

OUR WOMEN—They are Wonderful—Says Japanese Bride "Of course, they have their bad points too."

Mme. Yamasaki, Wife of Japanese Diplomat, Gives Interesting Views on American Womanhood—How Our Women Impress One Who Sees Them From an Entirely Novel View Point.

"AMERICAN women lead such wonderful lives. They are so free and independent. They are so well educated and accomplished. There is such an equality between them and men. They discuss intelligently all the leading questions of the day. And they vote and hold political offices! There seems to be no end to their ambitions and their opportunities to realize them."

Madame Katschi Yamasaki, wife of the Japanese consul in Chicago, sat primly in a big green velvet chair in the drawing-room of her home, 5725 Lexington avenue, and thus admiringly discussed her American sisters with an Inter-Ocean interviewer.

"But most amazing is the home life of American women," the dainty Japanese woman continued. "She may choose whom she will marry! She may be her husband's companion through life. She may care for her own children and decide how they shall be educated. If her matrimonial life through no fault of hers is unhappy, she can secure a divorce and still keep her children. She can also prevent her husband from securing a divorce without just reason. And if she does not want to marry, she may remain single and be respected and happy."

"The American woman is allowed to lead her own life, to have her own ideas, to do her own work, and to assert her rights. It is no wonder they call America the land of the free!"

A little over five months ago Madame Yamasaki bade farewell to the land of cherry blossoms and chrysanthemums and started on her long wedding journey to Chicago. The little Japanese bride has just celebrated her nineteenth birthday, but she looks like a slip of a girl who is not more than sweet sixteen.

Charming Oriental Beauty.
She is an exquisite bit of old Japan, with a fragile beauty which charms and fascinates the beholder. Her glossy black hair is straight and long and not a stray lock mars the smoothness of the carefully-rounded pompadour. Her black eyes are long and narrow and slant slightly upward at the outer corners, and her eyebrows are delicately outlined above them. Her complexion is a clear ivory white with a touch of color in the cheeks that might have been stolen from the cherry blossoms. She is slender and petite, lacking several inches of being five feet in height.

The kimono she wore would have been the delight and envy of every American woman. It was made of a heavy silk crepe of a soft wistaria tone in which was woven a dull white conventional design. The underdress she wore was of white broadened crepe, showing about two inches at the throat and between the white crape and the wistaria was a narrow fold of cherry-colored crepe.

Her feet were clad in thick silk stockings with a separate piece for the big toe. The straw sandals were fastened on with a thong stretched from the front.

No murmur of discontent or longing came from the dainty foreigner as she talked about our manners and customs and dress, which seemed to delight and amuse her. She admitted, however, that the most fascinating of all are the American women, whom she has watched with wondering and admiring eyes.

"They are so different," said Mrs. Yamasaki, with a slight turn of the head, which sent the cluster of wistaria blossoms nodding against the black hair. "I had read a great deal about American women before I came here and I thought I knew all about them—but I don't."

American Women a Surprise.

"While I was attending college at Tokyo my teachers told me about the position of women in the United States and explained to me that they were mixing in politics— Isn't that what you call it? But I didn't know they voted and I never dreamed of their holding political offices. It is such an unheard-of thing in Japan. Our women know absolutely nothing about government affairs. In fact, we are not interested in them," she admitted naively.

"But here one has to be interested," she continued. "My American friends ask me if I am a suffragette. I tell them I do not know. Then they try to explain women's rights to me but the more they tell me, the more perplexed I become. Even if I did understand it I would not know what to do. I have depended on men so long—so many centuries," she added with a smile. "That I should hesitate to take the responsibility. With American women it is different. They have so much ability and the more I learn of them the less surprised I am at anything they do. They are so resourceful and whatever they attempt they seem to carry through."

There was an unmistakable note of appreciation in the low musical voice which mingled harmoniously with the apologetic undertone for the Japanese women who were not brave enough to make the struggle.

"And your women's clubs," she continued with a helpless look. "They tell me at their meetings women discuss subjects of every kind and even send word to the men what views they hold. When I hear them holding a council it makes me think of the councils of the mothers and grandmothers and other relatives when a marriage is being arranged in Japan. Such solemn affairs as they are and the persons who are most interested have no voice in the matter at all."

"Yet I suppose if I stay here long enough I shall be a club woman myself. The American spirit is so catching and when one of your wonderful women talks to me and tells me all the good women are doing in the clubs, I want



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Mrs. YAMASAKI



"CLUB WOMEN ARE WONDERFUL."



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"SHE SAID SHE WAS AN OLD MAID."

ment for a girl to learn to be a home maker." "Your own engagement was perhaps a long one," it was suggested. The little Japanese bride looked appealingly at her husband. "We were engaged for several years," Mr. Yamasaki answered with a smile. "For several years," she echoed dutifully.

fully. But the knowing glance that flashed from eye to eye convinced me that their engagement in this country would have been considered a very long one.

"Your courtship here seems peculiar to me. It commences young in America, too, for I hear the boys and girls at school have their sweethearts—in fact many of them. I see the boys and girls go walking and skating together and I meet young men and young women at parties when their parents are not along. They have freedom and companionship that are denied in Japan. Some one told me young people frequently became engaged without their parents' knowledge or consent. And that sometimes they get married without letting any one know. How terrible that is!"

"It isn't as serious as that," she was assured. "They generally come back home in a week or two and are forgiven."

"But that doesn't make it any the less disloyal to their parents," she answered, her eyes snapping with excitement. "It is so ungrateful when parents have done so much for children to make them happy. Obedience is the first lesson we are taught and all our lives we are obedient to some one. First to our parents, then to our husbands, and then to our mothers-in-law and grandmothers. Always we are obedient until we are mothers-in-law and grandmothers ourselves. Then the younger women must be obedient to us. It is an old custom, but I don't think any modern custom can be better, do you?"

"Obedience is an excellent trait," the interviewer answered evasively. "Do you think American women lack it altogether?"

"I couldn't say," she said, looking intently at the sparkling ring on the long, slender hand. "But I have heard American children talk back to their parents. I have heard wives pleasantly but firmly disobey their husbands, and even the wishes of older people are sometimes disregarded. It is all part of your 'freedom,' I suppose."

Startled by Old Maid.

"Do you know the kind of woman I met the other day?" she asked, her face brightening up. Without pausing for a reply, she resumed her story. "This woman was much older than I and never had been married. How strange! She said she was an old maid or a spinster. She said she never intended to marry and that she was just as happy as she could be. I asked her if there were others like her and she said 'thousands of them'—the United States is full of old bachelors and old maids who are far more contented than most married persons. Is it true?" she demanded.

"How wonderful to earn your own living," she added, meditatively. "But the Japanese women do not know how they never think of going out and making money. Perhaps many of our girls at home would not marry if they could make a home for themselves. But they can't. And no matter what the circumstances of a Japanese family are, a girl cannot require her father to support her after she is of marriageable age. So there is nothing for her to do but marry. Often she is unhappy with the husband that is chosen for her, and that generally ends in his divorcing her and sending her back home."

"What do you think of divorce?" she was asked.

"It is so unjust to the woman," she replied, the heart of the woman rising above the tradition of ages. "I suppose a man has a right to divorce his wife, but it leaves her so helpless and alone."

"I know little of your divorce laws, but I think they are better than ours. When a Japanese maiden marries she knows her whole happiness depends upon pleasing her husband. She has been brought up to understand this from childhood, and the causes for divorce are strongly impressed upon her. Some of our reasons are the same as yours, but we have many additional ones. A man can divorce his wife if she is disobedient to her father-in-law and mother-in-law. He can divorce her for stealing, or for jealousy, or for talking too much."

"But the principal reason is that he does not like his wife. So he sends her back to her father and she takes back her family name. If she has children, she cannot keep them unless her husband chooses to give them to her. She is left heartbroken and disgraced and must remain, often an unwelcome guest in her father's house, until she is again chosen to be some man's wife."

"I believe there is a law now granting the woman the right to sue for a divorce. But few Japanese women with children would take advantage of it. They love their children so dearly they will do almost anything to keep the family together."

Views on Our Divorce.

"Many divorced people marry again, and often a man divorces several wives until he finds one that he likes."

"Do you believe in divorce?" "Too big a problem for me," she said with a shake of her head. "It seems to me that a man and woman should be happy together all their lives if they love each other and want to do what is right. But if they do not, they would only be unhappy together. One thing, though, I am sure of—if a woman has a good husband who is kind and thoughtful of her, she should be obedient to his every wish."

"There is much to be grateful for in America," she said. "Your warm houses are so comfortable. All we have to keep the cold out in Japan is a small jar filled with burning charcoal, and when the days are cold and damp we sit and shiver."

"And I do love your American clothes. They are so pretty and so charming. But they are not becoming to a Japanese lady, I know," she asserted. "I have several costumes. They make me look old and queer. I wear the short skirt when I go out walking, and they are so free and easy to get around in, and your shoes are real comfort. I wore American shoes all the time I was going to college. How the other girls envied me. But those awful stays or corsets. I wonder if I will ever get used to them. They are so stiff—so unrelenting. I only wear them when I am on my American costumes, and I put so glad to take them off, especially when I get used to wearing them they will be all right, but it is the hardest American custom I have tried to learn."

"The evening gowns with the low necks and short sleeves are dainty and attractive. The soft clinging fabrics are so graceful, and I admire the long trains. But they seem strange after kimonos—so soft of undressed."

"I don't see how an American woman has any time left after she has planned her costumes—there are so many styles to consider and so many parts to each gown. The cut of our kimonos is always the same. Some years they are worn a little longer, sometimes the sash is worn broader or tied in a larger bow, and once in a while the height of our wooden clogs changes—but that is all. Then our kimonos are made of such heavy silk that they last for years. Often a rousseau will last a whole lifetime, and frequently kimonos are handed down to us from our ancestors. They are so simply made they can be altered easily to fit anyone."