A TOUR through Europe, where I could observe Western women closely, has enabled me to look objectively for the first time at the women of Japan. This in turn has made it easier for me to analyze the details of journalism for women in this country. The nature of the magazines they read is a natural corollary of the character of the women themselves.

To Westerners, Japanese women may appear to live in a state of subjection to their menfolk. Bound by the fetters of the household, they may seem cut off from the outside world. Because women in Japan have no place in the social sphere, because they rarely appear in public to discuss cultural problems and such questions as women's suffrage, they perhaps give the impression of being strangely servile as, demurely attired in kimono, they go smilingly but silently about their daily tasks.

Europeans and Americans apparently make much of their women, who, often as highly cultivated as men, seem to presume on the mere privilege of their sex. To my eyes, the Western woman of today lacks feminine tenderness, while her toilet appears strangely barbaric. At the very least, it is far removed from nature in its artificiality. Western individualism, which might be called the key to Western civilization, has deprived women of their natural beauty and tenderness, and made them in some ways masculine. And masculine women have the same unhappy effect on me as do effeminate men.

Much has been said about the character of Scarlett O'Hara, the heroine of Gone with the Wind. But it seems to me that Western women have all more or less Scarlett's character. Of strong temper, she has courage and ability enough to take on the work of a man and succeed at it, but for that reason her love affair ends unhappily. Have not tragedies such as Scarlett's been repeated time and time again in Europe and America?

No home is ever free from restraint. Marriage itself is the first step to restraint. A home often has old parents in it, and usually there are children. The wife cannot always cling to the husband as a cook does to his pan; she cannot demand his constant and all-absorbing love. We Japanese are often sorry to think that our wives are troubled with too much domestic business, but, for us, self-sacrifice is woman's traditional virtue—a conception which originated in our family system. When I look at my mother and my wife, the quality of their self-sacrifice impresses me with all the force of religious devotion.

There is something lofty in the attitude of the woman who discharges faithfully her various small duties at home, serves her husband and protects her children. I have been told that in some parts of the East, women are confined in harems and made the playthings of men. Such folly can lead a country to ruin. Even in China, where until recently all phases of life have had a most negative aspect, some women are now making a positive effort to re-establish the ideals of Chinese civilization.

I have said that the greatest characteristic of Japanese women is their quality of self-sacrifice. This kind of self-sacrifice may be mistaken for servility by the people of those countries in which ideas of rights and responsibilities are strongly developed. But is there anything servile or slavish in the character of Japanese women? A certain Western lady has said that Japanese women must become more emancipated. But they are already emancipated. They are free in the best sense of the word. I cannot believe that real emancipation for women means that they should invade the realm of men. Reversal of the natural positions of men and women seems to me to be a misfortune for Europe.

I have heard that in Europe there are high-minded women who open up their salons to men of letters, artists and the like, and that these salons become nurseries for new developments in
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the world of culture. This leads me to believe that the present prosperity of European civilization is partly due to the existence of such feminine patrons of the arts. I have referred already to the lack of society life in Japan. It is one of the characteristics of Japanese women that they are unsocial, but never one of their drawbacks. There are a great many women of culture in this country who remain unemancipated in the Western sense; they nevertheless exert an influence of their own. The nature of this influence is related to the nature of the art of the East, which possesses an intrinsic profundity, though it lacks external splendour.

Just as the women of Japan differ from those of the West, so too do their respective tastes in reading matter. In fact, Japanese magazines in general, of which there is as great a variety as exists in America, are different in several distinct respects from those published in other countries. But to return to the subject of magazines purely for women. In Japan, where there is no society, there are very few opportunities for women to pick up facts in the course of general conversation, while there is so much for the average housewife to do in the home that she can rarely manage to go out for the purpose of widening her knowledge.

Women's journals serve to make up for these deficiencies. They devote less space and prominence to fashion articles than do their counterparts in the West, concentrating more on subject matter of a practical or definitely cultural nature. It would be no very great exaggeration to say that a women's magazine in Japan is intended as a reference book for the practical exigencies of life rather than a source of amusement.

Japanese women are as diligent, persevering and shy as are most Japanese men and have no liking for the extraordinary. When they see the eccentric behaviour of the women in American films, their reaction is neither one of contempt nor of envy; they merely feel amazed. Because they are the descendants of samurai, they understand daring and bravery, but they like their own daily life to be quiet and peaceful. Their life is spent mostly at home, its tempo conditioned by the atmosphere of the inevitable garden of trees and flowering shrubs and by the mood that the tokonoma, or alcove, with its hanging picture and vase of flowers evokes. Though the housewife may occasionally visit a theatre or cinema and though she sometimes must go out shopping, she is usually fully occupied at home. She therefore demands instruction as well as diversion from the magazine she reads.

Perhaps the most widely read women's magazines in Japan are the Shuju no Tomo (Housewife's Companion) and the Fujin Kurabu (Women's Club), which are said to have a million readers each. Catering largely to the middle classes, these two journals are somewhat similar in general make-up; however, the Fujin Kurabu has a wider variety of instructional and entertaining features than its rival. The two magazines are read widely by both salaried men's wives and working girls, for they are at once diverting and of practical use. Considerable space is devoted to articles on cooking, which is after all only natural in a country like Japan, where food is prepared in a greater variety of ways than in any country I know of. In the case of Japanese cuisine, it is impossible to put one's finger on a few regularly used seasoning materials as one can do for example with the world famous cuisine of France. There are too many of them. Again, cooking materials vary greatly with the seasons, which makes for a great variety of recipes. The busy housewife wants to have these recipes set out for her and explained at the right time; she wants also to know how she can best take care of the family's clothing—an important point in Japan where the seasonal changes are very regular and sharply marked. All this essential information she gets from her magazine, particularly from the Shuju no Tomo.

Both the two major women's magazines also give instruction in elementary medicine and science, besides providing a commentary on any current political and economic topics in which their readers are likely to be interested. Fiction is naturally given a place, though by no means a preponderant one. The
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stories are mostly of a light amusing type and of no great literary merit. As might be imagined, its multifarious features make the magazine quite bulky; indeed there are few housewives who can find time to read right through from cover to cover. It is precisely because of this great number of features that some intellectuals are inclined to criticize these magazines on the assumption that the subject matter cannot surely be of a very high standard. Such criticism, however, is beside the point, for the journals in question fill a very real need.

There is another magazine, the Fujin Kobron (Review for Women), which caters to the women of the intellectual classes. The appeal here is not so immediately practical; information is offered for its own sake. Further, a higher literary standard is reached by this magazine’s stories and novels, which are not necessarily amusing or slanted to appeal solely to women. The policy of the editors in general is to raise the standard of culture and civilization of their readers, a majority of whom belong to the leisured class. That the circulation figures have been continually on the increase, indicates the wisdom of this policy and evidences a desire on the part of Japanese women, once they have the necessary leisure, to improve themselves mentally and spiritually.

Japan has many other women’s magazines, none of them so popular, however, as the three already mentioned. For instance, there is the Fujin Asabi (Asahi for Women), published by the important Tokyo and Osaka Asahi newspaper company. This magazine is a comparatively recent arrival on the newsstands and it is difficult as yet to point out its special features. Certainly the editors have been very successful as regards its make-up and, as far as it is possible to judge, their policy would seem to be one of offering plenty of light reading matter to appeal to women of all classes and particularly to the travelling public, if the number of copies in railway bookstalls is any criterion.

A magazine titled the Fujin no Tomo is published by a Mrs. Motoko Hani, a Christian educationist with social and educa-

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tional views of her own. Among its readers are not only those who have the same idea as the publisher, but also many intellectual young women attracted by the new life movement she propounds. Unlike its contemporaries the magazine has very few literary features, but its views on child education, its interpretations of current events and its practical suggestions for leading a new life are both enlightening and suggestive.

The Shin Jo-ten (New Garden for Women) is another magazine that appeals to young women, particularly to students and girls waiting to be married. Aiming mainly at raising the literary standard of its readers, it carries a large number of articles and stories by literary men and thinkers of some note. For still younger girls there are the Reijokai (Young Ladies’ World) and the Wakakura (Young Grass). These two magazines, which seldom touch on social problems, give prominence to stories with a feminine angle written chiefly by young literary men and women.

One noteworthy fact is that Japanese women are avid for the knowledge these magazines make available to them. It is only through the women’s magazines, after all, that the great majority of housewives in this country can satisfy their desire for information. In other countries, most women read magazines largely to amuse themselves, to keep abreast of the latest fashions or merely to kill time. But to Japanese women their magazines are as indispensable as their daily rice.

Women’s journals thus fill a very important rôle in this country, and those that are well edited net their publishers a very handsome profit. But just as in other countries, plenty of funds are necessary to launch a magazine and plenty of pains are necessary to keep it running on a paying basis. Readers, particularly women readers, are notoriously capricious; if their favourite magazine loses its freshness, they will not hesitate to change over to another. The publishers of the leading women’s magazines in Japan are cognizant of this, and are constantly introducing new and attractive features.

Their aim goes further, however. They realize that the
higher the cultural standard of its women, the higher is the standard of civilization of a country; they know that their readers are anxious to improve themselves; and they are making increasingly successful efforts not only to expand circulation, but also to raise the standard of their magazines.