Buddha's crystal and other fairy stories

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BUDDHA'S CRYSTAL

AND

OTHER FAIRY STORIES

BY

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PREFACE

The kind reception given to “The Japanese Fairy Book” both in the West and in the East has encouraged me to send forth another small collection of stories from Japan. I have invented none of these stories. They are taken from Mr. Hideo Iwaya’s modern version of the old-folk-lore tales of Japan and some of his new stories, and in clothing them with an English dress my work has been that of adapter rather than translator. In picturesqueness of conception Japanese stories yield the palm to none. And they are rich in quaint expressions and dainty conceits. But they are apt to be written in a style too bold. This defect the professional story-teller remedies by colouring his story as he tells it. In the same way I have tried to brighten the rather bare structure of a story, where it seemed to need such treatment, with touches of local colour so as to make the story more attractive to the foreign reader. Whether I have succeeded or not the reader must judge for himself.

“Buddha's Crystal” first appeared in the Lady's Realm and is here reprinted by the kind consent of the publishers as is also “The Tea Kettle of Good Fortune” and “The Mouse Bride”, which first appeared in the Girl's Realm in 1899 when that magazine belonged to the same firm.* My thanks are also due to the present owners† of the Girl’s Realm for allowing me to add “Issunboshi” (1900) to this collection.

“The Demon Tile” and “The Fallen Comet” are re-written from a translation given me by a friend who permitted me to make what use I liked of them. These two stories and the “Crysanthemum Crest” are, I believe, newly invented by Mr. Iwaya.

The illustrations have been drawn by Mr. Tosen Toda and Mr. Shusui Okakura. To both of whom grateful acknowledgement is due for painstaking collaboration.

Tokio, 1908.

Y. T. O.

* Hutchinson & Co.  † Cassell & Co.
Buddha's Crystal

I.

LONG, long ago there lived in Japan a great State Minister named Kamatari Ko. He was descended from the illustrious Fujiwara Uji, and was the ancestor of the five great noble families from whose circle only the brides of the Emperors could be chosen. Kamatari was known throughout the land, not only as a knight of the most noble descent, but also as a wise and able minister and a loyal and faithful subject, devoted to his master, the Emperor, Tenshiii Tenno, to whom he had rendered signal service in quelling the insurrection raised by the rebel Soga-no-Iruka, and in restoring peace and unity to the land.

Now Kamatari, besides being rich and prosperous and of illustrious fame, was thrice happy in the possession of one beautiful daughter, named Kohaku Jo. She was the light of his eye, the joy of his heart, and the pride of his life, and he vowed, each time he saw her growing in youthful loveliness, like a peach-blossom in the sunshine of spring, that none but a king should be her mate. But of his ambition he spoke to none, and people wondered why, when one after another of the noble youths were offered by their families, according to Eastern custom, as suitors to
her hand, ceremoniously worded excuses were made to all; but so it was.

And Kohaku Jo grew in grace and beauty as the years went by, and at sixteen years of age all who saw her said that she was the most beautiful princess they had ever seen. Though small, she was as slender as a lily-stalk; her face was a small oval, delicately pale, with cheeks of the soft cherry bloom, and her eyebrows like the outline of the crescent moon. Fair indeed was she to behold. Her mouth was like a tiny bud of the peach-blossom, and her hands and feet rivalled the snowy petals of the white lotus.

But far outshining her loveliness of form was her loveliness of character and disposition, and far more precious, too, in the sight of all her friends. Never had she been known to speak a harsh word to anyone or to disobey her parents in her whole life. Except to go at appointed festivals and family anniversaries to the great temple hard by, whose massive roof she could see daily looming through the great pine and cryptomeria trees of her home, she never left the precincts of the palace. At such times she might be seen arranging flowers and pouring water over the monumental gravestones of the family, or in the beautiful solemn temple itself burning incense before the tablets set up to the memory of her ancestors, or clapping her hands and bowing her dusky head before the holy shrine.
BUDDHA’S CRYSTAL

Her days thus passed quietly and peacefully in the unbroken seclusion and retirement of an Eastern princess, and little recked she of the future that her father dreamed of her. But her fate was drawing near, though she knew it not. Kamatari was certainly favoured of the gods. His ambitious hopes for his daughter were soon to be realised.

One day there was a great stir in the palace courtyard, and the officers of ceremony were rushing to and fro to find out what was the reason of the unusual commotion there. The big gates were thrown open, and in came a stately procession of men carrying a banner with the strange device of a dragon on a yellow background. They were envoys from the Court of China, and they came with a message from the Emperor Koso. He had heard of the beauty, the grace, and the wit of Kohaku Jo, and he sent to offer her his hand and the half of his kingdom. Should her father consent to give her to the Emperor of China, Kohaku Jo might choose out of the vast treasures of her adopted country to enrich the land of her birth and its temples.

The envoys were received with great pomp and ceremony, a whole wing of the palace was placed at their disposal, and Kamatari begged them to give him a few days in which to consider the matter. He would give them a final answer when he had spoken with his daughter. She was but a little maid still, and she must
be told without undue haste. With many prostrations on both sides, Kamatari, the gratified father, withdrew. But in his heart there was no hesitation though much ceremony.

On reaching his own room he clapped his hands, and when in answer to his summons his confidential servant appeared, he sent him to bid the Lady Kohaku Jo hie to he father's presence. The messenger found her seated before the *koto* (harp) with her attendants around her, and when told that her father called for her, she hastened to obey, wondering what made him wish to see her so suddenly.

She reached her father's room, and, pushing aside the sliding screens, she slipped inside on to the creamy white mats, and bowed to the ground before him.

"Honourable father, you sent for me; I am here!"

"Yes, Kohaku, I sent for you to tell you a great piece of news. The time has come for you to leave your father's home. You must marry now. As your mother and I have often told you, you must marry some day, someone whom we should deem a fitting husband for you. This day have I chosen for you, my daughter. The Emperor of China has sent for you to become his bride, and in six weeks you must depart with the ambassadors who will conduct you to your future home."

"Honourable father, must I leave you and my mother so soon?" and the maiden's face grew pale and her eyes