

From Old Japan



O HANA SAN

O Hana San is the central figure in the Japanese exhibit placed in the Children's Museum through the generosity of members of the Woman's Education Association. The story of her life, her home, and the customs of her country is told each year to thousands of boys and girls from the schools of Greater Boston.

A JAPANESE GIRL'S LIFE

From her home in the Land of Cherry Blossoms, O Hana San came to the Children's Museum in order to let the boys and girls of Boston know how children live in Japan. The Honorable Flower Maiden (for that is the English of her musical name) was dressed with absolute correctness by a court dressmaker in Tokyo, and from the pattern of her kimono and the way in which her hair is cut we know she is about four years old. She wears soft socks which are almost like mittens, and when she goes out of doors straw sandals are put on her feet. When she is a little older she will wear the *géta*, or wooden clogs, which make a musical sound like "kring, krang."

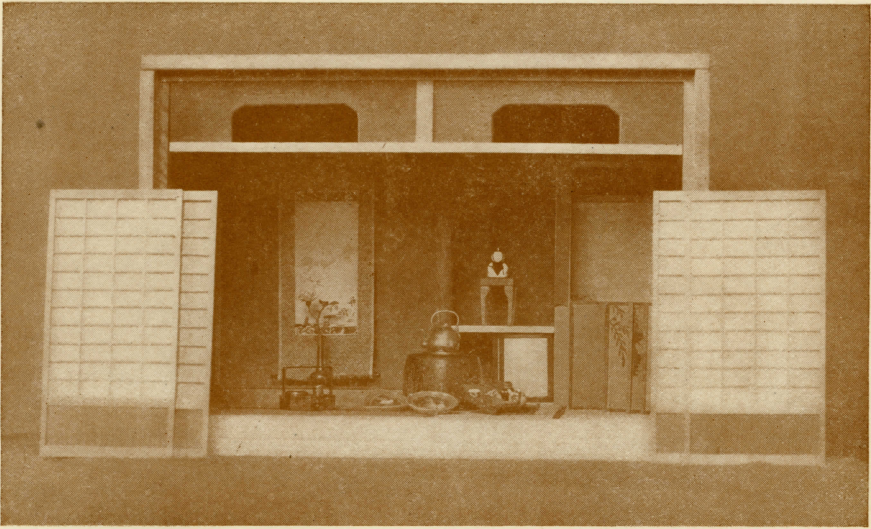
Her soft kneeling mats are with her, for in her home there are no chairs or sofas; in fact, no heavy furniture of any kind. But because of the loose, easy clothing it

is quite easy for O Hana San to sit with her little legs bent under her.

When the Japanese girl is tired and sleepy, her bed comes to her, only it is a very different bed from that of a little American girl. From a convenient closet the sleeping mats, made of padded silk or cotton, are brought out and placed on the floor, with the small bows on each uppermost and at the head. Since she is not old enough to have her hair dressed elaborately, like her mother's, O Hana San may use a soft pillow; and over her is laid, first, the big wadded garment that looks like a dressing gown, but is really her winter covering, and then the large comforter, its two tassels indicating the top. The emperor's mats are made of white silk, and he sleeps on sixteen, piled one above the other. Sheets were never found in old Japan, although now their use is becoming common.

There is no separate dining room in O Hana San's home; and when it is time for a meal, small, tray-like tables are brought in and set before each person. Soup, fish, and rice are quite sure to be included in any dinner, while with the tea little cakes of bean jelly may be served; and it would be quite proper for any guest to take hers home instead of eating it!

O Hana San's girlhood days will be very busy and happy ones, with plenty of play, although she must spend much time in studying correct etiquette. To make



“HER HOME IN FAR JAPAN”

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“TEA IS ALWAYS MADE IN THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS”

the bows required for different occasions means a great deal of practice; she must learn to be very courteous and respectful; she must study housekeeping and, perhaps, the care of silkworms; and a professor will come once a week to teach her flower arrangement—hours may be spent over one spray, twisting and bending it until it is as perfect as possible, and then it will be put in the place of honor in the guest room of the home.

There are no furnaces in a Japanese house, but in cold weather a fire box (*hibachi*) which burns charcoal is placed in the center of the room, and winter evenings are the signal for gathering around it. O Hana San has on many thickly padded kimonos, and huddles very close to the *hibachi* while Grandmother tells the following stories:

the time required for different occasions means a great deal of practice; she must learn to be very courteous and respectful; she must study housekeeping and prepare the care of dresses; and a professor will come once a week to teach her house arrangement—how to spend her time, existing and heading it until it is a matter of course, and then it will be put in the place of honor in the great room of the house.

These old stories from the East have been told many times at the Museum of Fine Arts to the children who come to see the Japanese woodcarving and ivory netsuke here illustrated; and in retelling them now, it is hoped that the familiarity of story and object may endear them to some children, while to others they may serve as an introduction to the wealth of Oriental art and story in the Museum of Fine Arts.

THE WOODCUTTER'S PEACH

There were once a poor old woodcutter and his wife who lived near a forest in Japan. One day, while the old man went into the wood to gather sticks for firewood, the old wife took her few pieces of linen to the brook where she always did her washing. A lovely, cool, quiet place it was to wash in, but today something unusual happened. Down the stream came floating something soft and round, and to her surprise it was a peach. Murmuring a little rhyme, she called to the current to bring it within her reach, and then joyfully she took it home to share with her husband. He cut it carefully, but his knife grazed the stone; it broke, and out jumped a boy! The old couple were breathless with amazement and delight. Momotaro, or Peachling, they called him, and kept him for their own.

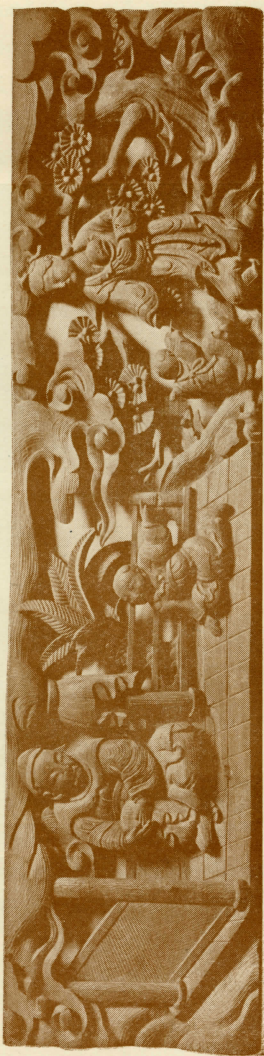
He grew up a lusty boy, loving the outdoors and every sort of adventure. But he was never quite satisfied, longing always to go to the island out over the seas where the demons lived. To conquer the demons was the Great Adventure. Others had tried; all had failed. But it was known that some day there would grow up a boy brave and steadfast enough to subdue them, and Peachling was determined to be that boy. The old couple gave him what they could, but it was only a few dumplings to sustain him on his journey.

Dumplings seemed poor aid against demons, but it was because he carried these in his pocket that first a dog, then a monkey, and finally a pheasant came sniffing about; and when Momotaro gave them each a piece, each in turn followed on after him to help him in his fight.

The four journeyed together until at last the great fortress of the devils loomed dark and dread across the water. They somehow passed over the stormy sea, and then all four had a stiff fight with the devils. Yet one by one all the demons were vanquished, except the Chief Demon, Akandoji. He dwelt in the inner fortress, and wielded a terrible war club. As the four approached, he threw it at them, but it fell far wide of its mark. And just as he lost his balance with the force of the throw, the four sprang upon him and knocked him down. In the twinkling of an eye they had bound him with ropes. Not an eyelash might he move until he had told them the secret hiding-place of the hordes of treasure that lay buried, as every one knew, in the island of the demons. To all manner of gems and gold and silver Momotaro and his friends helped themselves, until they were so heavily laden that they could scarcely walk. All this they took home to the poor old woodcutter and his wife, and so they all lived happily ever after.



SMALL IVORY FIGURES (NETSUKE), JAPANESE 19TH CENTURY,
IN THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON



CARVED WOODEN PANEL, JAPANESE (18TH CENTURY)
IN THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

A LITTLE FOLLOWER OF CONFUCIUS

Min Sun, a little Chinese boy, was unfortunate enough to have a very cruel stepmother. Two babies of her own took all the stepmother's love, for, not understanding the nature of love, she was as stingy with it as if it were money. So mean was the woman to her stepson that when the father was away about his business, she even took his food for her own children, though there was really plenty for all. The boy grew thinner and thinner. But no one realized it, for Chinese boys do not dress as our boys do, showing long legs and arms that any one may see, but they wear a long cloak or dress with trousers that reach to the feet and with full sleeves that cover the arms.

At length the boy had grown so thin that even such a dress could not hide how frail he had become. Indeed, he was so weak that he could hardly stand. When his father noticed this he cried: "Tell me how you come to be so. Is illness upon you?"

"No," Min Sun answered, "I am not ill."

"What, then, ails you?" demanded his father. "Answer me."

The boy hesitated to say a hard word against his stepmother, and in his confusion his words stumbled over one another. Then his father guessed the cause.

His face grew white, then turned to purple, so angry was he.

"The woman shall go!" he stormed. "She treats my son thus! Out of my house with her! Away!" He started to carry out his threat at once, but Min Sun crept to his feet, holding him.

"No, no! Stop!" he begged. "If you send her off, her babies too must go. Then three lives will be hurt. Two babies will be hungry instead of only one boy. Is it not better that one should suffer rather than three?"

Meanwhile, suspecting that there might be trouble, the stepmother, with one baby in her arms, another playing at her feet, had been listening just out of sight. Now, when she heard the little boy's plea, all her hardness of heart melted away. In tears she ran to her husband, throwing herself on the floor beside Min Sun.

"Forgive me!" she cried. "I have heard. Only keep us all and you shall see. He shall be as one of my own. I will cherish and care for him always. Indeed, how could I now help loving him?"

Of course, after that they lived together, as happy a family as heart could wish.



THE SCHOOLGIRL, BABY WITH OLDER SISTER, LADY IN STREET COSTUME