

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambroch Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntatz
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka
Sachs Poe Liebermann Kock Korolenko
de Sade Praetorius Mistral Zetkin



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**Madame Chrysantheme –
Volume 2**

Pierre Loti

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MADAME CHRYSANTHEME

By
PIERRE LOTI

BOOK 2.

CHAPTER XII

HAPPY FAMILIES!

July 18th.

By this time, four officers of my ship are married like myself, and inhabiting the slopes of the same suburb. This arrangement is quite an ordinary occurrence, and is brought about without difficulties, mystery, or danger, through the offices of the same M. Kangourou.

As a matter of course, we are on visiting terms with all these ladies.

First, there is our very merry neighbor Madame Campanule, who is little Charles N—-'s wife; then Madame Jonquille, who is even merrier than Campanule, like a young bird, and the daintiest fairy of them all; she has married X—-, a fair northerner who adores her; they are a lover-like and inseparable pair, the only one that will probably weep when the hour of parting comes. Then Sikou-San with Doctor Y—-; and lastly the midshipman Z—- with the tiny Madame Touki-San, no taller than a boot: thirteen years old at the outside, and already a regular woman, full of her own importance, a petulant little gossip. In my childhood I was sometimes taken to the Learned Animals Theatre, and I remember a certain Madame de Pompadour, a principal role, filled by a gayly dressed old monkey; Touki-San reminds me of her.

In the evening, all these folk usually come and fetch us for a long processional walk with lighted lanterns. My wife, more serious, more melancholy, perhaps even more refined, and belonging, I fancy, to a higher class, tries when these friends come to us to play the part of the lady of the house. It is comical to see the entry of these ill-matched pairs, partners for a day, the ladies, with their disjointed bows, falling on all fours before Chrysantheme, the queen of the establishment. When we are all assembled, we set out, arm in

arm, one behind another, and always carrying at the end of our short sticks little white or red paper lanterns; it is a pretty custom.

We are obliged to scramble down the kind of street, or rather goat's- path, which leads to the Japanese Nagasaki—with the prospect, alas! of having to climb up again at night; clamber up all the steps, all the slippery slopes, stumble over all the stones, before we shall be able to get home, go to bed, and sleep. We make our descent in the darkness, under the branches, under the foliage, among dark gardens and venerable little houses that throw but a faint glimmer on the road; and when the moon is absent or clouded over, our lanterns are by no means unnecessary.

When at last we reach the bottom, suddenly, without transition, we find ourselves in the very heart of Nagasaki and its busy throng in a long illuminated street, where vociferating djins hurry along and thousands of paper lanterns swing and gleam in the wind. It is life and animation, after the peace of our silent suburb.

Here, decorum requires that we should separate from our wives. All five take hold of each others' hands, like a batch of little girls out walking. We follow them with an air of indifference. Seen from behind, our dolls are really very dainty, with their black hair so tidily arranged, their tortoiseshell pins so coquettishly placed. They shuffle along, their high wooden clogs making an ugly sound, striving to walk with their toes turned in, according to the height of fashion and elegance. At every minute they burst out laughing.

Yes, seen from behind, they are very pretty; they have, like all Japanese women, the most lovely turn of the head. Moreover, they are very funny, thus drawn up in line. In speaking of them, we say: "Our little trained dogs," and in truth they are singularly like them.

This great Nagasaki is the same from one end to another, with its numberless petroleum lamps burning, its many-colored lanterns flickering, and innumerable panting djins. Always the same narrow streets, lined on each side with the same low houses, built of paper and wood. Always the same shops, without glass windows, open to all the winds, equally rudimentary, whatever may be sold or made in them; whether they display the finest gold lacquer ware, the most marvellous china jars, or old worn-out pots and pans, dried fish, and ragged frippery. All the salesmen are seated on the ground in

the midst of their valuable or trumpery merchandise, their legs bared nearly to the waist.

And all kinds of queer little trades are carried on under the public gaze, by strangely primitive means, by workmen of the most ingenious type.

Oh, what wonderful goods are exposed for sale in those streets! What whimsical extravagance in those bazaars!

No horses, no carriages are ever seen in the town; nothing but people on foot, or the comical little carts dragged along by the runners. Some few Europeans straggling hither and thither, wanderers from the ships in harbor; some Japanese (fortunately as yet but few) dressed up in coats; other natives who content themselves with adding to their national costume the pot-hat, from which their long, sleek locks hang down; and all around, eager haggling, bargaining, and laughter.

In the bazaars every evening our mousmes make endless purchases; like spoiled children they buy everything they fancy: toys, pins, ribbons, flowers. And then they prettily offer one another presents, with childish little smiles. For instance, Campanule buys for Chrysantheme an ingeniously contrived lantern on which, set in motion by some invisible machinery, Chinese shadows dance in a ring round the flame. In return, Chrysantheme gives Campanule a magic fan, with paintings that change at will from butterflies fluttering around cherry-blossoms to outlandish monsters pursuing each other across black clouds. Touki offers Sikou a cardboard mask representing the bloated countenance of Dai-Cok, god of wealth; and Sikou replies with a present of a long crystal trumpet, by means of which are produced the most extraordinary sounds, like a turkey gobbling. Everything is uncouth, fantastical to excess, grotesquely lugubrious; everywhere we are surprised by incomprehensible conceptions, which seem the work of distorted imaginations.

In the fashionable tea-houses, where we finish our evenings, the little serving-maids now bow to us, on our arrival, with an air of respectful recognition, as belonging to the fast set of Nagasaki. There we carry on desultory conversations, full of misunderstandings and endless 'quid pro quo' of uncouth words, in little gardens lighted up with lanterns, near ponds full of goldfish, with little

bridges, little islets, and little ruined towers. They hand us tea and white and pink-colored sweetmeats flavored with pepper that taste strange and unfamiliar, and beverages mixed with snow tasting of flowers or perfumes.

To give a faithful account of those evenings would require a more affected style than our own; and some kind of graphic sign would have also to be expressly invented and scattered at haphazard among the words, indicating the moment when the reader should laugh—rather a forced laugh, perhaps, but amiable and gracious. The evening at an end, it is time to return up there.

Oh! that street, that road, that we must clamber up every evening, under the starlit sky or the heavy thunder-clouds, dragging by the hands our drowsy mousmes in order to regain our homes perched on high halfway up the hill, where our bed of matting awaits us.

CHAPTER XIII

OUR "VERY TALL FRIEND"

The cleverest among us has been Louis de S— — —. Having formerly inhabited Japan, and made a marriage Japanese fashion there, he is now satisfied to remain the friend of our wives, of whom he has become the 'Komodachi taksan takai' ("the very tall friend," as they say, on account of his excessive height and slenderness). Speaking Japanese more readily than we, he is their confidential adviser, disturbs or reconciles our households at will, and has infinite amusement at our expense.

This "very tall friend" of our wives enjoys all the fun that these little creatures can give him, without any of the worries of domestic life. With brother Yves, and little Oyouki (the daughter of Madame Prune, my landlady), he makes up our incongruous party.

CHAPTER XIV

OUR PIOUS HOSTS

M. Sucre and Madame Prune, my landlord and his wife, two perfectly unique personages recently escaped from the panel of some screen, live below us on the ground floor; and very old they seem to have this daughter of fifteen, Oyouki, who is Chrysantheme's inseparable friend.

Both of them are entirely absorbed in the practices of Shinto religion: perpetually on their knees before their family altar, perpetually occupied in murmuring their lengthy orisons to the spirits, and clapping their hands from time to time to recall around them the inattentive essences floating in the atmosphere. In their spare moments they cultivate, in little pots of gayly painted earthenware, dwarf shrubs and unheard-of flowers which are delightfully fragrant in the evening.

M. Sucre is taciturn, dislikes society, and looks like a mummy in his blue cotton dress. He writes a great deal (his memoirs, I fancy), with a paint-brush held in his fingertips, on long strips of rice-paper of a faint gray tint.

Madame Prune is eagerly attentive, obsequious, and rapacious; her eyebrows are closely shaven, her teeth carefully lacquered with black, as befits a lady of gentility, and at all and no matter what hours, she appears on all fours at the entrance of our apartment, to offer us her services.

As to Oyouki, she rushes upon us ten times a day—whether we are sleeping or dressing—like a whirlwind on a visit, flashing upon us, a very gust of dainty youthfulness and droll gayety—a living peal of laughter. She is round of figure, round of face; half baby, half girl; and so affectionate that she bestows kisses on the slightest occasion with her great puffy lips—a little moist, it is true, like a child's, but nevertheless very fresh and very red.

CHAPTER XV

"HOU!"

Our dwelling is open all the night through, and the lamps burning before the gilded Buddha bring us the company of the insect inhabitants of every garden in the neighborhood. Moths, mosquitoes, cicadas, and other extraordinary insects of which I don't even know the names—all this company assembles around us.

It is extremely funny, when some unexpected grasshopper, some free-and-easy beetle presents itself without invitation or excuse, scampering over our white mats, to see the manner in which Chrysantheme indicates it to my righteous vengeance—merely pointing her finger at it, without another word than "Hou!" said with bent head, a particular pout, and a scandalised air.

There is a fan kept expressly for the purpose of blowing them out of doors again.

CHAPTER XVI

SLEEPING JAPAN

Here I must own that my story must appear to the reader to drag a little.

Lacking exciting intrigues and tragic adventures, I wish I knew how to infuse into it a little of the sweet perfumes of the gardens which surround me, something of the gentle warmth of the sunshine, of the shade of these graceful trees. Love being wanting, I should like it to breathe of the restful tranquillity of this faraway spot. Then, too, I should like it to reecho the sound of Chrysantheme's guitar, in which I begin to find a certain charm, for want of something better, in the silence of the lovely summer evenings.

All through these moonlit nights of July, the weather has been calm, luminous, and magnificent. Ah, what glorious clear nights! What exquisite roseate tints beneath that wonderful moon, what mystery of blue shadows in the thick tangle of trees! And, from the heights where stood our veranda, how prettily the town lay sleeping at our feet!

After all, I do not positively detest this little Chrysantheme, and when there is no repugnance on either side, habit turns into a makeshift of attachment.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SONG OF THE CICALA

Forever, throughout everything, rises day and night from the whole country the song of the cicalas, ceaseless, strident, and insistent. It is everywhere, and never-ending, at no matter what hour of the burning day, or what hour of the refreshing night. From the harbor, as we approached our anchorage, we had heard it at the same time from both shores, from both walls of green mountains. It is wearisome and haunting; it seems to be the manifestation, the noise expressive of the kind of life peculiar to this region of the world. It is the voice of summer in these islands; it is the song of unconscious rejoicing, always content with itself and always appearing to inflate, to rise, in a greater and greater exultation at the sheer happiness of living.

It is to me the noise characteristic of this country — this, and the cry of the falcon, which had in like manner greeted our entry into Japan. Over the valleys and the deep bay sail these birds, uttering, from time to time, their three cries, "Ha! ha! ha!" in a key of sadness that seems the extreme of painful astonishment. And the mountains around reecho their cry.

