll sigh with you,
Oh, willow ! willow !
On maiden's coldness do you brood ?
I'll do so too.
Oh, willow ! willow !
I'll charm your willing ears
With songs of lovers' fears,
While sympathetic tears
My cheek bedew,
Oh, willow ! willow ! ”

(Then he changed the tune.)

“ But if patriotic sentiment is wanted,
I've patriotic ballads cut and dried,
For where'er our country's banner may be planted,
All other local banners are defied.
Our warriors in serried ranks assembled,
Never quail—or they conceal it if they do ;
And I shouldn't be surprised if people trembled
Before the mighty troops of Titipu ! ”

(He sang the verse that follows to a rollicking sea-tune.)

“ And if you call for a song of the sea,
We'll heave the capstan round,
With a ' yeo heave oh ! ' for the wind is free,
Her anchor's a-trip and her helm's a-lee,
Hurrah for the homeward bound !

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To lay aloft when it blows and snows
May tickle a landsman's taste,
But the happiest hour a sailor knows
Is when he's down
At an inland town,
With his Nancy on his knees, yeo ho!
And his arm around her waist!

“ Then man the capstan—off we go,
As the fiddler swings us round,
With a ‘ yeo heave oh ! ’
And a rumbelow,*
Hurrah for the homeward bound ! ”

“ That's a very nice song,” said Pooh Bah, “ but it's too long. I was tired of it ever so long before it was finished.”

“ I'll sing it again with a verse left out, if you like,” said Nanki Poo, who was anxious to conciliate so important a person.

“ Well, try,” said he, and Nanki Poo sang it again with the sentimental verse omitted.

“ That's much better,” said Pooh Bah ; “ I was not nearly so bored that time. Now try it without the patriotic verse.”

And Nanki Poo sang it without the patriotic verse.

* I have no idea what a “ rumbelow ” may be. No doubt it is some nautical article that is extremely useful on board ship, for it is so often alluded to in sea-songs. It seems to hold the same place in a sea-song that the “ old plantation ” does in negro minstrelsy.

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“ I quite enjoyed that,” said Pooh Bah ; “ now omit the nautical stanza.”

Nanki Poo did so, though he was getting rather tired.

“ That’s delightful ! ” exclaimed Pooh Bah. “ Now try it without the introductory verse.”

“ But that would leave nothing to sing,” said Nanki Poo.

“ Exactly my idea of a song ! ” said Pooh Bah, greatly tickled at the success of his little practical joke. “ So much obliged to you. And now to business. What do you want with Yum-Yum ? ”

“ I’ll tell you,” said Nanki Poo. “ A year ago I loved her and I discovered that she loved me, although she was betrothed, entirely against her will, to her guardian Koko. As a man of honour, I gave up all hope of her and left the town broken-hearted. Judge of my delight when I heard, a short time ago, that Koko had been condemned to be beheaded for defacing a public monument. I hurried back at once in the hope of finding Yum-Yum at liberty to listen to my protestations.”

“ It is quite true,” replied Pooh Bah, “ that Koko was so condemned, but he was reprieved at the last moment and raised to the exalted rank of Lord High

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Executioner under the following remarkable circumstances :

“ Our great Mikado, virtuous man,
When he to rule our land began,
 Resolved to try
 A plan whereby
His people might be steadied,
So he proclaimed a statute new
That all misguided people who
Did anything they shouldn't do
 Should forthwith be beheaded.

“ His stern decree, you'll understand,
Caused great dismay throughout the land,
 For young and old
 And shy and bold
Were equally affected :
The gentleman who snubbed his wife,
Or ate green peas with blade of knife,
Was straight condemned to lose his life—
 He usually objected.

“ So we released on heavy bail
This Koko from the county jail
 (Whose head was next
 On good pretext
Condemned to be mown off),
And made *him* headsman, for we said
' Who's next to be decapitated
Cannot cut off another's head
 Until he's cut his own off.'

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And we are right, I think you'll say,
To argue in this kind of way,
 And I am right,
 And he is right,
And all is right—too looral lay ! ”

“ Koko released and appointed Lord High Executioner ! ” exclaimed Nanki Poo in broken-hearted dismay. “ Why, that's the highest rank citizen can attain ! ”

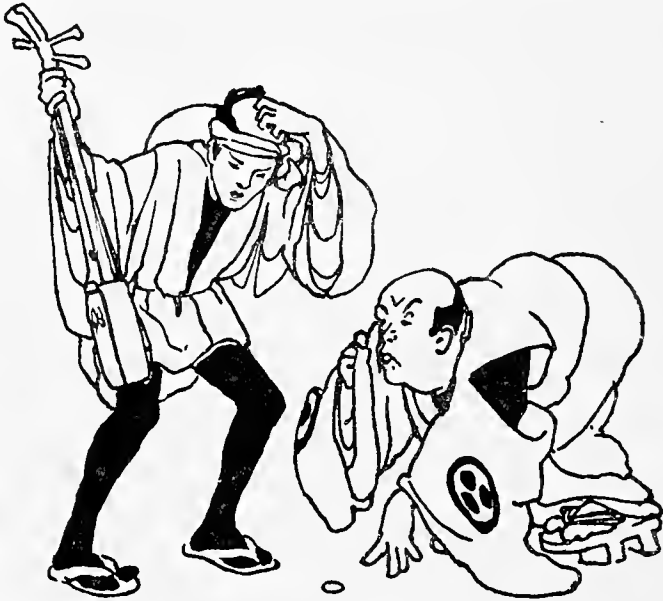
“ It is,” replied Pooh Bah. “ Our logical Mikado, seeing no moral difference between the dignified Judge who condemns a criminal to die and the industrious mechanic who carries out the sentence, has rolled the two offices into one, and every Judge is now his own Executioner.”

“ But,” said Nanki Poo, who saw the brilliant Order of the Potted Geranium sparkling on Pooh Bah's bosom, “ how good of you, who are evidently a Nobleman of the highest rank, to condescend to tell all this to me, a mere strolling minstrel ! ”

“ You'd think so indeed if you knew all,” replied Pooh Bah. “ I am, in point of fact, a particularly haughty and exclusive person of pre-Adamite ancestral descent. My family pride is something inconceivable ; I'm ashamed of this weakness, but I can't help it. I was born sneering. Nevertheless, I

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struggle hard to overcome this defect. I mortify my pride on every possible occasion. When all the officers of State resigned in a body because they were too



proud to serve under a retired tailor, did I not unhesitatingly accept all their posts at once? It is consequently my degrading duty to serve this contemptible upstart as First Lord of the Treasury, Lord Chief Justice, Commander-in-Chief, Lord High Admiral, Master of the Buckhounds, Lord of the Bedchamber, Gold Stick in Waiting, Archbishop of Titipu, and Lord Mayor, both acting and elect.

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And at a salary ! In point of fact, at several salaries !
A Pooh Bah paid for his services ! I, a salaried minion !
But I do it ! It revolts me, but I do it ! ”

A great sob rose to Pooh Bah’s throat as he stooped to pick up a halfpenny, which had hitherto escaped his observation.

“ It does you credit,” said Nanki Poo, who was too simple to see that Pooh Bah was really a very contemptible character.

“ But I don’t stop at that,” continued Pooh Bah ;
“ I dine with middle-class people on reasonable terms. I dance at cheap suburban parties for a moderate fee. I accept refreshment at any hands, however lowly. I also retail State Secrets at a very low figure. For instance, any further information about Yum-Yum would come under the head of a State Secret.”

Nanki Poo took the hint and gave him the few coins in his possession. Pooh Bah (who had been leading up to this) flushed purple with shame and humiliation.

“ Another insult ! ” said he, weighing the coins in his hand, “ and, I think, a light one ! ” Nevertheless, he proceeded to earn his tip by singing the following song :

“ Young man, despair,
Likewise go to,

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Yum-Yum the fair
 You may not woo.
 It will not do,
 I'm sorry for you,
You very imperfect ablutioner ! *
 This very day
 From school Yum-Yum
 Will wend her way
 And homeward come,
 With beat of drum
 And a rum-tum-tum,
To wed the Lord High Executioner !

“ And the brass will crash,
 And the trumpets bray,
And they'll cut a dash
 On their wedding day.
From what I say you may infer
It's as good as a play to him and her ;
She'll toddle away, as all aver,
With the Lord High Executioner !
 It's a hopeless case
 As you may see,
And, in your place,
 Away I'd flee ;
 But don't blame me,
I'm sorry to be
Of your pleasure a diminutioner.
 They'll vow their pact
 Extremely soon,
 In point of fact

* The Japanese are an extremely clean people, and Pooh Bah was honestly shocked to find that Nanki Poo's long march had left its traces on his person.

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This afternoon
Her honeymoon
With that buffoon

At seven commences, so *you* shun her ! ”

Nanki Poo was terribly upset by Pooh Bah's news about Yum-Yum, and he went away in the most disconsolate condition imaginable. Pooh Bah, who considered that he had fully earned his tip, resumed his search for overlooked halfpence with such intentness (he had found three) that he did not notice the approach of Koko who had to tap him on the shoulder to attract his attention.

“ Pooh Bah,” said Koko, “ I want to consult you on a matter of some importance.”

“ I am all ears,” replied Pooh Bah, which in one sense was true enough.

“ It seems that the festivities in connection with my approaching marriage with Yum-Yum (who will arrive to-day) must last a week. I should like to do the thing handsomely, and I want to consult you as to the amount I ought to spend upon it.”

“ Certainly,” said Pooh Bah. “ But in which of my capacities do you wish to consult me ? As First Lord of the Treasury, Lord Chamberlain, Attorney-General, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Privy Purse or Private Secretary ? ”

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Koko considered for a moment.

“ Suppose we say as Private Secretary.”

“ Speaking as your Private Secretary I should say that, as the city will have to pay for it, don't stint yourself—do it well.”

“ Exactly,” said Koko. “ As the city will have to pay for it. That is your advice ? ”

“ As Private Secretary,” said Pooh Bah. “ Of course you will understand that as Chancellor of the Exchequer I am bound to see that due economy is observed.”

“ Oh,” said Koko, rather crestfallen. “ But you said just now ‘ don't stint yourself, do it well.’ ”

“ As Private Secretary,” replied Pooh Bah.

“ And now you say that due economy must be observed.”

“ As Chancellor of the Exchequer.”

“ I see,” said Koko ; “ that's awkward.” Then an idea occurred to him.

“ Come over here, where the Chancellor can't hear us,” said Koko, leading him round the corner of the square. “ Now, as my Solicitor, how do you advise me to deal with this difficulty ? ”

“ Oh, as your Solicitor,” replied Pooh Bah, “ I should have no hesitation in saying ‘ chance it.’ ”

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“ Thank you,” said Koko, shaking his hand.
“ That settles it—I will.”

“ If it were not that as Lord Chief Justice I am bound to see that the law isn’t violated.”

“ I see ; that’s awkward again. Come over here where the Chief Justice cannot hear us,” leading him down the second turning to the left. “ Now, then, as First Lord of the Treasury ? ”

“ Of course as First Lord of the Treasury,” said Pooh Bah, “ I could propose a special vote that would cover all expenses if it were not that, as Leader of the Opposition, it would be my duty to resist it tooth and nail. Or as Paymaster-General I could so cook the accounts that as Lord High Auditor I should never discover the fraud. But then as Archbishop of Titipu it would be my duty to denounce my dishonesty and give myself into my own custody as First Commissioner of Police.”

“ That’s more awkward still,” said Koko, quite depressed by the many difficulties that were presented to him.

Pooh Bah was not adamant. His gentle heart was touched by Koko’s embarrassment.

“ I don’t say,” said Pooh Bah, “ that all these important people could be squared ; but it is right

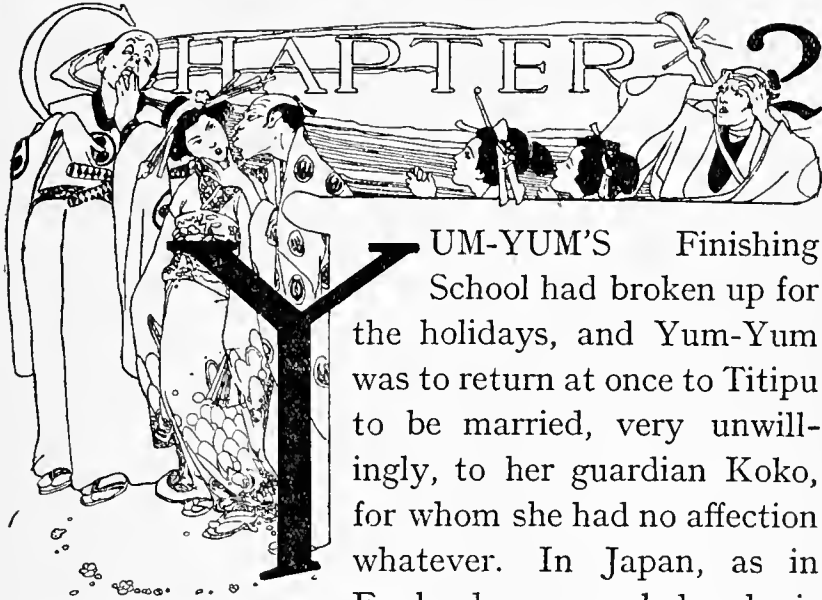
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to tell you that they wouldn't be sufficiently degraded in their own estimation unless they were insulted by a very considerable bribe."

Koko was a little relieved.

"The matter shall have my careful consideration," said he, giving him all the money he had about him. "But see—my beautiful Yum-Yum and her bridesmaids approach, and any little compliment on your part, such as an abject grovel in a characteristic Japanese attitude, would be esteemed a favour."

"No, no," said Pooh Bah, "grovels are extra. No money no grovel." And as Koko had no more to give him, the grovel had to be dispensed with.



YUM-YUM'S Finishing School had broken up for the holidays, and Yum-Yum was to return at once to Titipu to be married, very unwillingly, to her guardian Koko, for whom she had no affection whatever. In Japan, as in England, a young lady who is under age cannot be married without her guardian's consent, and as Koko would not consent to her marrying anybody but himself, she *had* to marry him if she wanted to be married to anyone at all.

Yum-Yum, as a bride-that-was-to-be, was naturally an object of intense interest to all her school-fellows, and as she was extremely popular with them on account of her amiability and (properly restricted) sense of fun, they all begged to be allowed to be her bridesmaids. Yum-Yum, who was a most good-natured girl, readily assented to this suggestion, so the day after breaking-up they all travelled together

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to Titipu in three long omnibuses, with their luggage on the roof, because as she was to be married that evening there was necessarily no time to be lost.

Yum-Yum and her bridesmaids arrived safely at Titipu and at once proceeded on foot to the courtyard in front of Koko's Official Residence, where he was waiting, dressed in his most magnificent clothes, to receive them. Moreover he was attended by his retinue of nobles, including Pooh Bah, who as Archbishop of Titipu was to read the marriage ceremony.

The young ladies entered the courtyard, walking two and two, and singing this pretty song :

“ Comes a train of little ladies
From scholastic trammels free,
Each a little bit afraid is,
Wondering what the world can be !

“ Is it but a world of trouble—
Sadness set to song ?
Is its beauty but a bubble
Bound to break ere long ?

“ Are its palaces and pleasures
Fantasies that fade ?
And the glories of its treasures
Shadows of a shade ? ”

As nobody could guess the answer to these riddles,

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Yum-Yum, with her two dearest and most confidential friends (who were called Peep Bo and Pitti-Sing) came to the front and sang the following trio, which had been composed by the school music-master for the occasion :

“ Three little maids from school are we,
Pert as a school-girl well can be,
Filled to the brim with girlish glee ;
 Three little maids from school !
Everything is a source of fun ;
Nobody’s safe, for we care for none ;
Life is a joke that’s just begun ;
 Three little maids from school !
 Three little maids who all unwary
 Come from a ladies’ seminary,
 Freed from its genius tutelary !
 Three little maids from school !
One little maid is a bride—Yum-Yum—
Two little maids in attendance come,
Three little maids is the total sum—
 Three little maids from school !
From three little maids take one away,
Two little maids remain, and they
Won’t have to wait very long, they say—
 Three little maids from school !
 Three little maids who all unwary
 Come from a ladies’ seminary,
 Freed from its genius tutelary—
 Three little maids from school ! ”

Koko was very pleased with their trio, and even

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the solemn and haughty Pooh Bah was seen to smile. But he recollected that a smile was quite inconsistent with the dignity of twenty-eight of his most important public appointments, and consistent only with about three of the humblest of them—Court Jester, Licensor of Plays, and Editor-in-Chief of the Japanese *Punch*. There was a heavy majority against the smile and therefore, being a conscientious man, he effaced it at once and resumed his customary expression of solemn stupidity.

Koko came down the steps, with open arms, to receive Yum-Yum, who was not a little alarmed at this threat of affection.

“ You’re not going to kiss me before all these people ? ” said she.

“ Well,” said Koko, “ that was the idea.”

Yum-Yum didn’t know much about these things, for she only knew what was taught in the Finishing School, and the Finishing School did not finish them quite as far as that. She turned to Peep Bo.

“ It seems odd, doesn’t it ? ” whispered Yum-Yum.

“ It *is* rather peculiar,” assented Peep Bo.

“ Oh, it’s all right,” said Pitti-Sing. “ Everything must have a beginning, you know.”

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“ Well,” replied Yum-Yum, “ of course I know nothing about these things, but I’ve no objection if it’s usual.”

“ Oh, it’s quite usual, I think,” said Koko, who, to make quite sure, appealed to Pooh Bah. “ What do you say, Lord Chamberlain ? ”

Now the Lord Chamberlain was the highest authority on all points of propriety, and his decision in such matters was final. Pooh Bah reflected for a moment :

“ I have known it done,” said he at last.

That settled the matter, and Koko kissed Yum-Yum on both cheeks, to the infinite amusement of all the bridesmaids, who chuckled to each other in a rather unladylike manner.

“ Thank goodness *that’s* over ! ” said Yum-Yum.

At this moment the three young ladies caught sight of poor Nanki Poo, who had managed to get into the courtyard with the crowd in order to have one last look at Yum-Yum before losing her for ever.

Yum-Yum saw him and recognized him at once.

“ Why,” said she, running up to him, “ that’s never you ! ”

You see at a Finishing School they teach you a great many polite accomplishments, but you are not

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taught grammar because you are supposed to know it before you go there, otherwise, instead of exclaiming "that's never you!" she would probably have said: "Am I mistaken, or do I behold you once more?"

The other two young ladies (who had heard all about him from Yum-Yum) rushed up to him and all three

began to speak at once, without any stops :

Yum-Yum said : " Oh I am so glad—I haven't seen you for ever so long and I'm right at the

Peep Bo said : " And have you got an engagement ? Yum-Yum's got one but she doesn't like

Pitti-Sing said : " Now tell us all about the news because you go about everywhere and we've been

(Yum-Yum) : top of the school and have got three prizes and I've come home for good and I'm

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- (Peep Bo) : it and she'd ever so much rather it was you and
 I've come home for good and I'm
(Pitti-Sing) : at school, but thank goodness that's all over
 now and we've come home for good and we're
(Yum-Yum) : not going back any more !
(Peep Bo) : not going back any more !
(Pitti-Sing) : not going back any more !

You can try if you like to say these three speeches at once as the girls did. I should think it was difficult because I can't do it myself, and I know that anything that is too difficult for me to do must be very difficult indeed. But there's no reason why you shouldn't try—especially on a wet day, when you can't go out and find it rather dull at home. If you can't do it, and *I* can't do it, it shows that three little school-girls put together are cleverer than you and I, because they *could* and *did*.

Nanki Poo was deeply touched to find that Yum-Yum had borne him in remembrance during the year of their separation, and he determined to make a final appeal to Koko's commiseration. But just as he was about to throw himself at Koko's feet, that gentleman, who had been not a little astonished at the welcome accorded to Nanki Poo by the three young ladies, said to him, rather drily :

“ I beg your pardon. Will you present me ? ”

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“ Oh,” said all three at once. “ This is the gentleman who——”

“ One at a time, if you please,” said Koko.

“ This,” said Yum-Yum, “ is the gentleman who used to play so beautifully on the—on the——”

“ On the Marine Parade,” said Peep Bo.

“ Oh, indeed,” said Koko, as he uttered a long whistle with his pursed-up lips. “ I am not acquainted with the instrument.”

Nanki Poo could be silent no longer.

“ Sir,” said he, “ I have the misfortune to love your ward Yum-Yum ; she returns my affection and is entirely indifferent to yours. Oh, I know I deserve your anger, but I——”

“ Anger ? ” said Koko. “ Not a bit, my boy. Why, I love her myself ! I’m not so unreasonable as to quarrel with a man for agreeing with me. Charming little girl, isn’t she ? Pretty eyes—nice hair—taking little thing, altogether. Very glad to have my opinion backed by a competent authority. Thank you very much. Good-bye. Pish Tush, run him off.”

And Pish Tush took him by the back of the neck with one hand and by the waist with the other and ran him out of the courtyard in the most undignified manner.

“ PISH TUSH, RUN HIM OFF ”



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In the meantime Yum-Yum, Peep Bo and Pitti-Sing had been devoting their attention to Pooh Bah, who stood absolutely motionless to express his contemptuous indifference to the impertinent curiosity of the young ladies. They had never seen anything like him before, and they were not quite sure that he wasn't a piece of ingenious waxwork. One of them, to make sure, poked him in the ribs with her forefinger, which made him jump.

"It's alive!" said she, starting back in alarm.

"Go away, little girls," said Pooh Bah, whose dignity was terribly upset by this very unladylike action. "Can't talk to little girls like you. Go away, there's dears."

Koko came to the rescue.

"Pooh Bah, allow me to present my bride-elect. It's the one in the middle."

"What do you want me to do to them?" said Pooh Bah, swelling with outraged importance. "Mind, I *will not* kiss them."

"No, no," replied Koko. "You shan't kiss them. A little bow—a mere nothing. You needn't mean it, you know."

"It goes against the grain," said Pooh Bah. "They are not young ladies, they are young persons."

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“Come, come,” said Koko, “make an effort, there’s a good nobleman.”

“Well, I shan’t mean it,” replied Pooh Bah. And, comforting himself with this reflection, he made a tremendous effort as though he were trying to swallow a larger piece of Bath bun than he could conveniently manage.

“How de do, little girls—how de do?” And then he muttered to himself: “Oh, my Protoplasmal Ancestor!”

“That’s very good,” said Koko, encouragingly. “That’s really capital.”

The three young ladies were very much amused at Pooh Bah’s absurd pride. They were so ill-bred as to chuckle quite out loud, and I don’t think much of their Finishing School.

“I see nothing to laugh at,” said Pooh Bah, swelling with importance like an angry turkeycock. “It’s very painful to me to have to say ‘How de do, little girls’ to young persons. I’m not in the habit of saying ‘How de do, little girls’ to anybody under the rank of a stockbroker.”*

Koko was distressed at Pooh Bah’s evident annoyance.

* I don’t know why he drew the line at a stockbroker, unless it is that when a member of the aristocracy is ruined he generally goes on the Stock Exchange.

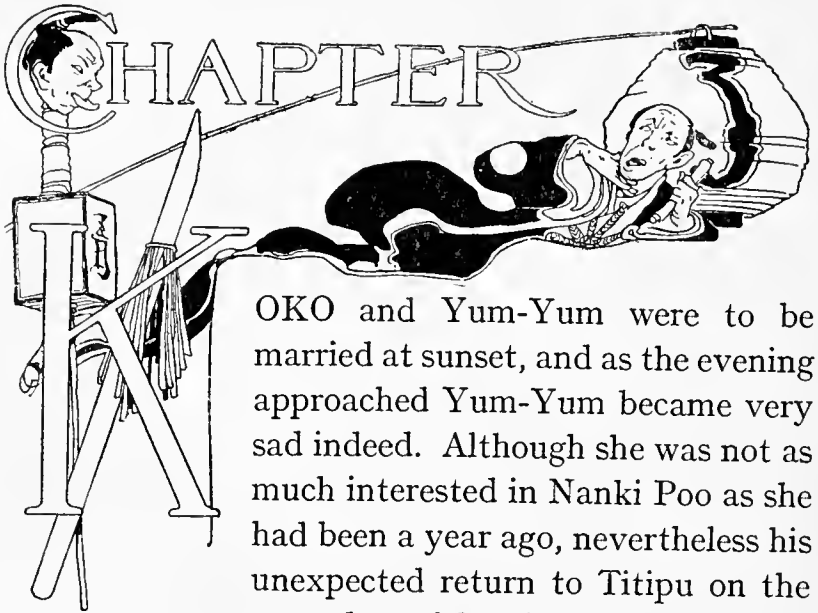
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“Don’t laugh at him,” whispered Koko to the girls. “He can’t help it—he’s under treatment for it.” Then, turning to Pooh Bah, he said: “Never mind them; they don’t understand the delicacy of your position.”

“*We* know how delicate it is, don’t we?” said Pooh Bah, who was very fierce by this time.

“I should think we did,” said Koko. “How a nobleman of your importance can do it at all is a thing I never could and never shall understand. Come with me and be rude to one of the servants. It will help to reconcile you to yourself.”

And off they went together, leaving Yum-Yum, Peep Bo and Pitti-Sing laughing heartily at their experience of a nobleman of the highest importance.



OKO and Yum-Yum were to be married at sunset, and as the evening approached Yum-Yum became very sad indeed. Although she was not as much interested in Nanki Poo as she had been a year ago, nevertheless his unexpected return to Titipu on the very day of her intended marriage with Koko seemed to make her still more unwilling to unite herself to a man who was absolutely uninteresting to her. She wandered forth into the shady grounds of the Official Residence in order to think it over and try to find some means of escaping the unpleasant doom that Koko had prepared for her.

Now Nanki Poo was so absorbed by his distress at the prospect of Yum-Yum's marriage that he kept hovering about the Residence all day long. He saw Yum-Yum enter the garden and he at once accosted her, for he had something to say that he thought

HE SAW YUM-YUM ENTER THE GARDEN



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might exercise a powerful influence over her movements.

“ Yum-Yum,” said he, “ I’m in a dreadful state of mind. I’ve travelled here night and day for three weeks in the belief that your guardian was to be beheaded, and now I find that he’s reprieved and that you are to be married to him this evening ! ”

“ Alas, yes ! ” said Yum-Yum.

“ But you do not love him ? ”

“ Alas, no ! ”

“ Then refuse to be married to him and be married to me instead.”

“ Impossible,” said Yum-Yum. “ It is true that I do not love Koko, but a wandering minstrel who sings and plays outside places of entertainment is hardly a fitting husband for the ward of a Lord High Executioner.”

Nanki Poo looked right and left to be quite sure that they were unobserved, while he made the important communication to which I have referred.

“ What,” said he in an emphatic whisper, “ if it should prove that, after all, I am *no* musician ? ”

“ There ! ” said Yum-Yum, “ I was certain of it directly I heard you play.”

This was sheer nonsense on Yum-Yum’s part,

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for she admired his playing beyond everything, but she never could resist an opportunity of being pert.

“ Now do be serious for one moment,” said Nanki Poo. “ What if it should prove that I am no other than the SON OF HIS MAJESTY THE MIKADO ? ”

“ The son of the Mikado ! ” exclaimed Yum-Yum in great amazement. “ The heir to the throne of Japan ? ”

“ That is another way of putting it,” said Nanki Poo.

Yum-Yum fell on her knees and hit her forehead on the ground three times (but not too hard) to express her reverence for the exalted gentleman who had courted her.

“ But why is your Highness disguised ? ” she exclaimed, “ and what has your Highness done ? And will your Highness promise never to do it again ? ”

“ I'll tell you,” said Nanki Poo. “ Some years ago I had the misfortune to captivate Kati-sha, an elderly lady of my father's Court. She, mistaking my customary politeness for an expression of affection, claimed me in marriage. My father, who is extremely strict in such matters, ordered me to marry her within a week or be beheaded that evening. That evening I fled, and, assuming the disguise of a Second Trombone, I joined the band in which you found me when I first had the happiness of seeing you.”

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“ I see,” said Yum-Yum, who was beginning to be much impressed by the exalted rank of her suitor. “ I’ll think it over. Go away now and I’ll see what can be done. But to be quite candid, I don’t see how I am to get out of it.”

“ Is there no hope ? ” said Nanki Poo.

“ I’m afraid not,” said Yum-Yum. “ But, nevertheless, hope up to a certain point, but don’t overdo it. Now go, for I hear Koko coming, and if he catches me talking to you it will vex him. Good-bye ! ”

And they rubbed their knees and bent their heads at each other, as was usual in Japan when two people parted. Nanki Poo leapt over the small boundary wall and vanished, while Yum-Yum went into the house just as Koko appeared.

“ There she goes,” said Koko to himself. “ To think how entirely my future happiness is wrapped up in that little parcel ! Oh, Matrimony ! ”

He was going on to address a carefully prepared speech to Matrimony, when Pooh Bah and Pish Tush entered hurriedly.

“ Now then, what is it ? ” said Koko. “ Can’t you see that I’m soliloquising ? You have interrupted an apostrophe, sir ! ”

“ I beg your Highness’s pardon,” said Pish Tush,

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“ but we are the bearers of a letter from the Mikado.”

“ A letter from the Mikado ! ” exclaimed Koko.
“ What can it be about ? ”

They all squatted on the ground, and Koko pressed the letter to his forehead in token of submission before he opened it.

“ Ah, here it is at last,” said Koko as he read the letter with dismay. “ The Mikado is struck by the fact that no executions have taken place in the province of Toki-Saki for many years, and he decrees that unless somebody is beheaded within a month, the city of Titipu shall be reduced to the rank of a village ! ”

“ But that will involve us all in irretrievable ruin ! ” said Pish Tush, who held a quantity of tramway shares.

“ Absolute ruin ! ” exclaimed Pooh Bah, who as Lord High Architect had just accepted a valuable contract to build a cathedral.

“ Yes,” said Koko, “ there’s no help for it ; I shall have to execute somebody. The only question is, who shall it be ? ”

“ Well,” said Pooh Bah, “ it seems unkind to say so, but as you’re already under sentence of death, everything points to *you*.”

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“That’s absurd,” said Koko. “It has been already decided that a man cannot cut his own head off.”

“A man might try,” replied Pooh Bah.



“Even if you only succeeded in cutting it half off, that would be something,” said Pish Tush.

“It would be taken as evidence of your desire to comply with the Imperial will,” observed Pooh Bah.

“No,” said Koko. “There I am adamant. As Lord High Executioner my reputation is at stake, and I can’t consent to embark on a professional operation unless I see my way to a successful result.”

“This professional conscientiousness is highly creditable to you,” remarked Pooh Bah, “but it places *us* in a very awkward position.”

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“ My good sir,” said Koko, a little nettled, “ the awkwardness of your position is grace itself compared with that of a man engaged in the act of cutting off his own head.”

“ I’m afraid,” said Pish Tush, “ that unless you can find a substitute——”

“ A substitute !” exclaimed Koko. “ The very thing ! Thank you very much, Pish Tush. Pooh Bah, I appoint you Lord High Substitute.”

Pooh Bah pondered thoughtfully for half a minute. He was strongly tempted to accept this new and distinguished office, but his better nature prevailed.

“ I should like it above all things,” replied Pooh Bah. “ Such an appointment would realize my fondest dreams. But no—at any sacrifice I *must* set bounds to my insatiable ambition !”

And he expressed his views in the following song :

“ I am so proud,
If I allowed
My family pride
To be my guide,
I’d volunteer
To quit this sphere
Instead of you
In a minute or two ;

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And so
Although,
As of course you know,
I greatly pine
To brightly shine *
And take the line
Of a hero fine,
With grief condign
I must decline
To sit in solemn silence in a dull dark dock
In a pestilential prison with a life-long lock,
Awaiting the sensation of a short sharp shock
From a cheap and chippy chopper on a big black block !

Having thus expressed his views, Pooh Bah hastily retired (lest, if he remained, he should allow himself to be over-persuaded), followed by his faithful subordinate.

Koko was in a terrible state of mind.

“ Here,” said he, “ am I who allowed myself to be respited at the last moment, simply in order to benefit my native town, and it is now suggested, by a man whom I have laden with honours, that I should consent to die within a month ! Is this public gratitude ? Is this——”

At this moment Nanki Poo appeared, with a rope in which he was making a large noose.

* “ *To brightly shine.*” This is called a “ split infinitive ” and is never used by well-educated people. But some allowance should be made for a gentleman who is extemporising beautiful poetry.

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“ How dare you interrupt ? ” said Koko. “ Am I never to be permitted to soliloquise ? ”

Koko was fond of soliloquising because his medical attendant said that contradiction was bad for him as it flew to his head, and Koko could rely upon it that while he was speaking to himself, nobody could contradict him.

“ Go on,” said Nanki Poo. “ Don’t mind me.”

“ What are you going to do with that rope ? ” asked Koko.

“ I am about,” said Nanki Poo, “ to terminate an unendurable existence.”

“ No, no, don’t do that,” exclaimed Koko, who was really a humane man. “ This is horrible ! Why you wicked, wicked man, are you aware that in taking your life you are committing a crime at which society revolts—a crime of the most disgraceful and inhuman character which—which——”

And Koko paused for a moment, for a most ingenious idea had just occurred to him.

“ Well ? ” said Nanki Poo, “ ‘ a crime of the most disgraceful and inhuman character.’ Go on.”

And Koko, trembling in every limb at the bare thought of the proposal that he was about to make, whispered :

THE STORY OF THE MIKADO

“ Is it *absolutely certain* that you are resolved to die ? ”

“ Absolutely,” said Nanki Poo, attaching the rope to a bough of a tree.

“ Will *nothing* shake your resolution ? ”

“ Nothing ! ”

“ Threats, entreaties, prayers—all useless ? ”

“ Quite. My mind is made up.”

“ Then,” said Koko, “ if you *really* mean what you say, and if nothing whatever will shake your determination, don’t spoil yourself by committing suicide, but be beheaded handsomely at the hands of the Public Executioner.”

“ I don’t see how that would help me,” said Nanki Poo.

“ You don’t ? ” replied Koko. “ Observe. You’ll have a month to live, and you’ll live like a fighting-cock at my expense. When the day arrives there’ll be a grand public ceremonial—you’ll be the central figure—no one will even attempt to deprive you of that distinction. There’ll be a procession, bands, Dead March, bells tolling, all the girls in tears, Yum-Yum distracted—then, when it’s all over, general rejoicings and a display of fireworks in the evening ! *You* won’t see them, but they’ll be there all the same.”

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Nanki Poo was touched by the thought that Yum-Yum would mourn for him.

“Do you think,” said he, “that Yum-Yum would really be distracted?”

“I’m convinced of it. Bless you, she’s the most tender-hearted little creature alive.”

“I should be sorry to cause her pain,” replied Nanki Poo. “Perhaps after all, if I were to travel in Europe for a couple of years, I might contrive to forget her.”

“Oh, I don’t think you could do that,” said Koko hastily. “Life without Yum-Yum—why, it seems absurd!”

“I’ll tell you how we’ll manage it,” replied Nanki Poo. “Let me marry Yum-Yum to-morrow and in a month you may behead me.”

“No, no,” said Koko, “I draw the line at Yum-Yum.”

“Very good,” said Nanki Poo. “If you can draw the line, so can I.”

And he proceeded to illustrate his meaning by slipping the noose over his head.

“Stop! Stop!” exclaimed Koko, terrified lest he should carry out his threat. “How can I consent to your marrying Yum-Yum when I’m engaged to marry her myself?”

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“ She’ll be a widow in a month,” replied Nanki Poo, “ and you can marry her then.”

“ That’s true, of course,” said Koko ; “ but, dear me—my position during the next month will be most unpleasant.”

“ Not nearly so unpleasant as my position at the end of it,” replied Nanki Poo.

“ Well,” said Koko, “ I agree. I reluctantly agree. After all it’s only putting off my wedding for a few weeks.”

“ That’s all ! ” said Nanki Poo.

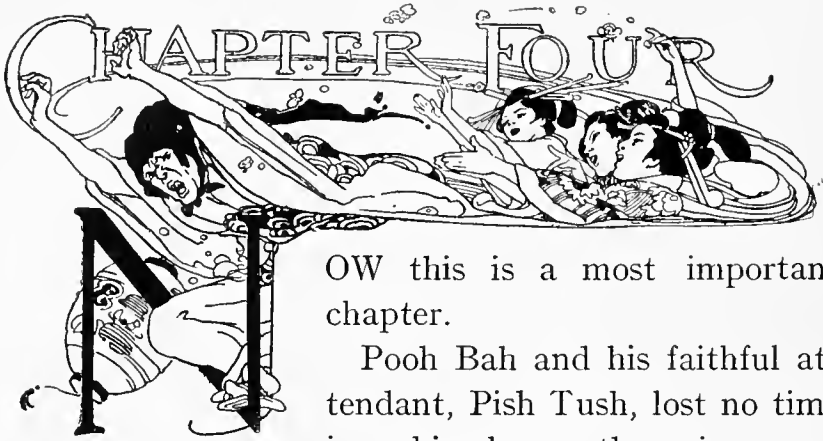
“ But you won’t prejudice her against me, will you? You see I’ve educated her to be my wife and I’ve taught her to believe that I am a good and wise man. Now I shouldn’t like her views on that point disturbed.”

“ Trust me,” said Nanki Poo, “ she shall never know the truth from me.”

“ Treat her well,” continued Koko. “ She likes a poached egg for breakfast, half a dozen oysters for lunch, and some warm barley water with a rusk at night. She has, also, a girlish fondness for hardbake.”

“ She shall have them all,” said Nanki Poo.

“ Then that’s settled,” replied Koko, who, nevertheless, was not at all pleased with his bargain. But some people are never satisfied.



OW this is a most important chapter.

Pooh Bah and his faithful attendant, Pish Tush, lost no time in making known the serious news that the Mikado had announced that someone must be beheaded within a month or Titipu would be reduced to the rank of a village. As nearly all the inhabitants possessed property in Titipu to a greater or less extent, they were all keenly interested in the prosperity of the city, which would be hopelessly ruined if it were deprived of its Municipal privileges. Moreover the province of Toki-Saki, of which it was the capital, would be forfeited to the Mikado as a district which had no seat of government from which it could be controlled. Altogether, it was a very serious state of things, and so, as soon as Koko had come to a more or less satisfactory understanding with Nanki Poo, he summoned all the principal inhabitants to meet him in the Market Place at ten o'clock the next day, that he might relieve

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their minds by telling them what he proposed to do.

At the appointed hour, when all the inhabitants had assembled except the newly-born babies and persons over ninety years of age who were left to take care of them, Koko mounted a kind of pulpit in which the auctioneer who sold cattle usually stood. He was received with the following chorus :

“ What are you going to do, good sir,
Come tell us quickly pray—
The programme rests with you, good sir,
And must be settled to-day.

“ Are you going to cut off your head, good sir,
Or does anyone, right away,
Consent to be killed in your stead, good sir ?
Come tell us quickly, pray.”

Then Pooh Bah exclaimed :

“ To ask you what you mean to do we punctually appear.”

And Koko, unwilling to keep them for a moment in unnecessary suspense, replied :

“ Congratulate me, gentlemen, I've found a volunteer ! ”

To which the crowd, greatly relieved, shouted with one voice the Japanese equivalent for

“ Hear, hear, hear ! ”

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Then Koko led Nanki Poo forward and introduced him to the populace, exclaiming :

“ 'Tis Nanki Poo
I think will do ?
He yields his life if I'll Yum-Yum surrender ;
Now I adore that girl with passion tender,
And could not yield her with a ready will
If I did not
Adore myself with passion tenderer still ! ”

Then they all shouted :

“ How sad his lot,”
“ He loves himself with passion tenderer still ! ”

Thereupon Koko handed Yum-Yum to Nanki Poo. They embraced rapturously, and Pooh Bah, who among many other things was Lord High Toast Master, addressed Nanki Poo in the following tasteful lines :

“ As in a month you've got to die
If Koko tells us true,
'Twere empty compliment to cry
' Long life to Nanki Poo ! '
But as till this day month you'll live
As fellow citizen,
This toast with three times three we'll give—
' Long life to you—till then ! '
May all good fortune prosper you,
May you have health and riches too,
May you succeed in all you do—
Long life to you—till then ! ”

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The people took up the *refrain* of the toast (that is to say, the last four lines) and shouted them with all their might and main. To express the joy with which they heard the good news, they instantly broke into a wild dance, but as the figures had not been arranged and practised, each danced the dance he knew best, and consequently there was a good deal of bumping against each other and tumbling down; but they meant well.

Among the crowd was one mysteriously veiled lady who listened quietly to all that went on, but was conspicuous from the fact that she alone took no part in the rejoicings. She was a good deal knocked about during the wild dance that I have described, and when she had had enough (which was very soon) she threw off her veil and exclaimed :

“ Your revels cease—assist me all of you !
I claim my perjured lover, Nanki Poo ! ”

The mysterious lady was no other than the plain and elderly Kati-sha, the lady to whom Nanki Poo (as we may still call him) had paid some innocent attentions and whom his arbitrary and dictatorial father, the Mikado, had ordered him to marry on pain of instant death if he declined to do so ! With

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the assistance of a strong and capable band of private detectives she had traced him diligently through his complicated wanderings until she tracked him down to Titipu, where she arrived just as his marriage to Yum-Yum had been satisfactorily arranged. It was most awkward for everybody, and everybody wondered what would happen next. Nanki Poo looked particularly foolish.

Kati-sha prided herself, not without reason, upon her powers of unpleasant declamation. As soon as she had enjoyed the confusion and dismay that followed her startling announcement, she advanced to Nanki Poo and addressed him in these scornful terms :

“ Oh fool, that fleest
 My hallowed joys !
Oh blind, that seest
 No equipoise ! *
Oh rash, that judgest
 From half the whole !
Oh base, that judgest
 Love's lightest dole !
 Thy heart unbind,
 Oh fool, oh blind !
 Give me my place,
 Oh rash, oh base ! ”

* I fancy that she meant by this that Nanki Poo was so short-sighted as not to perceive that her moral and social qualities were an adequate compensation for the drawbacks of advanced age and damaged personal appearance. But when people lapse into poetry you never can be quite sure what they mean.

" I CLAIM MY PERJURED LOVER, NANKI POO "



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Having completely withered Nanki Poo with these pleasant little remarks, she next turned her attention to poor trembling little Yum-Yum, and proceeded to give *her* a bit of her mind.

“ Pink cheek that rulest
Where Wisdom serves !
Bright eye that foolest
Steel-tempered nerves !
Rose-lip that scornest
Lore-laden years !
Sweet tongue that warnest
Who rightly hears.
Thy doom is nigh,
Pink cheek, bright eye !
Thy knell is rung,
Rose-lip, sweet tongue.”

This was too bad of Kati-sha. In the first place, she ought to have remembered that, after all, it was no fault of Yum-Yum's, and, in the second, that in addressing an inexperienced girl, fresh from school, she ought to express herself in simple terms, if she wished her meaning to be understood.

“ Pink cheek that rulest
Where Wisdom serves.”

I suppose she meant that she, Kati-sha, was the embodiment of Wisdom, but I don't see how she

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“ served ” except as an example to be avoided. But she was in a tearing rage at the time, and I suppose that this must be taken into consideration in criticizing her remarks.

Now Pitti-Sing and her school-fellows had come all the way to Titipu to act as bridesmaids at Yum-Yum’s wedding, and although Yum-Yum was not going to be married to Koko (just yet) still she *was* going to be married, and they did not intend to allow their fun to be stopped for any elderly lady, however important she might think herself. So, having plenty

of assurance of a modest description, Pitti-Sing went up to Kati-sha (who was trying to remember whether she had said anything unladylike in her rage), and addressed her as follows :



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“ Away, nor prosecute your quest,
From our intention well expressed
 You cannot turn us,
The state of your connubial views
Towards the person you accuse
 Does not concern us !

“ For he’s going to marry Yum-Yum—Yum-Yum !
 Your anger pray bury
 For all will be merry,
I think you had better succumb—cumb-cumb,
 And join our expressions of glee.
On this subject I pray you be dumb—dumb—dumb ;
 You’ll find there are many
 Who’d wed for a penny,*
The word for your guidance is ‘ mum—mum—mum ’ ;
 There’s lots of good fish in the sea ! ”

And all the other bridesmaids took up the chorus :

“ The word for your guidance is ‘ mum—mum—mum ’ ;
 There’s lots of good fish in the sea ! ”

All this was very bad taste on Pitti-Sing’s part, and I don’t see how her conduct is to be defended. It is most unbecoming for a mere school-girl to address an elderly lady, however plain, in words of ridicule and contempt. She might have expressed her meaning in becoming terms without in any way weakening its effect.

Kati-sha, who was too proud to take notice of the

* Cheap, considering all things.

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impertinence of a mere chit of a school-girl, directed her next remark to Nanki Poo, who looked as foolish as a young man could look at this public and unexpected claim upon his affections. He and Yum-Yum knelt at her feet to implore her forgiveness, but in vain. She exclaimed :

“ Oh, faithless one, this insult you shall rue !
In vain for mercy on your knees you sue—
I'll tear the mask from your disguising,
Prepare yourselves for news surprising—

(addressing the crowd)

No minstrel he, despite bravado !
He is the son of your——”

Now an ingenious idea had occurred to Yum-Yum. She had anticipated the probability that Kati-sha would endeavour to frustrate Koko's intentions to let Yum-Yum marry Nanki-Poo, by revealing the fact that he was the son of their monarch, and she had arranged with her school-fellows that if Kati-sha attempted anything of the kind they would drown her voice by making just such a clattering uproar as you might expect from three dozen school-girls all talking at once at the top of their voices. So when Kati-sha uttered the words :

“ No minstrel he, despite bravado !
He is the son of your——”

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they all shouted the last words of a humorous song that had been sung by them at their breaking-up :

“ O ni ! bikkuri shakkuri to !
O sa, bikkuri shakkuri to ! ”

Kati-sha, who detected their intention, replied :

“ In vain you interrupt with this tornado !
He is the only son of your——”

and again the girls shouted :

“ O ni, bikkuri shakkuri to !
O sa, bikkuri shakkuri to ! ”

But Kati-sha was not to be put down by clamour. She resumed :

“ You little jades, I'll spoil——”

By this time the crowd had entered into the fun of the thing, and two thousand voices shouted :

“ O ni ! bikkuri shakkuri to ! ”

Kati-sha continued :

“ —— your gay gambado—
He is the eldest son——”

Again the crowd shouted :

“ O ni ! bikkuri shakkuri to ! ”

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Kati-sha again tried to get a word in :

“ — of your — ”

Once more the crowd yelled :

“ O ni ! bikkuri shakkuri to ! ”

and at the same time Koko's brass band played the National Anthem in double time, and in all the keys from A to G.

Kati-sha was exhausted, and moreover she saw that there was not the remotest chance of making her meaning clear to them,* so she resolved that she would hasten at once to the Mikado and explain her wrongs to one who was so much more patient than his subjects that he never was known to interrupt a lady who had a grievance to lay before him, however elderly and plain she might be. But before going she fired this parting shot :

“ Ye torrents roar,
Ye tempests howl,
Your wrath outpour
With angry growl,
Do ye your worst—my vengeance-call
Shall rise triumphant over all !

* I should have thought that as it was quite clear that the “ missing word ” rhymed with “ bravado,” “ tornado,” and “ gamado,” the crowd might have guessed that it was “ Mikado.” But people who are quite intelligent as individuals are sometimes extraordinarily dense when they are acting in a mob. This is the only way in which I can explain it.

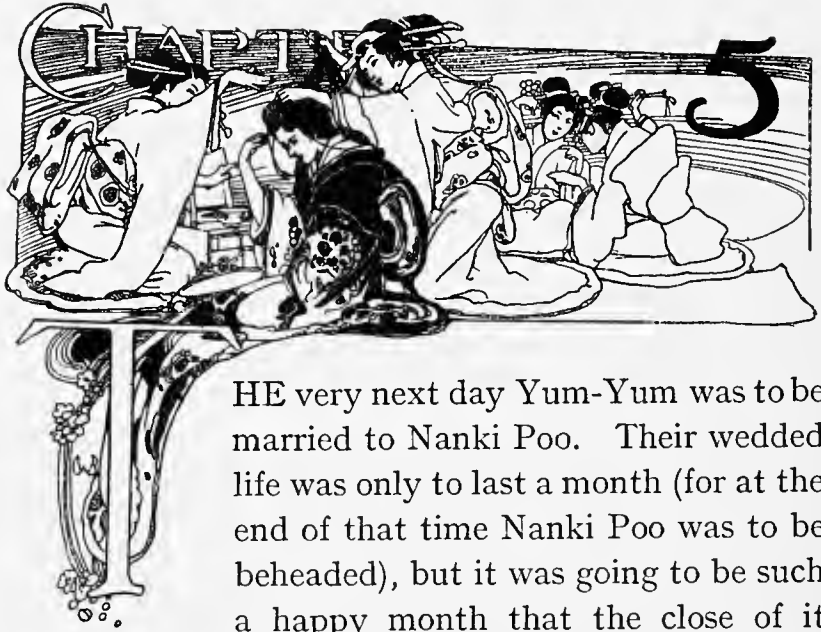
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“ Prepare for woe,
 Ye haughty lords !
At once I go
 Mikado-wards.
And when he learns his son is found
My wrongs with vengeance will be crowned ! ”

But as she uttered the last lines the crowd again shouted :

“ O ni ! bikkuri shakkuri to ! ”

and poor Kati-sha had to give it up as a bad job and hurry off as fast as possible to explain the situation to her revered monarch.



HE very next day Yum-Yum was to be married to Nanki Poo. Their wedded life was only to last a month (for at the end of that time Nanki Poo was to be beheaded), but it was going to be such a happy month that the close of it seemed to be an immensely long way off and consequently hardly worth considering. That is the way with young and foolish people who live only for the present and think it is time enough to consider how they will deal with a day of difficulty when that day arrives.

That morning Yum-Yum was occupied a long time at her toilette. She naturally wanted to look to the best advantage, but as her three dozen bridesmaids had come to help her to do her hair, and as each bridesmaid had her own idea as to how hair should be done, and moreover as each in succession

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undid what her immediate predecessor had done and did it again in her own way, the process became rather tiresome. Eventually, however, Yum-Yum, whose policy it was to conciliate everyone, allowed each bridesmaid to do a little bit, so the result bore the same relation to an ordinary head of hair that a fruit salad does to each of the individual delicacies of which it is compounded. Then it became necessary to touch up Yum-Yum's cheeks and lips with a little colour, for Japanese young ladies consider this to be quite correct, although English ladies would rather look as yellow as frogs than consent to do anything so shocking.

As the bridesmaids titivated Yum-Yum's head and face they sang the following appropriate verses :

“ Braid the raven hair,
 Weave the supple tress,
Deck the maiden fair
 In her loveliness.
Paint the pretty face,
 Dye the coral lip,
 Emphasise the grace
 Of her ladyship !
Art and nature thus allied
Go to make a pretty bride.”

Then Pitti-Sing proceeded to give her a bit of

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advice, founded upon what would have been her experience if she had had any :

“ Sit with downcast eye,
Let it brim with dew,
Try if you can cry—
We will do so too.
When you're summoned, start
Like a frightened roe,
Flutter, little heart,
Colour come and go ! *
Modesty at marriage tide
Well becomes a pretty bride ! ” †

By the time they had finished their singing, Yum-Yum's toilet was completed, and all the bridesmaids withdrew to their respective apartments with the view of putting a few finishing touches to their own impudent little faces, except Pitti-Sing and Peep Bo, who shared Yum-Yum's room.

“ Yes,” said Yum-Yum, admiring herself in a mirror, “ I am indeed beautiful ! Sometimes I sit and wonder in my artless Japanese way why it is that I am so much more attractive than anybody else in the whole world ? Can this be vanity ? No ! Nature is lovely and rejoices in her loveliness. I am a child of Nature, and I take after my mother.”

* This must have taken a bit of doing, as her colour was laid on as thick as cardboard.

† I'm afraid that Pitti-Sing was a bit of a sly-boots.

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This was, of course, all very wrong. Yum-Yum was a good-looking girl, but not nearly as lovely as she believed herself to be. Her absurd conceit came of her ridiculously exaggerated first name ("The full moon of delight which sheds," etc.), which, though she quite forgot it, was conferred upon her by her sanguine parents when she had no more features than a lump of putty.

However, entertaining that opinion of herself, one is scarcely surprised that she should have embodied it in detail in the following song :

THE SUN AND MOON

" The sun, whose rays
Are all ablaze
With ever living glory,
Does not deny
His Majesty—
He scorns to tell a story.
He don't * exclaim
' I blush for shame,
So kindly be indulgent,'
But fierce and bold
In fiery gold
He glories all effulgent !
I mean to rule the earth
As he the sky—
We really know our worth,
The sun and I !

* " Doesn't " would have been better, but it wouldn't have fitted the metre and in poetry the metre is paramount.

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“ Observe his flame,
That placid dame,
The Moon's Celestial Highness ;
There's not a trace
Upon her face
Of diffidence or shyness :
She borrows light
That, through the night
Mankind may all acclaim her ;
And, truth to tell,
She lights up well,
So I, for one, don't blame her.
Ah, pray make no mistake,
We are not shy ;
We're very wide awake,
The Moon and I ! ”

“ Yes,” said Pitti-Sing, who had heard the song before, and was so ill-mannered as to yawn several times during its delivery, “ we'll take it that everything smiles upon you, and of course you're about the happiest girl in all Japan, so *that's* settled.”

“ The happiest girl indeed,” said Peep Bo, “ for you have attained happiness in all but perfection.”

“ In *all but* perfection ? ” replied Yum-Yum, who did not quite approve of this saving clause.

“ Well, dear,” said Peep Bo, “ it can't be denied that your husband having to be beheaded is, in its way, a drawback.”

Yum-Yum began to cry.

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“ I think it is very indelicate of you,” said she, “ to refer to such a subject on such a day. If my married happiness *is* to be—to be——”

“ Cut short,” suggested Pitti-Sing, rather spitefully.

“ Well, cut short—in a month, can’t you let me forget it ? ”

And the poor girl would have burst into a flood of tears if Nanki Poo had not fortunately arrived at that very moment to see whether his bride was ready. I say “ fortunately ” because, if she had really had time to burst into a flood of tears, she would have had to be made up all over again.

Nanki Poo was surprised to find Yum-Yum in such a state of agitation.

“ Yum-Yum ! Why, what’s the matter ? ”

“ They’ve been reminding me that (*sob*) in a month (*sob*) you’re to be beheaded ! ”

The same idea had occurred to Nanki Poo. It was disconcerting, of course, but he tried to make the best of it.

“ A month ? ” said he. “ Well, what’s a month ? Nonsense. These divisions of time are purely arbitrary. Who says that twenty-four hours make a day ? ”

“ There’s a popular impression to that effect,” replied Peep Bo, sobbing.

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“ Then we’ll efface it,” said Nanki Poo. “ We’ll call each second a minute, each minute an hour, each hour a day and each day a year. At that rate, we’ve about thirty years of married happiness before us ! ”

“ And at that rate this interview has already lasted four hours and a quarter,” observed Pitti-Sing. “ How time flies when one is thoroughly enjoying one’s self ! ”

Notwithstanding their expressions of content they were all, including Nanki Poo, a little upset at the rather dismal prospect before them. So to cheer themselves up they sang what is called a “ glee,” and a glee is generally as doleful a piece of music as you’d find in a long summer’s day’s march.

This is the glee that they selected for the purpose of raising their spirits :

“ Brightly dawns our wedding day ;
 Joyous hour, we give thee greeting !
 Whither, whither art thou fleeting ?
Fickle moment, prithee stay !
 What though mortal joys be hollow ?
 Pleasures come, if sorrows follow :
Though the tocsin sound ere long,
 Ding dong ! Ding dong !
Yet until the shadows fall
Over one and over all,
Sing a merry madrigal—
 A madrigal !

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“ Let us dry the ready tear ;
 Though the hours are surely creeping,
 Little need for woeful weeping
Till the sad sundown is near.
 All must sip the cup of sorrow—
 I to-day and thou to-morrow ;
This the close of every song,
 Ding dong ! Ding dong !
What though solemn shadows fall
Over one and over all,
Sing a merry madrigal—
 A madrigal ! ”

By this time they had reduced themselves to the lowest depths of depression, and Yum-Yum's two bridesmaids found it absolutely necessary to retire in order to restore the ravages which their emotion had worked upon their complexions.

Yum-Yum and Nanki Poo tried to console each other, but with indifferent success. At this point Koko arrived, also in the lowest possible spirits. He sat down and sighed so heavily that Yum-Yum and Nanki Poo quite forgot their own anxieties in their sympathy with poor Koko's obvious distress.

“ Come, come, ” said kind-hearted Yum-Yum. “ After all, it's only for a month. At the end of the month you and I will be married as originally arranged. ”

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“ No,” said Koko. “ It’s useless to deceive oneself with false hopes.”

“ What do you mean ? ” exclaimed the two lovers in a breath.

“ My child—my poor child,” replied Koko—“ my little bride that was to have been——! ”

“ *Was* to have been ? ” said Yum-Yum. “ What in the world do you mean ? ”

“ I mean that you and I can never be each other’s. I’ve just ascertained that by the Mikado’s law, when a married man is beheaded, his wife is buried alive ! ”

“ Buried alive ! ” exclaimed the lovers, again in one breath.

“ Buried alive,” repeated Koko. “ It’s a most uncomfortable death.”

“ But who told you that ? ” asked Nanki Poo, in great agitation.

“ Oh, I got it from Pooh Bah. He’s my solicitor.”

“ But he may be mistaken ! ” said poor little Yum-Yum.

“ So I thought,” replied Koko, “ so I consulted the Lord Chief Justice, the Attorney-General, the Master of the Rolls, the Judge Ordinary, and the Lord Chancellor. They’re all of the same opinion. Never knew such unanimity on a point of law in my life ! ”

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As Pooh Bah filled all these offices, the unanimity of opinion was, perhaps, not so remarkable as at first sight it appeared to be.

Yum-Yum and Nanki Poo were terribly disconcerted at this melancholy piece of news. She thought for a few moments, and then, taking Nanki Poo's hand in hers, she said :

“ Darling ! I don't want to appear selfish, and I love you with all my heart. I don't suppose I shall ever love anybody else half as much as I love you. But when I agreed to marry you (my own) I had no idea (pet) that I should have to be buried alive in a month ! ”

“ Nor I,” replied Nanki Poo. “ It's the very first I've heard of it ! ”

“ It—it *does* make a difference, doesn't it ? ”

“ It *does* make a difference, of course,” said Nanki Poo.

“ You see—burial alive—it's such a stuffy death ! You appreciate my difficulty, don't you ? ”

“ Yes,” said Nanki Poo, “ and I appreciate my own. If I insist on your carrying out your promise I doom you to a hideous death ; if I release you, I am beheaded, and Koko marries you directly afterwards ! ”

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Koko listened to this little conversation with great interest, for if Yum-Yum declined to marry Nanki Poo, that poor young man would have to be beheaded in accordance with his contract, for Koko only consented to *allow* him to marry Yum-Yum ; he didn't undertake to compel Yum-Yum to consent to the marriage. Everything was at a deadlock, so they did as most persons, I suppose, would do under similar circumstances—they joined in a trio.

Yum-Yum sang :

“ Here's a how-de-do !
If I marry you,
When your time has come to perish,
Then the maiden whom you cherish
Must be buried too !
Here's a how-de-do ! ”

Nanki Poo sang :

“ Here's a pretty mess !
In a month or less
I must die without a wedding !
Let the bitter tears I'm shedding
Witness my distress.
Here's a pretty mess ! ”

And Koko sang :

“ Here's a state of things !
To her life she clings :
Matrimonial devotion
Doesn't seem to suit her notion—
Burial it brings.
Here's a state of things ! ”

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Koko's tender heart was touched by Nanki Poo's distress.

"My dear Nanki," said he, "I can't conceive anything more distressing than to have one's marriage broken off at the last moment. But cheer up—you shan't be disappointed of a wedding—you shall come to mine."

This was handsome of Koko and Nanki Poo felt it, though he didn't intend to accept the invitation.

"It's awfully kind of you," said he, "but that's impossible. I intend to die to-day."

"What do you mean?" asked Koko in great alarm. "You needn't die for a month!"

"I can't live without Yum-Yum. This afternoon I perform the Happy Despatch!"* And he drew the large and glistening knife which Japanese gentlemen always carry about them for this particular purpose.

"No, no," said Koko, very decidedly. "I can't permit that. You are under contract to die by the hands of the Public Executioner in a month's time. If you kill yourself, what's to become of me?"

* The "Happy Despatch" is the reassuring name given by the gentle Japanese to the painful operation of cutting oneself open. Suicide used to be extremely popular with these sensible people. If a gentleman left home and found that he had forgotten his umbrella, he would say, "Oh, I can't be bothered to go back and fetch it, so here goes!" and off he popped.

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I don't know how they would have settled this difficult question if Pooh Bah had not rushed in just at that moment, in a state of great agitation.



“ Now then, Lord Mayor,” said Koko, “ what is it ? ”

“ The Mikado and his suite are approaching the city and will be here in ten minutes ! ”

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“The Mikado!” exclaimed Koko. “This is too awful!” Then, addressing Nanki Poo, he said:

“Now look here, you know—this is getting serious. A bargain’s a bargain, and you really mustn’t defeat the ends of justice by committing suicide. As a man of honour and a gentleman you are bound to die ignominiously at the hands of the Public Executioner.”

“Very well, then,” said Nanki Poo, handing him a sharp sword, “behead me.”

“What, now?” said Koko, much disconcerted.

“Certainly,” said Nanki Poo, “at once.”

“My good sir,” stammered Koko, “I don’t go about prepared to execute gentlemen at a moment’s notice. Why, I never even killed a blue-bottle!”

“Still,” interposed Pooh Bah, “as Lord High Executioner——”

“My good sir,” replied Koko, “as Lord High Executioner I’ve got to behead him in a month. I’m not ready yet. I don’t know how it’s done. I’m going to take lessons. I mean to begin with a guinea-pig and work my way up through the animal kingdom till I come to a Second Trombone. I *can’t* kill you. I can’t kill anything!”

And poor Koko fairly sobbed in his distress.

“Come, come, my poor fellow,” said Nanki Poo,

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“we all have disagreeable duties to discharge at times. After all, what is it? If I don’t mind, why should you? Remember, sooner or later it must be done!”

A brilliant idea suddenly occurred to Koko.

“*Must* it?” said he. “I’m not so sure about that!”

“What do you mean?” said Nanki Poo, Yum-Yum and Pooh Bah all at once.

“Why should I kill you when making an affidavit that you’ve been executed will do just as well? Here are plenty of witnesses—the Lord Chief Justice, Commander-in-Chief, the Lord High Admiral, the Home Secretary, First Lord of the Treasury, and Commissioner of Police. They’ll all swear to it (then turning to Pooh Bah), won’t you?”

Pooh Bah boiled over with indignation at the mere suggestion that the various characters of which he was composed would lend themselves to such an unpardonable deception.

“Am I to understand,” said he loftily, “that all of us High Officers of State are required to perjure ourselves to secure the safety of an ex-tailor?”

“Why not?” said Koko. “You’ll be grossly insulted as usual.”

Pooh Bah considered for a moment.

“Will the insult be cash down or at a date?” said he.

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“ It will be a ready money transaction,” replied Koko, handing him a large bag of gold.

“ Well, it will be a useful discipline,” said Pooh Bah, who saw in this arrangement a fresh method of humiliating his overweening arrogance. “ Choose your fiction and I’ll endorse it.” Then he exclaimed in a whisper : “ Ha ha, Family Pride, how do you like *that*, my buck ? ”

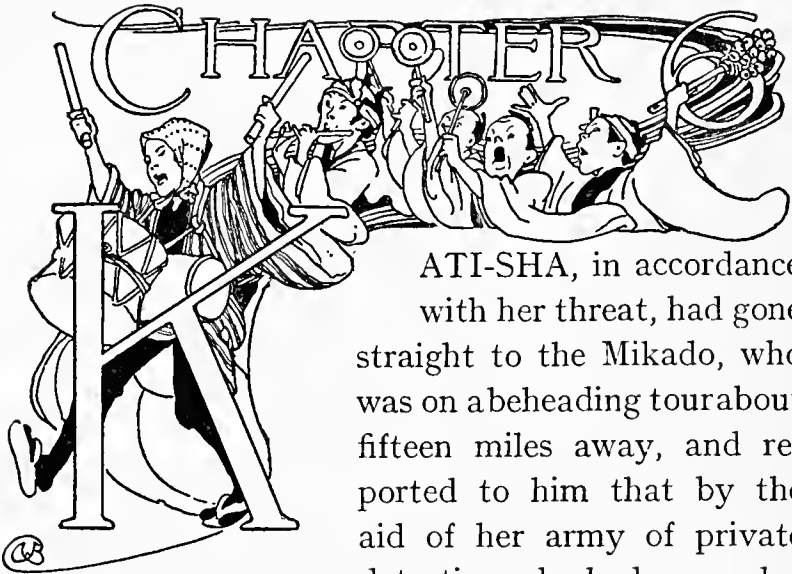
“ But,” interposed Nanki Poo, “ I tell you that life without Yum-Yum is insupportable.”

“ Bother Yum-Yum. I’m sick of the girl,” exclaimed Koko. “ Here,” said he, “ take Yum-Yum and marry Yum-Yum, only go away and never come back again ! Yum-Yum—have you five minutes to spare ? Then go along with his Grace the Archbishop of Titipu—he’ll marry you to Nanki Poo at once.”

“ But if I’m to be buried alive ? ” said Yum-Yum, not unnaturally.

“ Now don’t ask any questions, but do as I tell you and Nanki Poo will explain all ! ”

And Yum-Yum went off to be married to Nanki Poo, who told her that Koko had ingeniously (but deceptively) arranged that no one should really be beheaded at all.



ATI-SHA, in accordance with her threat, had gone straight to the Mikado, who was on a beheading tour about fifteen miles away, and reported to him that by the aid of her army of private detectives she had succeeded in discovering that his long-lost heir was hiding in Titipu, effectively disguised, now as a wandering minstrel, but formerly as the Second Trombone of the Purple Tartarian Band. The (more or less) excellent monarch, who did not care very much for his son, was particularly fond of getting at the bottom of a mystery, so he gave orders that his retinue were to accompany him at once to Titipu. Accordingly His Majesty, with Kati-sha and a brilliant staff, set forth the next morning and arrived at Titipu in the afternoon, to the great consternation of all the inhabitants and particularly of Koko, who had never expected to be brought face to face, so soon after his appointment

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as Lord High Executioner, with a monarch who regarded decapitation as a cheap and ready cure for all social and political evils.

The inhabitants put on their very best clothes, and at the same time assumed an expression of virtuous industry which they hoped would have the effect of mollifying their beloved but terrific monarch. As the Royal Band reached the Market Place, where the populace were assembled, they played a triumphal Japanese march, in which every musician performed the air he was best acquainted with, in the time that was most agreeable to himself, and in the key that pleased him best—which gave an individuality to the whole performance which you never succeed in getting when the same air is played by all.

After the band came a troupe of Japanese warriors in red and black armour, and helmets which quite concealed their pretty faces, and after them a kind of portable throne in which were seated the Mikado and his *protégée* Kati-sha. As they entered, all the people flung themselves on their faces, pretending that the lustre of the Mikado's resplendent beauty was so blinding that no man might look at it except through smoke-coloured spectacles, with which they had not had time to provide themselves.

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As the people lay face downwards on the ground they sang the Japanese National Anthem as well as they could, but as the dust got into their throats whenever they drew a breath, the result was less remarkable for its smooth and velvety utterance than for a kind of coughing loyalty which caused infinite amusement to its august object.

This was the National Anthem :

“ Miya sama, miya sama,
Ou ma no, maye ni.
Pira-Pira sara no wa
Nan gia na
Toko tonyare, tonyare na ! ”

And I feel sure you will agree with me that, crude as it is, yet as an expression of simple heartfelt loyalty, combined with self-respecting humility, it is far in advance of the ridiculous doggerel which we Britishers have to sing whenever we are called upon to hail our beloved monarch.

The (rather) good Mikado then proceeded, as was his custom, to explain his position and views. The song he sang was not intended to be interrupted and, when sung without interruption, it is a singularly powerful piece of lyrical composition. But on this occasion he was accompanied by Kati-sha, who had

A TROUPE OF WARRIORS IN RED AND BLACK ARMOUR



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no idea of being left out in the cold when anything interesting was going on, and who consequently took good care that the Mikado should not have it all his own way. This quite spoilt the beauty of the verses, to the annoyance of the Poet-Laureate Austin who wrote them. So, when the Mikado sang :

“ From every kind of man
Obedience I expect ;
I'm the Emperor of Japan——”

Kati-sha, regardless of metre, cut in with :

“ And I'm his daughter-in-law elect !
He'll marry his son
(He's only got one)
To his daughter-in-law elect ! ”

This absurd interruption annoyed the Mikado, who felt that it was a liberty on Kati-sha's part. However, he went on :

“ My morals have been declared
Particularly correct——”

And Kati-sha, as before, sang :

“ But they're nothing at all compared
With those of his daughter-in-law elect !
Bow ! Bow !
To his daughter-in-law elect ! ”

By this time the Mikado was very angry, but he

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was too much of a gentleman to expostulate publicly. So he continued :

“ In a fatherly kind of way
I govern each tribe and sect,
All cheerfully own my sway——”

The irrepressible and self-assertive Kati-sha broke in with :

“ Except his daughter-in-law elect !
As tough as a bone
With a will of her own
Is his daughter-in-law elect ! ”

It was quite true, but this was not the time to make the statement. The (pretty) good Mikado muttered something under his breath (I can't imagine what it was) and began once more :

“ My nature is love and light—
My freedom from all defect——”

Again Kati-sha put in her oar :

“ Are insignificant quite
Compared with his daughter-in-law elect !
Bow ! Bow !
To his daughter-in-law elect !
Bow ! Bow !
To his daughter-in-law elect.”

At last the Mikado turned sulky. There were four-and-twenty beautiful verses in all and the best were

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to come. So not only did the populace lose a treat, but all the Poet-Laureate's trouble in writing them was quite wasted. The Mikado, who rather fancied his singing (he had a light tenor voice with baritone-bass falsetto), said nothing at the time, but resolved to suppress Kati-sha's pudding for a week as a punishment for her unmannerly behaviour.

When it was quite sure that the Mikado was not going to sing any more, Koko, Pooh Bah and Pitti-Sing came forward and flung themselves on their faces at the royal feet. If you ask how Pitti-Sing came to be mixed up with it, I may explain that Pooh Bah, who among other things held the post of Lord High Admirer, had, in his official capacity, fallen head over ears in love with her, and they were, in point of fact, engaged.

"Your Majesty," said Koko, "I am honoured in being permitted to welcome your Majesty. I guess the object of your Majesty's visit—your wishes have been attended to. The execution has taken place!"

"Oh," said the Mikado, "you've had an execution, have you?"

"Yes," replied Koko. "The Coroner has just handed me his certificate."

"I am the Coroner," explained Pooh Bah.

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The Mikado took the certificate and read it.

“ At Titipu, in the presence of the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice, Attorney-General, Secretary of State for the Home Department, Lord Mayor and Groom of the Second Floor Front.”

“ They were all present,” said Pooh Bah. “ I counted them myself.”

“ Ha,” said the Mikado, smacking his lips, “ I should like to have seen it.”

“ A tough fellow he was, your Majesty—a man of gigantic strength. His struggles were terrific.”

And the three conspirators proceeded to describe :



THE STORY OF THE MIKADO

THE EXECUTION THAT NEVER TOOK PLACE

Koko sang :

“ The criminal cried as he dropped him down
In a state of wild alarm—
With a frightful, frantic, fearful frown
I bared my big right arm.
I seized him by his little pig-tail
And on his knees fell he,
And he squirmed and struggled
And gurgled and guggled,
I drew my snickersnee !
Oh never shall I
Forget the cry
Or the shriek that shrieked he,
As I gnashed my teeth
When from its sheath
I drew my snickersnee ! ”

Then the other two sang :

“ We know him well,
He cannot tell
Untrue or groundless tales—
Whenever he tries
To palm off lies,
Invariably he fails ! ”

Then Pitti-Sing, who was a conceited little thing,
continued the narrative :

“ He shivered and shook as he gave the sign
For the stroke he didn't deserve,
When all of a sudden his eye met mine
And it seemed to brace his nerve,

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For he nodded his head and kissed his hand
And he whistled an air, did he,
 As the sabre true
 Cut cleanly through
His cervical vertebræ !
 When a man's afraid
 A beautiful maid
Is a cheering sight to see,
 And it's O I'm glad
 That moment sad
Was cheered by sight of me ! ”

Then the other two sang :

 “ Her terrible tale
 You can't assail,
With truth it quite agrees.
 Her taste exact
 For faultless fact
Amounts to a disease.”

Then came Pooh Bah's turn. That ridiculous impostor couldn't keep his nonsensical pride out of his verse, as you will see :

“ Now though you'd have said that head was dead,
 For its owner dead was he,
It stood on its neck with a smile well-bred
 And bowed three times to me ;
It was none of your impudent off-hand nods
 But as humble as could be,
 For it clearly knew
 The deference due
To a man of pedigree !

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And it's O I vow
That deathly bow
Was a touching sight to see,
Though trunkless, yet
It couldn't forget
The deference due to me ! ”

The other two were thoroughly disgusted with the old donkey's ridiculous pretensions, but they felt bound to endorse his story. So they sang :

“ In solemn sooth
He speaks the truth
(Whenever he finds it pays),
And in this case
It all took place
Exactly as he says ! ”

“ All this,” said the Mikado, “ is very interesting, but we came about a totally different matter. A year ago my son bolted from our Imperial Court.”

“ Indeed ? ” replied Koko. “ Had he anything to complain of ? ”

“ Nothing whatever,” interposed Kati-sha. “ On the contrary, I was going to marry him, yet he fled.”

“ I am surprised,” said the Lord High Admirer, “ that he should have fled from one so lovely.”

“ That's not true,” said Kati-sha, who was nothing if not outspoken ; “ you consider that I am not

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beautiful because my face is plain. But you know nothing. It is not in the face alone that beauty is to be sought. My face is plain, but I have a left shoulder-blade that is a miracle of loveliness. People come miles to see it. My right elbow has a fascination that few can resist. It is on view Tuesdays and Fridays on presentation of visiting card. I have a tooth that may be said to stand alone. Many artists of distinction have tried to draw it, but in vain. As for my circulation, it is the largest in the world."

"And yet he fled!" said Koko, who, with Pitti-Sing and Pooh Bah, was convulsed with repressed chuckles.

"And is now masquerading in this town," added the Mikado, "disguised as a Second Trombone."

"A Second Trombone!" exclaimed the three conspirators, shaking with terror.

"Yes—in the Purple Tartarian Band. Would it be troubling you too much if I asked you to produce him?"

"Oh, not at all—not at all," said Koko. "I'd do so with greatest pleasure only—it's rather awkward—he's gone abroad!"

"Gone abroad?" said the Mikado. "His address?"

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“Peckham Rye!” replied Pooh Bah, naming the first place that had the advantage of being a long way off.

“Upper Tooting, wasn’t it?” asked Pitti-Sing.

“Peckham Rye,” replied Pooh Bah so decidedly that further doubt was out of the question.

In the meantime Kati-sha had amused herself by reading the Coroner’s certificate.

“Ha!” she exclaimed in a tone that made them all (including the Mikado) jump a foot into the air. “See here—his name—Nanki Poo—the name he went by—beheaded this morning!!!”

Koko, Pooh Bah and Pitti-Sing fell flat upon the ground. They were convinced that their last hour had come.

“Dear, dear, dear!” said the Mikado, “this is very tiresome. My poor fellow, in your anxiety to carry out my wishes you have beheaded the heir to the throne of Japan!”

“I beg to offer an unqualified apology!” moaned Koko.

“I desire,” stammered Pooh Bah, “to associate myself with that expression of regret.”

“Indeed,” said Pitti-Sing, “we hadn’t the remotest idea——”

“Of course you hadn’t,” said the Mikado. “Come,

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come, my good friend (addressing Koko), don't distress yourself—it was no fault of yours. If a man of exalted rank chooses to disguise himself as a Second Trombone he must take the consequences. It really distresses me to see you take on so. I've no doubt he thoroughly deserved all he got."

Koko, Pooh Bah and Pitti-Sing were infinitely relieved to find that the Mikado took so just and reasonable a view of the situation. He wasn't such a bad fellow after all.

"We are extremely obliged to your Majesty," said Koko, as they all three rose from the ground.

"Obliged?" replied the (rather) kind Mikado, "not a bit. How could *you* tell?"

"It wasn't written on the gentleman's forehead," said Pitti-Sing.

"It might have been on his pocket-handkerchief," said Pooh Bah, "only Japanese don't use pocket-handkerchiefs."

"Ha! ha!" said the (rather) good-humoured Mikado. And all five roared with laughter at Pooh Bah's little joke.

"I forget," said the Mikado, turning to Kati-sha, "the punishment for compassing the death of the Heir Apparent?"

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“ Punishment ! ” exclaimed the three conspirators, in a condition that was little short of collapse.

“ Yes,” replied the Mikado, “ something lingering with boiling oil in it, I fancy. I *think* boiling oil occurs in it, but I’m not sure. I know it’s something humorous but lingering, with either boiling oil or melted lead. Come, come, don’t fret, I’m not a bit angry.”

“ If your Majesty will accept our assurance——” began Koko.

“ We hadn’t the least notion——” added Pitti-Sing.

“ I wasn’t there ! ” exclaimed that cowardly impostor Pooh Bah.

“ Of course—of course,” said the Mikado, “ that’s the pathetic part of it. Unfortunately the fool of an Act says, ‘ compassing the death of the Heir Apparent.’ There’s not a word about a mistake or not knowing. There should be, of course, but there isn’t. However, I’ll have it altered—next session.”

“ What’s the good of that ? ” said Koko, almost fainting.

“ Now let’s see,” said the obliging monarch, who was always politely anxious to meet people’s views.

“ Will after lunch suit you? Can you wait till then ? ”

“ Oh, yes,” moaned Koko, “ we can wait till then ! ”

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“ I don’t want any lunch,” blubbered Pooh Bah.
“ Then we’ll make it after luncheon. Come along, Kati-sha, this has given me quite an appetite.”
And the Mikado, with Kati-sha, went into the

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pavilion, where a sumptuous collation had been prepared at Koko's expense. Koko was to have presided as host, but under the circumstances the Mikado thoughtfully excused him.

"Well," said Koko to Pooh Bah as soon as the Mikado and Kati-sha had withdrawn, "a nice mess you've got us into with your nodding head and the deference due to a man of pedigree!"

"Merely corroborative detail, intended to give artistic verisimilitude to a bald and otherwise unconvincing narrative!" replied Pooh Bah.

"Corroborative detail!" exclaimed Pitti-Sing; "corroborative fiddlestick!"

"Well, there's only one thing to be done," said Koko. "Nanki Poo hasn't started yet—he must come to life again at once—that he may be produced before the Mikado."

At that moment Nanki Poo and Yum-Yum crossed the Market Place, Nanki Poo carrying two bundles, which contained their respective trousseaux.

"Here he comes," said Koko; "how fortunate! Nanki Poo—I've good news for you—you're reprieved."

"Oh, but it's too late," replied Nanki Poo. "I'm a dead man and I'm off for my honeymoon."

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“Nonsense. It appears that you’re the son of the Mikado. Your father is here, and he has brought Kati-sha, who claims you in marriage.”

“Oh, but he’s married to me now,” said Yum-Yum.

“I can’t come to life and marry Kati-sha,” said Nanki Poo, “because I’m dead and married already—consequently she will insist on my being executed, and then Yum-Yum will have to be buried alive, so *that’s* out of the question. Now if you could persuade Kati-sha to marry *you*, I could come to life without any fear of being put to death.”

“I marry Kati-sha!” exclaimed Koko.

“I really think it’s the only way,” said Yum-Yum.

“But, my good girl, have you seen her? She’s something appalling!”

“Ah, that’s only her face,” said Yum-Yum. “She has a left elbow which people come miles to see.”

“I’m told that her right heel is much admired by connoisseurs,” remarked Pooh Bah.

“Here she comes,” said Pitti-Sing. “Now is your opportunity.”

At that moment Kati-sha, who had finished her luncheon, came out of the pavilion; and Yum-Yum and Nanki Poo delicately withdrew that the

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(possible) lovers might have it all to themselves. Koko recognized the excellence of Nanki Poo's advice and decided, come what might, to win her hand rather than lose his life.

"Kati-sha," said he, approaching her timidly.

"Ha!" exclaimed Kati-sha, flying at his throat and shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat, "the miscreant who robbed me of my love! But vengeance pursues—they are heating the cauldron!"

"Kati-sha! behold a suppliant for mercy!" And he threw himself at her feet.

"Mercy?" exclaimed she. "Had you mercy on *him*? True, he did not love me, but he would have loved me in time. I am an acquired taste—only the educated palate can appreciate *me*. I was educating *his* palate when he left me. It takes years to train a man to love me, and you robbed me of my prey—I mean my pupil—just as his education was on the point of completion! Oh, where shall I find another! Where shall I find another!"

Koko braced himself up to a supreme effort.

"Here!" said he with terrific vehemence. "Here—here—here!"

(It sounded like applause, but if you examine it you will see that it is spelt differently.)

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“What !!!” exclaimed Kati-sha, in unbounded surprise.

“Kati-sha,” said Koko, “for years I have loved you with a white-hot passion which is slowly but surely consuming my very vitals! True it is that, under a poor mask of unutterable disgust, I have endeavoured to conceal a passion whose inner fires are broiling the soul within me! Kati-sha, I dare not hope for your love, but I will not live without it! Accept it, or I perish on the spot!”

“Go to!” said Kati-sha, who made it a rule never to snub an admirer; “who knows so well as I that no one dies of a broken heart!”

“You know not what you say,” replied Koko. “Listen!”

And he sang her this pathetic little ballad:

THE LITTLE TOM-TIT

“On a tree by a river a little tom-tit
Sang ‘Willow, titwillow, titwillow!’
And I said to him, ‘Dicky bird, why do you sit
Singing “Willow, titwillow, titwillow”?
Is it weakness of intellect, birdie,’ I cried,
‘Or a rather tough worm in your little inside?’
With a shake of his poor little head he replied,
‘Oh willow, titwillow, titwillow!’”

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“ He slapped at his chest as he sat on that bough,
Saying ‘ Willow, titwillow, titwillow ! ’
And a cold perspiration bespangled his brow,
‘ Oh willow, titwillow, titwillow ! ’
He sobbed and he sighed, and a gurgle he gave,
Then he threw himself into the billowy wave,
And an echo arose from the suicide’s grave—
‘ Oh willow, titwillow, titwillow ! ’ ”

“ Now I feel just as sure as I’m sure that my name
Isn’t willow, titwillow, titwillow,
That ’twas blighted affection that made him exclaim
‘ Oh willow, titwillow, titwillow ! ’
And if you remain callous and obdurate, I
Shall perish as he did and you will know why.
Though I probably shall not exclaim as I die
‘ Oh willow, titwillow, titwillow ! ’ ”

Poor soft-hearted Kati-sha was deeply touched by this pathetic little story. In fact, at the end, she was almost in tears.

“ Did he really die of love ? ” said she between her sobs.

“ He really did !—I knew the bird intimately.”

“ And all on account of a cruel little hen ? Poor little chap ! And—and if I refuse to marry you, will you do the same ? ”

“ At once ! ”

“ No, no,” said Kati-sha, now fairly crying ; “ you

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mustn't! Anything but that! Oh, I'm a silly little goose!"



And she flung herself on Koko's unwilling shoulder in a burst of hysterical grief.

Koko had obtained what he wanted, but even then he didn't seem quite happy. However, she hurried him at once to the Registrar's office that they might be married before he had time to change his mind.

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At that critical moment the Mikado, who had been sitting over his wine after Kati-sha left him, appeared, wiping his lips with every appearance of satisfaction.

“ Now then,” said he, “ we’ve had a capital lunch. Have all the painful preparations been made ? ”

“ Your Majesty, all is prepared,” replied Pish Tush.

“ Then produce the unfortunate gentleman and his two well-meaning but misguided accomplices.”

Thereupon Koko, Pooh Bah and Pitti-Sing advanced, led by Kati-sha, and flung themselves at the Mikado’s feet.

“ Mercy ! ” said Kati-sha. “ Mercy for Koko, mercy for Pitti-Sing, mercy even for Pooh Bah ! ”

The Mikado was not a little surprised at this unexpected change of front.

“ I don’t think I quite caught that remark,” said he.

“ Mercy ! ” repeated Kati-sha. “ My husband that was to have been is dead and I have married this miserable object ! ” indicating Koko, who was making tremendous efforts to look blissful.

“ Oh ! ” said the Mikado, “ you haven’t been long about it.”

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“ We were married before the Registrar,” said Koko, blushing like a girl.

“ *I* am the Registrar,” exclaimed Pooh Bah. “ It doesn’t take long.”

“ So I see,” replied the Mikado. “ But my difficulty is, that as you have slain the Heir Apparent to the throne of Japan——”

At that moment Nanki Poo and Yum-Yum presented themselves before the Mikado and threw themselves at his feet.

“ Bless my heart,” said the Mikado. “ Here he is !”

“ And your daughter-in-law elected !” added Yum-Yum rather neatly.

“ Explain,” said the Mikado, addressing Koko.

“ Your Majesty,” said Koko, “ it’s like this. It is true that I stated that I had killed Nanki Poo——”

“ Yes,” replied the Mikado, “ with most affecting particulars.”

“ Merely corroborative detail,” interposed Pooh Bah, “ intended to give artistic verisimilitude to a bald and——”

“ *Will* you refrain from putting in your oar ? ” said Koko. “ Your Majesty, it’s like this : when your Majesty says ‘ Let a thing be done,’ it’s as good as done—practically it *is* done, because your Majesty’s

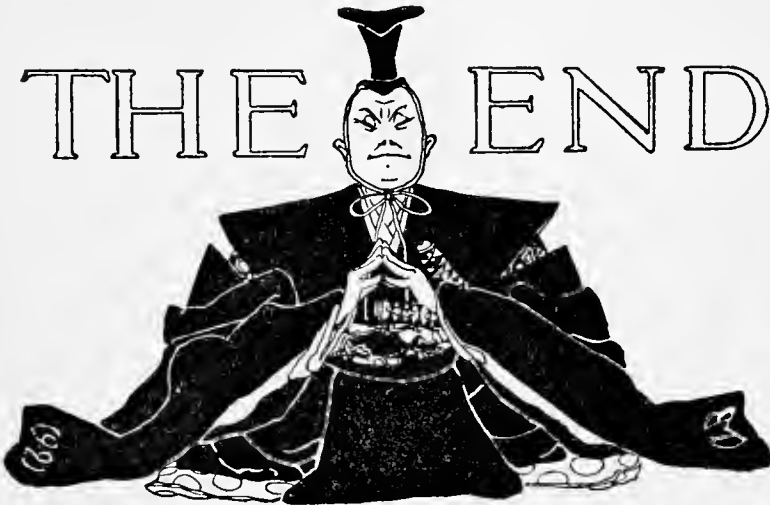
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will is law. Your Majesty says 'Kill a gentleman,' and a gentleman is told off to be killed—consequently that gentleman is as good as dead—practically he is dead—and if he *is* dead, why not say so?"

"I see," said the rather puzzle-headed monarch—but I don't suppose that he really *did* see. Anyway, *I* don't and I don't suppose *you* do.

At all events he appeared to be satisfied, and that was all that was wanted. So this exciting story, which is crammed full of thrilling incidents and hair-breadth escapes, ended quite happily and without any bloodshed after all!

THE END



CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CH. 200 ROOM



