

## GEISHA GIRLS DESCRIBED

Japanese Gives Interesting Account of These Bewitching Entertainers

San Francisco, April 21.—Seimin Inosaka is a young Japanese who has lately come to America to finish his education. He belongs to a good family and has had advantages of the best schools in his own country. He arrived here too late to enter Columbia university this spring, but will do so the coming fall.

Though exceedingly young, he is intensely patriotic, and has spent much time in ascertaining just how the Americans feel towards his countrymen. One thing he has learned is that there is an erroneous impression here in regard to the ladies of that country, the tendency being to confuse them with the class known as Geisha. He has written the following article giving the history of the latter class and defining them as separate and apart from the gentlewomen of that land:

Several hundred years ago there were a few girls of peculiar profession who were called Shirabyoshi in Japan. The occupied high ranks and position in society. Their professions were to dance and sing, mainly employed by royal courts or wealthy families to enjoy them, as their charges were great. They lived in the cities where emperors lived.

At that time they were nobly characterized and well educated, and their arts were so difficult that unless educated in these arts they could not become shirabyoshi. But as the years passed, they gradually degenerated in their characters and in social ranks, then they began to be shirabyoshi without education, having no arts, and the only element that entitled them to be called shirabyoshi was the beauty of their faces.

We have got no record since when their names were changed into Geisha. I think it was 100 years ago. I venture to say that the main cause of their degeneration was due to the peaceful reign of the Tokugawa dynasties of about six centuries. During this time Daimyos had nothing to do, and they must have naturally

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searched for their enjoyments, and the shirabyoshi became one of their sacrifices. Demand for them was so great and because of difficulties of their arts compelled them to take in uneducated, low character, and satisfied by the beautifulness of faces only. Hitherto they were selected from Samurai families, but at this time many of them were picked out from Chonins, who were the lowest class and utterly ignorant. A few years ago, it was the climax of the Geisha.

Now, the Geisha's professions are to dance and sing. They are selected from poor families who cannot support themselves without getting some money by sacrificing their daughters. There are few occupations for an uneducated girl in Japan. Compelled by their poverty they search for this costly choice, because by this they get much more money than they de-

served. Musical instruments of shirabyoshi in singing were Koto and Tsuzumi, which were used by nobles only. Geishas use Teuzumi and Samisen, which are used by a kind of beggars at present, regarded humble. Shirabyoshi was dressed like a princess or a noble. A Geisha's dress is different in its form, especially in its color, from that of a lady, and if a lady puts on such a dress she will be thrown out from her society and sneered at as a Geisha.

Geishas, in their present condition, should be called a toy of a wealthy, dissolute people. They are employed by such kind of man only, just as a wealthy European plays cards. They form a society by themselves, but never permitted to enter into that of ladies. They are also rejected to appear before a gentleman or a lady. There are many thousands of Geishas scattered in all cities.

Now, it is a great phenomenon that they are steadily decreasing in number. Social reformers are eager to prohibit their existence by law, but Japan is too busy to pay attention to them.

Almost all foreigners had mixed up a Geisha and a Japanese lady. In fact, it is not easy to distinguish them, as Japanese ladies seldom come out from their gates. They often introduce to their people a Geisha as a type of Japanese woman.

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Spry Old Gent of 86 Hitches Up for Fourth Time.

New York, April 21.—In the presence of his son, eight grandchildren and four great grandchildren, James Vancourt, a rich resident of Mount Vernon, in his 86th year, and three times married to Mrs. Louisa Pines, 40 years old. The wedding was solemnized at the home of his son, who is 57 years old and, like his father, has been married four times.

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### Death of Aged Albanian.

Albany, Or., April 21.—Mrs. Anna Rebecca Heron, an aged resident of

this place, passed away at 4:30 p. m. last Friday, April 15th, after an illness of two weeks from apoplexy, aged 78 years, 1 month and 23 days.

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