

The Japanese Twins

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To the Dutch Twins and their friends

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INTRODUCTION--THE JAPANESE TWINS AND BOT'CHAN.

Away, away, ever so far away, near the western shores of the Ocean of Peace, lie the Happy Islands, the Paradise of Children.

Some people call this ocean the "Pacific" and they call the Happy Islands "Japan," but the meaning is just the same. Those are only their grown-up names, that you find them by on the map, in the geography.

They are truly Happy Islands, for the sun shines there so brightly that all the people go about with pleasant, smiling faces, and the children play out of doors the whole year through without ever quarreling. And they are never, never spanked! Of course, the reason for that is that they

are s good they never,never need it! Or maybe their fathers and mthers do not believe in spanking.

I have even been told--though I don't know whether to think it's true or not--that Japanese parents believe mre in sugar-plums than in punishments to make children good!

Anyway, the children there are very good indeed.

In a little town near a large city on one of the Happy Islands,there is a garden. In the garden stands a house, and in that House there live Taro, who is a boy, and Take (Pronounce Tah'kay), who is a girl.

They are twins. They are Japanese Twins and they are just five years old, both of them.

Of course, Taro and Take do not live alone in the house in the garden. Their Father and Mother live there too, and

their Grandmother, who is very old, and the Baby, who is very young.

Taro and Take cannot remember when Grandmother and Father and Mother happened, because they were all there when the Twins came; and the Twins could not possibly imagine the world without Father and Mother and Grandmother.

But with the Baby it was different. One day there wasn't any Baby at all, and the next day after that, there was, looking very new but quite at home already in the little house in the garden, where Taro and Take lived.

"Taro" means eldest son, and the Baby might have been called "Jiro," because "Jiro" means "second," and he was the second boy in the family; but from the day he came they called him just "Bot'Cha n." That is what they call boy babies in Japan.

"Take" means "bamboo," and the Twins' Father and Mother named their little daughter "Take" because they hoped she would grow up to be tall and slender and strong and graceful like the bamboo tree.

Now, can you think of anything nicer in this world than being Twins, and living with a Mother and Father and Grandmother and a Baby Brother, in a dear little house, in a dear little garden, in a dear little, queer little town in the middle of the Happy Islands that lie in the Ocean of Peace?

Taro and Take thought it was the nicest thing that could possibly have happened; though, as they hadn't ever lived anywhere else, or been anybody but themselves for a single minute, I don't see how they could be quite so sure about it.

This book is all about Taro and Take and the Baby, and what a nice time they had living. And if you want to know some of the things that happened on the very first day that

the Twins and Bot'Chan ever saw each other you can turn over to the next page and read about th day the Baby came. That tells all about it,just exactly as it was.

THE DAY THE BABY CAME

Taro and Take were standing right beside their Father early one mornng when the nurse came into the room with a bundle iner arms

It was a queer-looking, knobby kind of a bundle, and there was sething in it that squirmed!

The nurse looked so happy and smiling that the twins knew at once there must be something very nice in the bundle, but what it was they could not guess. Taro thought, "Maybe it's a puppy."He had wanted a puppy for a long time. And Take thought,"Perhaps it's a kitten! But it looks pretty large for a kitten,and it doesn't mew. Kittens always mw." And they both thought,"Anyway, it's alive."

The nurse carried the bundle across the room. She knelt down o the floor before the Twins' Father and laid it at his feet.

The Twins' Father looked very much surprised, and as for Taro and Take, they felt just exactly thay you feel when you look at your stocking on Christmasorning.

They dropped down o their knees beside the bundle, one on each side of their Father. They wanted dreadfully to open it. They wanted so dreadfully to open it that they had to hold their hands hard to keep from touching it, but they never even laid a finger o it, because th nurse had given it to their Father!

Taro just said aloud: "Is it a puppy?"

At the very sameent Take said: "Is it a kitten?"

And then their Father said: "I haven't opened the bundle yet, so how can I tell? We must ask the nurse. What is it, Natsu?"

And Natsu, the nurse, put her two hands together on the matting in front of her, bobbed her head down nearly to the floor, and said: "It is a little son, Master. Will you accept him?"

Then the Father sat right down the floor, too, between Taro and Take. He took the little squirming bundle in his arms, and turned back the covers--and there was a beautiful baby boy, with long, narrow eyes and a lock of hair that stood straight up on the top of his head!

"Oh! oh! Is he truly ours--a real live baby, for us to keep?" cried Take.

"Would you like to keep him?" her Father asked.

Take clapped her hands for joy. "Oh, yes, yes!" she said. "For then I can have a little brother of my own to carry on my back, just the way O Kiku San carries hers! I've ever had a thing but borrowed babies before! And O Kiku San

is not polite about lending hers at all! Please, please let me hold him!"

She held up her arms, and the Father laid the little baby in them very, very gently.

Taro was surprised to see a baby in the bundle that he had not said a word. He just sat still and looked astonished.

"Well, Taro, how is it with you?" said his Father. "Would you like to keep the Baby, too?"

"I'd even rather have him than a puppy!" said Taro very solemnly. And that was a great deal for Taro to say, for he had wanted a puppy for ever so many weeks.

"So would I rather have him than a puppy," the Father said; "ever so much rather."

Just then the Baby puckered up his nose, and opened his little bit of a mouth--and a great big squeal came out of it! You would never have believed that such a big squeal could possibly c out of such a little mouth. And h squirmed more than ever.

Then Natsu, the nurse, said, "There, there, little one! Come to your old Natsu, and she will carry you to Mother again."

"Let me carry him," Take begged.

"No, let me," said Taro.

But Natsu said, "No, no, I will carry him myself. But you may cith m, if you want to, and see your Mother."

So Taro and Take and their Father all tiptoed quietly into the Mother's room, and sat down o the floor beside her bed.

They sat o the floor because everybody sits on the floor in Japan. The bed was o the floor, too.

It was made of many thick quilts, and the pillow a little block of wood! We should think it very uncomfortable, but the Twins' Mother did not think so. She lay with the wooden pillow under her head in such a way that her hair was not mussed by it--instead, it looked just aseat as if she were going to a party. And it was just asice as a party, because they all had such a happy time together watching the new baby.

Bot'Chan acted just like all the other babies in the world. First h got his fist into his mouth by accident, and sucked it. Then he got it out again without meaning to, and punched himself in the nose with it--such a funny little nose, no bigger than a small button! Then he opened his mouth wide and yawned.

"See how sleepy the little mouse is," said the Mother.
"Run out and play now, my children, and let him rest."

Taro and Take left the room softly and went out on the porch. They sat down on the top step to talk over the wonderful thing that had happened.

It was springtime and the flowers in the garden were just pushing their leaves through the ground. The sun was shining, and a little yellow butterfly, that had only just crept out of its snug cocoon that very day, was dancing about in the sunshine.

"I suppose we were new once, too, weren't we?" said Take, watching the butterfly.

"I suppose were," Taro answered. "We grew right up out of the root of a tree. Natsu told me."

"I wonder which tree it was," Take said.

"It must have been one of the trees in our own garden, of course," Taro answered; "or else we shouldn't beere."

"Wouldn't it have been a terrible accident if w had happened to grow inome oth er garden?" said Take She looked quite scared just at the very thought of such a thing.

"Maybe if we had whouldn't have been ourselves at all," Taro answered. He looked a little scared, too.

"Who should wave been, then?" asked Take.

"I don't know, I'm sure," Taro said. "I can't think. But,anyway, we're lucky that it didn't happen. We'reere--and we're ourselves!"

"Let's go into the garden this minute and see if w can find Bot'Chan's tree," said Take. "He's sew that maybe we can find the very spot where h grew."

"The fairies would surely hide the place so wouldn't find it," said Taro; "but we can try. Let's go softly; then maybe they won't hear us."

They tiptoed out into the garden. How I wish you could see their garden! There are all sorts of wonderful places in it! It isn't very large, but it has in it a little bit of a toy mountain, and a tiny lake with little weeny goldfish in it, and a little stream of water, like a baby river, that runs into the lake. And, best of all, there is a curved bridge, painted red, just big enough for the Twins to walk over, if they are very careful and don't bounce! The Twins' Grandfather made this garden for their Father to play in when he was a little boy, so they all love it dearly.

There are iris plants and lilies beside the tiny lake, and a funny little pine tree--a very little pine tree, just a few feet high--grows out of some rocks on the side of the mountain.

The Twins crossed the tiny red bridge and crept up the steppingstones on the mountain-side until they reached the little pine tree.

"Do you s'pose it could be the pine tree?" Take whispered.

"Maybe; it's small--just the right size for Bot'Chan,"
Taro whispered back.

The Twins looked carefully all around the pine tree, but its trunk was gnarled and old. It is hard to believe that so little a tree could be so old, but the Japanese know how to keep a tree small, like a toy tree, even if it has been growing for a hundred years.

This tree wasn't a hundred years old, because their Grandfather had set it out when the Twins' Father was a little boy, and the Twins' Father wasn't anywhere near a hundred years old.