

# **An English Girl in Japan**

Ella M. Hart Bennett

# AN ENGLISH GIRL IN JAPAN



A LITTLE NASAN APPEARED.

AN ENGLISH GIRL  
IN JAPAN

BY  
ELLA M. HART BENNETT

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TO  
MY FRIEND MARY  
A SOUVENIR  
OF MANY PLEASANT DAYS

'Though wide the ocean now dividing us,  
Ne'er let its waters separate our souls.'  
*(Japanese quotation.)*

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

The following sketches of life in Japan and the voyage there and back are taken from a diary which I kept during my travels.

Since writing my little book of personal reminiscences, which, thanks to indulgent readers and kind friends, is now republished in a second edition, many and great changes have taken place in the Far East.

Japan has now become a great Power--not only in the East, but also in the West. It is *little* Japan no longer; or, rather, its greatness is now understood and acknowledged by all the world. Western civilization has taken a firm hold on the Japanese people. They have been rapidly adopting, and, in fact, improving on, Western methods, customs, and manners. The fear of the globe-trotter of to-day is whether he will be in time to see the Japan of his dreams and of romance, before this great Western wave of progress and reform has divested the Land of the Rising Sun of its quaint originality and fascinating charm.

E. H. B.

1906.

## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

The following sketches of life in Japan and the voyage there and back are taken from a diary which I kept during my travels.

As Japan and its wonderful little people have come so much before the world during the last few years, and especially at this time are one of the chief factors in the crisis in the Far East, I thought that these reminiscences and anecdotes taken from real life might be of interest.

I am indebted to the editors of the *Cornhill*, *Sketch*, *Sunday*, and the *Buenos Aires Standard* for the reproduction of some of the following sketches.

ELLA HART BENNETT.

1904.

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An English Girl in Japan

## CHAPTER I

### ON THE WAY

I start on my travels--A fair Theosophist--Life on an American liner--Arrival at New York--Delmonico's--The Hotel Waldorf--Niagara Falls--Across the Lakes--The prairies--A quiet Sunday.

The visit to the Far East, where my father had business in Japan, was taken when I was only eighteen. Being an only child, I had been his constant companion since the death of my mother nine years previously. I was never sent to school, and, after a succession of governesses, my education was put into the hands of the old bachelor Rector of our parish, whose ideas as to what a girl ought to know were somewhat peculiar. However, in other ways I had more practical knowledge of life than was usual for one of my age, as my father discussed subjects of all kinds with me freely; and I grew up to take interest in topics of the day, in animal life of all kinds, and in my garden, of which I was very proud.

Until the last moment I feared something might occur to prevent our going; and it seemed almost too good to be true to think I was actually to see the country from where my father had brought so many beautiful curios on his former visit, and which I had always heard spoken of as an earthly paradise.

However, the day of departure came at last, and after many preparations and tearful farewells from the two old servants, who were to keep house for us during our absence, we started--two planet pilgrims bound for the Land of the Rising Sun.

I have always disliked books of travel with dates describing the day and hour when the writer did this or that, and giving minute descriptions of food, climate, feelings, etc. I don't think it is in the least amusing to read that on Monday, the 26th, the heroine was seasick, and on the 30th, at 6 p.m., was able to enjoy roast mutton and pudding. Or that she landed on

such a day at such a place, and exactly how she spent each hour. I have decided only to write about the events and experiences which have most impressed me during my travels, and to describe as well as I can the characteristics of the people that I came across.

We sailed from Southampton in the *Paris*, a huge American liner of 12,000 tons, more like a floating hotel than a ship. My first impressions of life on board were not altogether enjoyable, as we started in a gale, and I own to more than once wishing myself back again in Old England. However, in a couple of days the weather calmed down, and I soon recovered my sea-legs, and was able once again to enjoy life.

There were a good number of passengers of every description and nationality on board--a theatrical company, Mr. Carnegie (the millionaire), the late Dr. Barnardo, Mrs. Annie Besant, a foreign Ambassador and a Colonial Governor, besides many other well-known people. Mrs. Besant was accompanied by two Indian Mahatmas, who were the objects of much interest. They spent the greater part of their time together, reclining in long deck-chairs, with pillows behind their heads, and covered up to their chins with thick rugs. Sometimes they lay for hours, hand in hand, with closed eyes; at other times they talked earnestly in low tones. One Indian was very short and fat, the other long and thin, with snake-like movements and curious piercing eyes. They had thick black hair down to their shoulders, little red caps with tassels on their heads, and long, rusty black frock-coats and white trousers--a truly remarkable pair. I overheard the fat one remark to Mrs. Besant that before they could disintegrate and assume their astral shapes it was necessary to abstain from food for twelve hours, when their bodies would be in a fit state to soar. The fat little man must evidently have made up for his abstinence at other times, judging from his portly appearance. We were told that the trio were going to lecture on Theosophy in Chicago, and, after some little persuasion, Mrs. Besant consented to give a lecture on board. Over three hundred of the passengers assembled in the saloon, and the fair Theosophist held us fascinated for more than an hour. She spoke very quietly, but with intense

earnestness, in a rich, deep voice, with hardly a moment's pause. The subject was evolution, and the manner in which the soul passes from one body to another, either getting higher and more spiritual, or deteriorating and becoming more animal.

One of the audience got up and asked for the proofs of Buddhism being superior to other religions, others followed suit, and the discussion became somewhat heated, until the chairman, Mr. Carnegie, restored order by saying that we were not at a debating society, but that Mrs. Besant having been persuaded to speak for our pleasure and entertainment, he thought the least we could do was to listen with respectful attention, if not agreeing with the subject in question. (Loud applause.)

The remainder of the voyage passed in the usual way--sports, tournaments, concerts, the daily lottery on the run--the prize number being sometimes worth between thirty and forty pounds. Various other amusements were arranged by enterprising passengers and officers of the ship.

We were fortunate in arriving at New York up to time--in five days and a half--as the week before the mails had been delayed by a severe cyclone, from the effects of which New York was still suffering. On landing at the Custom House the scene of confusion baffled description. We luckily possessed a pass, so had not to open our trunks, but it seemed hours before our thirty-five boxes and packages were collected together. Meanwhile, I sat waiting on one of my boxes until my patience was quite exhausted.

My father had engaged rooms at the Hotel Waldorf, where we found a most charming suite had been reserved for us. Each set of rooms in the hotel is furnished in a different style--one Indian, one Japanese, another Egyptian, and a special honeymoon suite, all pink, blue, and Cupids. This hotel--probably the most luxurious in the world--was built by Mr. Astor, the millionaire, costing £400,000, and £200,000 to furnish. The State-rooms,

fitted up for the Prince of Wales, who never went there after all, are magnificent. The walls are hung with Gobelin tapestry, and all the dinner-service is of solid silver. I was particularly fascinated with the winter garden, which resembles a huge conservatory, with fountains, palms, and little tables dotted about. A string band played there every evening, and I saw a number of smartly-dressed American women and girls, as well as men, enjoying their favourite American drinks. I was not content until I had sampled a 'corpse reviver,' drinking it through a long straw, but I cannot say the result was altogether satisfactory.

Everything about New York interested me immensely after the quiet country life I had led at home. The crowds in the streets, the bustle, the electric-cars and overhead railways, were at first bewildering. We were given a box at the Opera Comique to see 'Panjandrum,' and there I saw several American society beauties. The girls reminded me much of Dana Gibson's charming drawings. The men seemed insignificant in comparison; but it is said they make ideal husbands, which is an important consideration.

After the theatre we went to a 'roof garden,' going up by lift to the top of a large building, and through a door on to the roof. This had been converted into a Café Chantant--plants, chairs, a small stage, and a restaurant, all lit up with little coloured lamps. It was very amusing, and a delightful way of spending a hot evening, as, although the end of September, the weather in New York was still sultry.

Before returning to the hotel, my father took me to Delmonico's, the famous New York restaurant, where we had an excellent supper, beginning with hot, soft-shell crabs--a very favourite dish in America. They are just like our crabs, but the shells are quite soft and crisp, and one eats shell, legs, and all. Mrs. Besant and her two Mahatmas were sitting at a table near us. They had evidently no immediate intention of assuming their astral shapes, to judge by the number of dishes which were placed before them and were carried away empty. A precocious little American girl of about ten was having supper with her 'poppa' and 'momma' at the table



next to us. Between the intervals of eating she placed her elbows on the table, brandishing aloft her knife and fork, and made comments on the people round in a loud, nasal voice. After some especially indiscreet remark about the long, thin Indian, who turned and looked at her with a melancholy gleam in his snake-like eye, 'momma' exclaimed in equally strident tones: 'I guess, Jemima, you had better keep your remarks to your own *inside*, and not make them public, or you'll get yourself *disliked--say?*' For a few moments Jemima remained silent, but soon began again.

The next morning I was awakened to find a negro standing by my bedside with a tray in his hands. He stood motionless in an attitude of attention, his feet well turned out, a broad grin showing his white teeth, apparently awaiting my commands. After receiving my orders, he departed with another low bow, still smiling. Most of the house-work is done in America by negroes, who are very quick and willing.

After three delightful but most fatiguing days in New York, spent in sight-seeing, we left by the night train for Niagara. I shall never forget my first impressions of those wonderful Falls, which even exceeded my expectations, they are so indescribably beautiful and impressive.

After lunch at the hotel where we were to stay the night, we walked to various points on the American side, and at each the view seemed more beautiful than the last. The Niagara River divides and forms three islands. On one side are the American Falls; on the other, over a large suspension-bridge, are the Canadian Horseshoe Falls. I persuaded my father to take me down under the latter. We were first both arrayed in a complete set of oilskins--coat, long boots, and pointed hood--and presented most comical figures. A guide led the way, as the path in places was very steep and slippery. At one spot the water poured down on us like a shower-bath, and it required some strength of mind not to turn back; but when we had once started we were determined to see all. We came to a tunnel, lighted by lanterns, where the water dripped from the roof and walls, forming deep puddles, through which we plunged; and I was glad to find myself in the daylight again, safe and sound. The sunshine on the

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