Miss Yuriko Chujo, a Rising Novelist

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DURING the Meiji period, extending from 1868 to 1912, Japanese literature entered upon a new phase, and especially in the realm of fiction there was unprecedented prosperity, producing a few names that will become immortal. Most of the writers taking first place, were, however, men, female novelists of distinction being comparatively few. Even those regarded as the foremost female writers of the period cannot be compared with the grace and force of Seisho Nagon and Murasaki Shikibu who wrote more than a thousand years before.

One of the greatest of our modern female writers, Ichiyo Higuchi, who gleamed like a morning star across the transition stage between the Tokugawa days and the Meiji era, surpassed most of the male novelists of her
day. From a child she had been fond of reading, and used to pore over the scraps of newspapers that came to her as wrapping paper on parcels. She appeared indeed as a new star on the literary horizon, being unsurpassed for grace of style and acuteness of content by any of her contemporaries. At the early age of 27, however, she passed away, leaving only six volumes behind for the delectation of her admirers.

In the literary world of Japan at that time there were few worthy to succeed her, but Kimiko Koganei, Kashiko Iwamoto and Kaho Miyake made a brave effort to fill the vacancy. Koganei was a younger sister of the famous novelist Ogai Mori. After her marriage to Dr. Koganei, the young writer was too much taken up with household matters to give place to her pen, and indulged only in desultory composition until she was forgotten in the literary world. Kaho Miyake was a daughter of Renshu Tanabe, a retainer of the Shogun, and was a woman possessed of an ordinary literary talent. She married the famous publicist, Dr. Yujiro Miyake, who writes under the name of Setsurei. A great part, however, has consisted of brief literary jottings and biographies, always looking to the assistance of her talented husband. She has never revealed the degree of originality found in Kashiko
Iwamoto, the greatest of the three named.

Iwamoto usually has written under the name of Wakamatsu Shidzuko. Early in life she became a Christian and married Mr. Yoshiharu Iwamoto. She has the advantage of having acquired a good reading knowledge of English literature, and had displayed great ability in translations from such sources. She also writes English very well. One of her best translations is "Little Lord Fauntelroy", which is in a style at once appropriate to them and full of womanly tenderness. To her the households of Japan are indebted for translations of the best anecdotal literature of England and America. Her skill as a raconteur is inimitable. She too died young, alas, shortly after the publication of her best book, the Wasure Gatami. Her body was laid to sleep in the beautiful Somei Cemetery.
Kunikida Haruko, wife of the noted writer of the same name, wrote a few things after her husband's death, that raised her to an honourable place among the women writers of Japan; but she I could not make ends meet on her literary income, and now she lives by acting as a floor walker among the shop girls of the big Mitsukoshi Department store. There are various other name among the earlier women writers of the Meiji era, most of them mere translators, but the writings of Shigure Hasegawa, Kikuko Ojima and Yachiyo Okada are real novelists. Hasegawa was the daughter of a Nihonbashi merchant, and she wrote both novels and plays, and won considerable fame in the literary world. She finally was obliged to resort to other means of livelihood and is now the mistress of a teahouse at Tsurumi. Kikuko Ojima came from the province of Toyama and first supported her mother and sister by teaching in a primary school, while writing her novels. She won the prize of 2,000 yen offered by the Osaka Asahi newspaper for the best novel of the year, and was thenceforth regarded as among the leading writers fiction. Her specialty is girls' stories. She is the Louisa M. Alcott of Japan, but her influence is somewhat different. One of her stories had such influence over a young girl that the youthful reader committed suicide. The native public regards this as the surest sign of a powerful writer. Ojima married Kodera, the painter, since when she has written but little. Marriage seems to take the writing spirit out of a
Japanese woman. Still, she is now writing a story which is appearing in the *Shojo Gaho*, a magazine for girls.

Yachiyo Okada, another writer of some note, is the sister of Kaoru Osanai, one of the leading dramatic critics of today. She married Soburosuke Okada, a painter. Her novels and criticism of plays have won her a place among the women writers of Japan. Already some ten original works have been published under her name. In recent years her name has not appeared so often in the periodical literature of the country, but last year she wrote the "Stray Notes" column in the *Osaka Mainichi*, and contributed to the Tokyo *Nichinichi* under the name of Date Mushiko. These names may be placed in the second period of modern female novelists.

We now come to the two names that give promise of outlasting the period in which their works have appeared. Foremost among those bidding for immortality may be placed Tamura Toshiko and Chujo Yuriko; but Akiko Hiratsuka and Akiko Yosano stand a close second. Hiratsuka writes under the name of Raicho.
She was born in Hongo, Tokyo, in 1887, her father a government official. Graduating from the Ochanomidzu school, one of the best in the capital, she went to the college of Domestic Science and prepared herself for household affairs. But she always inclined to literature and was clever with the pen even in student days. She was early prone to sensationalism and love of freedom. Her composition was remarkable for its strength and boldness. She is an intellectual rather than an emotional writer at present, and loves to follow ideas to their logical conclusion. One would not know she was a woman from her writings. She founded the magazine known as "The Blue-stocking" to which women writers of a radical turn of mind contribute. The magazine advocates the emancipation of the Japanese woman and the extension of her rights. The foundress frequently attacks the unbecoming conduct of men. Raicho maybe counted among the prominent leaders of the new women in Japan, since her marriage with Hiroshi Okumura, the painter, her writing has assumed a gentler tone.

First place among women writers of the Meiji and Taisho
erases must be given to Toshiko Tamura, being even unsurpassed by any of her male contemporaries. Born in Asakusa, Tokyo, in 1884, she graduated from the Girls' High School in 1899 and then studied under the novelist, Koda Rohan; and afterwards she married Shogyo Tamura, a novelist of the same school. Unlike other women writers who have married, Toshiko has not allowed household affairs to take her from her life pursuit of the pen. In fact her writing has shown even greater acumen and more perfect style since her marriage, the number of her books being a marvel. Yet she has withdrawn her name from the literary world during the past two years, which is a mystery to those who admired her work. Her friends say she is in retirement preparing her magnum opus, and that when it appears the world will sit up and take heed.

Another woman writer of some note is Akiko Yosano, for the most part a poetess. She was born at Sakai near Osaka in 1878 and after graduating from the local girls' school married Hiroshi Yosano, another lover of the Muse. An account of her has already been given in these pages and as she is more of a poetess than a novelist, the reader may be referred to what has been said of her in a previous number of the Japan Magazine. Her "Diary
of a Woman" in the TAIYO, dealing with the home life of the Japanese woman is a literary venture of great value.

Though Yuriko Chujo is named last of the four she is by no means the least, having been recognized for her superior merit as a writer before any of the others. In fact she leaped from obscurity to renown in the literary world in a moment almost; and today she is regarded as having had no equal since Ichiyo Higuchi.

Should her development continue in future as it has done in the past, Chujo will doubtless become one of the female immortals of the Japanese Academy. Born in Tokyo in 1899 she is still but a girl, the daughter of an architect. She has, however, inherited her literary taste from her mother. The girl showed a keen and cultured literary taste from her youth and when she entered the Ochanomidzu girls' school she devoted her best time to literature, also eagerly devouring works on philosophy and religion. Her trunk was found to be ...
filled with manuscripts of half composed novels. Her mother, a very good judge, was astonished at the talent displayed in these stories. She took one of them to Dr. Tsubouchi, a great literary critic and he at once saw in them great promise, and recommended that girl begin to publish her stories. He suggested that she complete a whole novel giving her best attention to it. She produced the volume in one month, and it was published in the CHUO KORON under the title Madzushiki Hitobito-no-mure, or "A Crowd of Poor Men", the author being then only 16 years of age.

At once the literary world of Japan was astounded at the appearance of new genius. It was supposed by most readers to be the work of some famous novelist under an assumed name. Its freshness and its new point of view excited the keenest of interest. Some of its narratives and descriptions were inimitable. Most remarkable of all was its obvious originality, though it showed a certain degree of European influence. The critics were very kind; the novel received universal welcome. Other novels followed in rapid succession, including Hi-wa-kagayake ri, or "The Sun Shines"; and Negisama Miyata, and Chi-wa-yutananari, or "The Soil is Fertile." These first came out as serials, and then in volumes. It is scarcely two years
since this star arose above the literary horizon and her fame is equal that of any of her older contemporary women writers. Chujo is a virgin artist of the purest type with her future before her as clean white paper on which to make her history.