

Foreign Customs

A Banquet in Japan

IF YOU take a boat in Manila and go to Japan, in eight days you will be there. Japan is a beautiful country, and the Japanese people are very industrious. Many of their customs and habits are different from ours. Let us go to a Japanese banquet and watch their quaint way of taking their meals.

Food is served on a low table where the members of the family and the visitors squat and cross their legs. This part of their custom reminds one of our own old-fashioned way of eating. Some of our poor families to this day regularly take their meals at *dutangs*. *Dulang* is the Tagalog name for the low dinner table.

In Japan the dining room, as any other room in the house, is perfectly clean and orderly because the wooden shoes the people wear are removed before entering the house. The room has very simple decorations. It is almost bare of color except for the bright-petaled flowers on pots at the low windows. Doors and windows slide open and shut. Besides another small table at the corner, the only piece of furniture in the room is the dining tables. Things have no importance in a Japanese room: the people are everything.

The typical banquet in that neighbor country of ours takes place in a simple but impressive manner. Two girls in bright silk kimonos enter the room. Their dresses are beautifully decorated with figures. They carry trays on which little cups of green tea and pieces of green candy are placed.

After the tea the same girls bring in hot napkins. These pieces of cloth serve to clean the visitors' faces. Then follows the third course, the pea salad. The girls prepare the main dish, the *skiaki*, on a little gas stove in the middle of the table. The dish consists of a big piece of fat, green onions, beans, sugar, soya-bean sauce, and finally pieces of meat. These bits of meat are mixed with raw eggs in saucers. Instead of spoons and forks, the Japanese, like the Chinese, use chopsticks throughout the entire meal.

Conversation begins to be interesting. The educated Japanese loves to talk about music, art, history, and literature. They are very polite and patient.

At the end of the dinner a *geisha* arrives. A *geisha* is a Japanese singing and dancing girl. She is accompanied by another woman with a *sha mi-sen* or lute. The woman with the lute sits down cross-legged and begins to play on her instrument. The *geisha* dances, or rather skips, in her white cotton socks in front of the people in the room. All the men clap their hands to beat measure with her dancing. Then, one of them invites the *geisha* to dance a one-step with him.

After a round of dancing, the *geisha* and her companion with the lute sit with the guests and drink *sake*, the favorite wine of Japan. The *sake* is served steaming hot. The party ends in a quiet way, and the guests, happy and entertained, depart for home.

The Sampaguita

By Dr. Maria Pastrana-Castrone



THE sampaguita is the national flower of the Philippines. I am sure you know how it looks like. It is white and small and very fragrant. At night when the flowers bloom, they give a cool sweet odor. New flowers blossom all the year. They come out most abundantly, however, in the dry months of April and May.

The buds of this flower are usually made into rosaries and necklaces. This is done by passing abaca fibers through the buds, llang-ilang flowers and roses are tied at the end of the necklaces. Young women are fond of wearing these garlands around their necks.

The sampaguita plant is a slender, vine-like shrub. It is about two meters tall. It grows best when it is allowed to lean and climb on fences. The leaves are oval. They are somewhat pointed at the ends. They are arranged in pairs which are opposite to each other on the stem.

It is said that the sampaguita is a native of India. The Hindus call this flower *balphul*. It is named *sampaga* in Pampango, *manol* in Visayan, and *sampaguita* or *kampupot* in Tagalog. In naming this flower *kampupot*, the Tagalogs are misled. The real *kampupot* is another flower belonging to the same family as the sampaguita.

Some people think that the name sampaguita was taken from *sampaga*. *Sampaga* is defined by a Tagalog dictionary as a kind of flower similar to jasmine. Another book says that it is another name for flower.

The old folks in the Tagalog region (Please turn to page 21)