

JAPANESE REVERENCE FOR THE HEROIC DEAD

Unceasing Devotion to the Memory of Brave Men Who Made Sacrifice.

Daily Worship at the Tombs of Those Who Gave Up Their Lives for Others.

YOKOHAMA, Japan, March 15.—In our days of childhood we learn with much difficulty that boys may do things that girls may not; by and by we learn that 'tho' men and women have many ideals in common, some virtues weigh more in the scale for men, while others weigh more in the scale for women; and finally having become accustomed to all this, we achieve grown-upness and cross the Pacific only to learn that whole races of human beings live and prosper according to a scale of virtues that is their own. It seems that something wider than the Pacific separates American from Japanese ideals; and one can not help wondering how like us the Japanese will be when our Western ideals have held sway longer.

This is an interesting time to be in Japan. For the old ideals and the new flourish side by side. One often sees a gentleman, the victim of two codes of etiquette, bowing the three, slow, deep, ceremonial bows to an acquaintance and at the same time taking off his hat in foreign fashion. The other day in Tokyo an incident happened that might have occurred in feudal times, but came as a shock in this 20th century. A betto stab, bed a fellow servant, and afterwards going to his master, prostrated himself, begging pardon and expressing regret, not for the murderous act, but because he, a servant, had considered his own affairs before the master's, and had upset the master's household.

Love and loyalty have led the Japanese to extremes that we could never attain. Lately we have been to two places, sacred to the people, because they contain the graves of those who, true to their ideals of loyalty, died for others. The ideals of loyalty are not ours, but whatever our own beliefs, we must still admire those who have died for their beliefs.

Story of Supreme Loyalty.

Do you know the story of the Forty-seven Ronins? If you know it as Mitford tells it in his incomparable "Tales of Old Japan," you will find my account feeble and halting. It is the supreme story of Japanese loyalty and revenge, a story that lives in Japanese art, in the color prints especially; that lives in drama—every year it is played in the Tokyo theaters—and that lives still in the hearts of the people who through each day to burn incense before the forty-seven tombs at the temple of Sengakuji. A Ronin ("a man") was a well-born man who having for some reason lost his land, was tossed about by circumstances, wandering up and down the country, living as he might, until he could either return to the old or find some new allegiance. Only yesterday I met a modern Ronin boy of 17 whose father belongs to an old Samurai family and who has an assured position. He had been going to Seattle to live as a servant in some American family until he can learn English. Two years ago in America we had ourselves such a Ronin servant and our combie to Japan his father, a Tokyo lawyer, called on us and brought us presents. But the brave Forty-seven?

For Love of an Ancestor.

Asano, a daimio, lived early in the 15th century in his castle in Harima province. On him fell the honor of entertaining in Tokyo an imperial envoy, so important a personage that Asano was obliged to take lessons in etiquette from a superior named Kira. Asano bore his teacher's presents, but the lessons consisted of almost nothing except insults, for Kira, who was of a grasping nature, thought the gifts of the daimio mean and insignificant. Finally Kira, overhearing beyond endurance, asked Asano to tie the skirt of his sock, calling him a country lout, whereupon Asano, justly incensed, rushed toward Kira, thrusting at him with a dagger. The daimio was seized and imprisoned, a council sat on the case and in accordance with their decree, Asano committed harakiri, his family was disgraced, his castle confiscated, and his retainers disbanded. He was a man much loved by those who served him and especially by his councillor, Oishi Kuranosuke.

Oishi resolved to avenge the death of his master and so he chose 46 faithful retainers, among them Chikara, his son, a lad of 16, and an old man of 71, and these 47 men, banding themselves together, resolved to kill the enemy of their dead lord.

Kira, fearing them, kept himself well-guarded so the Ronins disbanded becoming tinkers, carpenters and tradesmen. Oishi meantime, knowing that he would be watched, went to Kyoto and gave himself up to a life of debauchery, even deserting his children and divorcing his wife. Then, when Kira was thrown off his guard and no longer feared the Ronins, Oishi joined his comrades in Tokyo and together they made their plans.

Avenge a Wrong.

One cold December night when snow was on the ground they feasted together talking over the last details of their attack and resolving to kill us helpless per-



THE WELL WHERE THE HEAD WAS WASHED

sons, for said Oishi: "To slay old men and women and children is a pitiful thing." At midnight they attacked the house, Oishi, with a party of men breaking in the front gate while Chikara led a party through the rear gate. Then began a stirring fight with the men at arms. The brave 47, without losing one of their number killed all of Kira's retainers before they found him crouching in an outhouse. This was Oishi's speech to him:

"My lord, we are the retainers of Asano Takumi no Kami. Last year your lordship and our master quarreled in the palace, and our master was sentenced to harakiri, and his family was ruined. We have come tonight to avenge him, as is the duty of faithful and loyal men. I pray your lordship to acknowledge the justice of our purpose. And now, my lord, we beseech you to perform harakiri. I, myself, shall have the honor to act as your second, and when, with all humility, I shall have received your lordship's head, it is my intention to lay it as an offering upon the grave of Asano Takumi no Kami."

But the cowardly nobleman refused to kill himself so the Ronins cut off his head, and then in all their blood-stained armor they set out on morning broke, carrying the head in a basket to the temple of Sengakuji.

Sacrificed 47 Lives.

On the way the Prince of Sendai sent out to them inviting them to breakfast in his palace so greatly was he impressed by their valor and loyalty. After this halt they went on until they reached the temple where the abbot came to meet them. They washed the head in a well near by and laid it on the tomb with a paper addressed to their lord, saying:

"Although we fear that after the decree issued by the government this plot of ours will be displeasing to our honored master, still we, who have eaten of your food, could not without blushing repeat the verse: 'Thou shalt not live under the same heaven nor tread the same earth with the enemy of thy father or lord, nor could we have dared to leave hell and present ourselves before you in paradise, unless we had carried out the vengeance which you began.'"

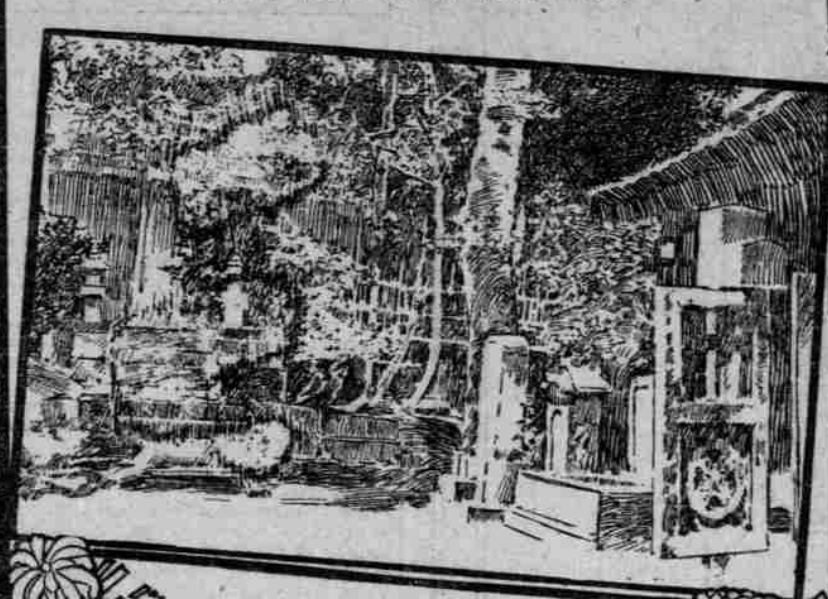
Then Oishi and Chikara, his son, and the others burnt incense while the priests of the temple prayed.

The decree of the supreme court was that they should all commit harakiri for the deed they had done though according to the custom and feeling of those times there was no more lawful than the lynching of fiendish negroes in the South today. So the 47 disemboweled themselves and their bodies were buried beside the tomb of their lord.

The temple is in the outskirts of Tokyo, near Shinagawa Station. We went along a little side street lined with shops, where postcards and books and sake cups are sold, all telling the tale of the bravery of the forty-seven. Passing

through the temple gate we came to a plain two-story building where, for a few sen, we saw the sacred relics: swords, spears, old iron helmets, worn clothing of rich brocade, plans of Kira's house, old documents, chain armor, and armor made painstakingly by hand of metal and leather. Some distance beyond, at the side of the main walk, is the little round well where the head was washed. A short distance more and we came to a building filled with carved wooden figures of the Ronins, young and old, from the man of 71 to the smooth-faced boy, Chikara. A figure in white represents Kira dressed in a nightgown as he was when the Ronins killed him. A quaint, good-natured old country man was in charge of the figures. He lifted the curtain that we might see from the outside instead of going to the trouble of taking off our foreign shoes and entering the room. We asked him the names of the different figures but he only shook his head and said, in his rustic Japanese, "You would not understand if I told you." As we went toward the graves a young Japanese stepped up, lifted his hat politely, and asked us to write something in English on a postcard; why we did not know unless he felt surprise that foreigners should visit the spot.

From another old man we bought sticks of incense, and passing the enclosure



THE TOMB OF THE LORD ASANO



THE TOMBS OF OISHI, FOUR OF HIS COMPANES, AND OF THE LORD ASANO

showing the grave of the Lord Asano came to the graves of his faithful relatives, marked alike, with small tombstones placed near together in a square. In front of each stone stands a bamboo holder filled with fresh green leaves, and in front of each incense is burning always till the place is grey with smoke and the air heavy with perfume. The graves of Oishi and Chikara are covered with little wooden shelters where the Japanese have pasted their cards. Here beside the grave of their Lord the Forty-seven lie, and with them another, a Satsuma man, who had spat upon Oishi and called him faithless and a coward as he lay in drunken sleep in the gutter one day in Kyoto. Assured after Oishi's death of his faithfulness, the Satsuma man committed harakiri

in atonement before Oishi's tomb, and the pitying priests buried the body beside the graves of the 47 heroes.

Reverence Without Limit.

If you go sometime to that little spot in the temple yard of Sengakuji perhaps you too will do as we did: place burning incense before the tombs of the Forty-seven Ronins, brave men and true. It is a wonderful story of loyalty, isn't it? And while we 20th century Americans shrink from the vengeance so relentlessly pursued we must share the Japanese feeling of reverence for the men who were true to their belief and faithful unto death. As we stood there, several hundred people came, men and women from the country, carrying many of their worldly



THE TOMBS OF OISHI AND SOME OF HIS COMPANES

possessions with them, fathers in semi-foreign clothes, telling the story to their schoolboy sons, mothers and daughters, young wives with babies tied on their backs, high school and college students, soldiers in uniform, well-to-do merchants and poor, bent, old cronies. One tiny maid came alone, and when she had left sticks of incense at each grave, clasped her hands before the tomb of Oishi and said a prayer for his soul.

Ill-Fated Couple.

Leaving Sengakuji, we went by winding lanes, bamboo shaded, to a suburb called Meguro, where Komurasaki and Gompachi, the ill-fated lovers, lie buried in one grave. Meguro is a thriving suburb, with so many new houses building that it seemed we should find no place secluded enough to hold a grave. Once we thought we had found the spot for we saw in a garden a great stone Buddha, with a semicircle of saints standing reverently about him. In reply to our knocking an old man and an old woman came out, quaint old-style Japanese, who directed us with such kindness and courtesy that we half wished to remain and make their acquaintance. Instead of continuing our search, after many turnings we came at last to a tea house on the corner, where a pretty woman fetched the key to the gate and made herself our guide. The wall and gateway, alas for romance! are of galvanized iron sheeting. Within, sheltered by bamboo and willow, is the grave where the lovers lie, the grave of the Shiyoku, the Japanese call it, for the Shiyoku is a mythical bird, the symbol of conjugal faithfulness. This is the story:

Shrine for Lovers.

Gompachi, who was a handsome youth, much skilled in the use of arms, quarreled with a comrade and killed him. So he left his home and, traveling far, stopped one night at a wayside house for rest. He was awakened from sleep by a beautiful girl, who told him that he was in a den of robbers, who intended to kill him for

his sword and silver. She herself they had stolen from her father's home, and she begged him to escape from the place, taking her with him. Gompachi, thus forewarned, lay in wait for the robbers and, as they attacked him, killed—so the story goes—all ten of them. He married Komurasaki to her father, who feasted him and gave him pieces of silver. The two young people exchanged vows of fidelity, and Gompachi fared on toward the capital. He was attacked by highwaymen and was about to be overcome when a civilian came to his rescue. This rescuer became his friend, entertaining him for several months. Then Gompachi became idle and dissolute. Finally, in one of his haunts he met Komurasaki weeping. She told him that misfortune had befallen her family, until in filial obedience, to save her father and mother from starving, she had sold her body to the keeper of the house in which he found her. Gompachi in his blindness had not the money to buy her freedom, but he went each day to see her. Then all his money was gone, his heart turned against him and Gompachi became a common highwayman and murderer. For his crimes he was caught at last and beheaded. Komurasaki, when he came no more, learned his fate and went to find his grave at Meguro. There, when she had wept and prayed long, she stabbed herself to death with a dirk. The priests who found her there buried her in the grave with Gompachi. Poor Komurasaki, life was hard for her.

Lovers today flock to the place to burn incense and tie wisps of paper prayers to the trees that overhang the grave.

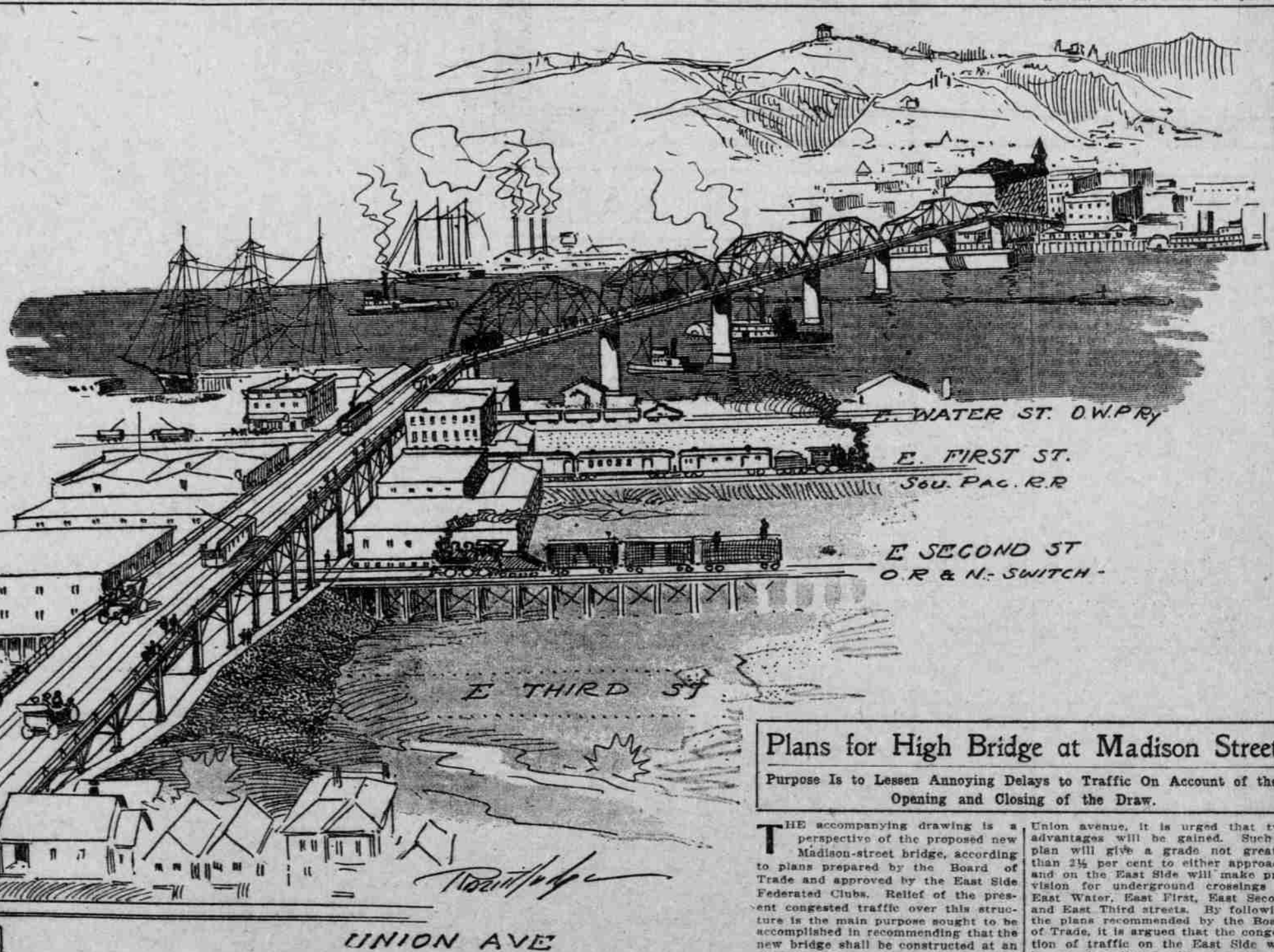
ANNE LAURA MILLER.

"Argued by the Works' Man."

See Paddy Flynn 't me last night, sez he: "Bech, me boy, it's attill' purty, had 'thin' wimmin folks, 't satisfy a fad, 'Air takin' jobs from ye an' me, me lad, sez Ol' to ye, sez Ol' it shouldn't be."

At that Ol' ups an' answers without fear: "Indeed, wid ye, me frind, Ol' don't agree."

Per anny man would not contented be "Without a gal 't run 't' females, a maid," sez Ol, "is born 't' injineer."



PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF PROPOSED HIGH BRIDGE AT MADISON STREET, LOOKING FROM THE EAST SIDE

Plans for High Bridge at Madison Street

Purpose Is to Lessen Annoying Delays to Traffic On Account of the Opening and Closing of the Draw.

THE accompanying drawing is a perspective of the proposed new Madison-street bridge, according to plans prepared by the Board of Trade and approved by the East Side Federated Clubs. Relief of the present congested traffic over this structure is the main purpose sought to be accomplished in recommending that the new bridge shall be constructed at an elevation nine feet greater than that of the old one. This will give the main part of the bridge an elevation of about 50 feet above low-water stage, which will enable fully 80 per cent of the river steamers to pass beneath the structure without opening the draw, putting an end to a large percentage of the present annoying delays to traffic.

By extending 100 feet further west the approach to the bridge from the West Side, and continuing the bridge level easterly on the East Side to

Union avenue, it is urged that two advantages will be gained. Such a plan will give a grade not greater than 2 1/2 per cent to either approach, and on the East Side will make provision for underground crossings at East Water, East First, East Second and East Third streets. By following the plans recommended by the Board of Trade, it is argued that the congestion of traffic on the East Side will be greatly relieved without noticeably increasing the grade of the bridge. The movement of freight is increasing constantly and the officers of the Board of Trade believe the benefits that will result from constructing a new bridge in accordance with its plans are such as will be required within a few years. The Board will seek to convince the Executive Board and the members of the City Council of the advisability of providing for future requirements by building such a bridge as has been designed.