

This shape, with the flowing hair?

“She loved so much

That even the Sinless heard her prayer,  
Pitied her pangs, and suffered her touch.”

Bid the sounds of crackling cease!

“They blaze, they burn!”

Let me flee back to my confined peace!  
“Pass on (they beckon); there’s no return.”

Spirits, why press ye close?

I am faint with fear!

“Already *thy* heart like an ember glows;  
Pluck it forth from thy bosom; thy place is here.”

Happy Francesca! thine

Is the fairer lot.

Better with him in hell to pine  
Than stand in cool shadows by him forgot!

*Alice Williams Brotherton.*

## OF THE ETERNAL FEMININE.

### I.

WHAT every intelligent foreigner dwelling in Japan must sooner or later perceive is, that the more the Japanese learn of our æsthetics and of our emotional character generally, the less favorably do they seem to be impressed thereby. The European or American who tries to talk to them about Western art, or literature, or metaphysics will feel for their sympathy in vain. He will be listened to politely; but his utmost eloquence will scarcely elicit more than a few surprising comments, totally unlike what he hoped and expected to evoke. Many successive disappointments of this sort impel him to judge his Oriental auditors very much as he would judge Western auditors behaving in a similar way. Obvious indifference to what we imagine the highest expression possible of art and thought, we are led by our own Occidental experiences to take for proof of mental incapacity. So we find one class

of foreign observers calling the Japanese a race of children; while another, including a majority of those who have passed many years in the country, judge the nation essentially materialistic, despite the evidences of its religions, its literature, and its matchless art. I cannot persuade myself that either of these judgments is less fatuous than Goldsmith’s observation to Johnson about the Literary Club: “There can now be nothing new among us; we have traveled over one another’s minds.” A cultured Japanese might well answer with Johnson’s famous retort: “Sir, you have not yet traveled over *my* mind, I promise you!” And all such sweeping criticisms seem to me due to a very imperfect recognition of the fact that Japanese thought and sentiment have been evolved out of ancestral habits, customs, ethics, beliefs, directly the opposite of our own in some cases, and in all cases strangely different. Acting on such psychological ma-

terial, modern scientific education cannot but accentuate and develop race differences. Only half-education can tempt the Japanese to servile imitation of Western ways. The real mental and moral power of the race, its highest intellect, strongly resists Western influence; and those more competent than I to pronounce upon such matters assure me that this is especially observable in the case of superior men who have traveled or been educated in Europe. Indeed, the results of the new culture have served more than aught else to show the immense force of healthy conservatism in that race superficially characterized by Rein as a race of children. Even very imperfectly understood, the causes of this Japanese attitude to a certain class of Western ideas might well incite us to reconsider our own estimate of those ideas, rather than to tax the Oriental mind with incapacity. Now, of the causes in question, which are multitudinous, some can only be vaguely guessed at. But there is at least one—a very important one—which we may safely study, because a recognition of it is forced upon any one who passes a few years in the Far East.

## II.

“Teacher, please tell us why there is so much about love and marrying in English novels; it seems to us very, very strange.”

This question was put to me while I was trying to explain to my literature class—young men from nineteen to twenty-three years of age—why they had failed to understand certain chapters of a standard novel, though quite well able to understand the logic of Jevons and the psychology of James. Under the circumstances, it was not an easy question to answer; in fact, I could not have replied to it in any satisfactory way had I not already lived for several years in Japan. As it was, though I endeavored to be concise as well as lucid,

my explanation occupied something more than two hours.

There are few of our society novels that a Japanese student can really comprehend; and the reason is, simply, that English society is something of which he is quite unable to form a correct idea. Indeed, not only English society, in a special sense, but even Western life, in a general sense, is a mystery to him. Any social system of which filial piety is not the moral cement; any social system in which children leave their parents in order to establish families of their own; any social system in which it is considered not only natural, but right, to love wife and child more than the authors of one's being; any social system in which marriage can be decided independently of the will of parents, by the mutual inclination of the young people themselves; any social system in which the mother-in-law is not entitled to the obedient service of the daughter-in-law, appears to him of necessity a state of life scarcely better than that of the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, or at best a sort of moral chaos. And all this existence, as reflected in our popular fiction, presents him with provoking enigmas. Our ideas about love and our solicitude about marriage furnish some of these enigmas. To the young Japanese, marriage appears a simple, natural duty, for the due performance of which his parents will make all necessary arrangements at the proper time. That foreigners should have so much trouble about getting married is puzzling enough to him; but that distinguished authors should write novels and poems about such matters, and that those novels and poems should be vastly admired, puzzles him infinitely more,—seems to him “very, *very* strange.”

My young questioner said “strange” for politeness' sake. His real thought would have been more accurately rendered by the word “indecent.” But when I say that to the Japanese mind our typical novel appears indecent, highly in-

decent, the idea thereby suggested to my English readers will probably be misleading. The Japanese are not morbidly prudish. Our society novels do not strike them as indecent because the theme is love. The Japanese have a great deal of literature about love. No; our novels seem to them indecent for somewhat the same reason that the Scripture text, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife," appears to them one of the most immoral sentences ever written. In other words, their criticism requires a sociological explanation. To explain fully why our novels are, to their thinking, indecent, I should have to describe the whole structure, customs, and ethics of the Japanese family, totally different from anything in Western life; and to do this even in a superficial way would require a volume. I cannot attempt a complete explanation; I can only cite some facts of a suggestive character.

To begin with, then, I may broadly state that a great deal of our literature, besides its fiction, is revolting to the Japanese moral sense, not because it treats of the passion of love *per se*, but because it treats of that passion in relation to virtuous maidens, and therefore in relation to the family circle. Now, as a general rule, where passionate love is the theme in Japanese literature of the best class, it is not that sort of love which leads to the establishment of family relations. It is quite another sort of love, — a sort of love about which the Oriental is not prudish at all, — the *mayoi*, or infatuation of passion, inspired by merely physical attraction; and its heroines are not the daughters of refined families, but mostly *hetære*, or professional dancing-girls. Neither does this Oriental variety of literature deal with its subject after the fashion of sensuous literature in the West, — French literature, for example: it considers it from a different artistic standpoint, and describes rather a different order of emotional sensations.

A national literature is of necessity reflective; and we may presume that what it fails to portray can have little or no outward manifestation in the national life. Now, the reserve of Japanese literature regarding that love which is the great theme of our greatest novelists and poets is exactly paralleled by the reserve of Japanese society in regard to the same topic. The valiant woman often figures in Japanese romance as a heroine; as a perfect mother; as a pious daughter, willing to sacrifice all for duty; as a loyal wife, who follows her husband into battle, fights by his side, saves his life at the cost of her own; never as a sentimental maiden, dying, or making others die, for love. Neither do we find her on literary exhibition as a dangerous beauty, a charmer of men; and in the real life of Japan she has never appeared in any such rôle. Society, as a mingling of the sexes, as an existence of which the supremely refined charm is the charm of woman, has never existed in the East. Even in Japan, society, in the special sense of the word, remains masculine. Nor is it easy to believe that the adoption of European fashions and customs within some restricted circles of the capital indicates the beginning of such a social change as might eventually remodel the national life according to Western ideas of society. For such a remodeling would involve the dissolution of the family, the disintegration of the whole social fabric, the destruction of the whole ethical system, — the breaking up, in short, of the national life.

Taking the word "woman" in its most refined meaning, and postulating a society in which woman seldom appears, a society in which she is never placed "on display," a society in which wooing is utterly out of the question, and the faintest compliment to wife or daughter is an outrageous impertinence, the reader can at once reach some startling conclusions as to the impression made

by our popular fiction upon members of that society. But, although partly correct, his conclusions must fall short of the truth in certain directions, unless he also possess some knowledge of the restraints of that society, and of the ethical notions behind the restraints. For example, a refined Japanese never speaks to you about his wife (I am stating the general rule), and very seldom indeed about his children, however proud of them he may be. Rarely will he be heard to speak about any of the members of his family, about his domestic life, about any of his private affairs. But if he should happen to talk about members of his family, the persons mentioned will almost certainly be his parents. Of them he will speak with a reverence approaching religious feeling, yet in a manner quite different from that which would be natural to an Occidental, and never so as to imply any mental comparison between the merits of his own parents and those of other men's parents. But he will not talk about his wife even to the friends who were invited as guests to his wedding. And I think I may safely say that the poorest and most ignorant Japanese, however dire his need, would never dream of trying to obtain aid or to invoke pity by the mention of his wife, — perhaps not even of his wife and children. But he would not hesitate to ask help for the sake of his parents or his grandparents. Love of wife and child, the strongest of all sentiments with the Occidental, is judged by the Oriental to be a selfish affection. He professes to be ruled by a higher sentiment, — duty : duty, first, to his Emperor ; next, to his parents. And since love can be classed only as an ego-altruistic feeling, the Japanese thinker is not wrong in his refusal to consider it the loftiest of motives, however refined or spiritualized it may be.

In the existence of the poorer classes

<sup>1</sup> I do not, however, refer to those extraordinary persons who make their short residence in teahouses and establishments of a much worse

of Japan there are no secrets ; but among the upper classes family life is much less open to observation than in any country of the West, not excepting Spain. It is a life of which foreigners see little, and know almost nothing, all the essays which have been written about Japanese women to the contrary notwithstanding.<sup>1</sup> Invited to the home of a Japanese friend, you may or may not see the family. It will depend upon circumstances. If you see any of them, it will probably be for a moment only, and in that event you will most likely see the wife. At the entrance you give your card to the servant, who retires to present it, and presently returns to usher you into the *zashiki*, or guest-room, — always the largest and finest apartment in a Japanese dwelling, — where your kneeling-cushion is ready for you, with a smoking-box before it. The servant brings you tea and cakes. In a little time the host himself enters, and after the indispensable salutations conversation begins. Should you be pressed to stay for dinner, and accept the invitation, it is probable that the wife will do you the honor, as her husband's friend, to wait upon you during an instant. You may or may not be formally introduced to her ; but a glance at her dress and coiffure should be sufficient to inform you at once who she is, and you must greet her with the most profound respect. She will probably impress you (especially if your visit be to a *samurai* home) as a delicately refined and very serious person, by no means a woman of the much-smiling and much-bowing kind. She will say extremely little, but will salute you, and will serve you for a moment with a natural grace of which the mere spectacle is a revelation, and glide away again, to remain invisible until the instant of your departure, when she will reappear at the entrance to wish you good-by. During other successive visits kind, and then go home to write illustrated books about the women of Japan.

you may have similar charming glimpses of her; perhaps, also, some rarer glimpses of the aged father and mother; and if a much-favored visitor, the children may at last come to greet you, with wonderful politeness and sweetness. But the innermost intimate life of that family will never be revealed to you. All that you see to suggest it will be refined, courteous, exquisite; but of the relation of those souls to each other you will know nothing. Behind the beautiful screens which mask the further interior all is silent, gentle mystery. There is no reason, to the Japanese mind, why it should be otherwise. Such family life is sacred; the home is a sanctuary, of which it were impious to draw aside the veil. Nor can I think this idea of the sacredness of home and of the family relation in any wise inferior to our highest conception of the home and the family in the West.

Should there be grown-up daughters in the family, however, the visitor is less likely to see the wife. More timid, but equally silent and reserved, the young girls will make the guest welcome. In obedience to orders, they may even gratify him by a performance upon some musical instrument, by exhibiting some of their own needlework or painting, or by showing to him some precious or curious objects among the family heirlooms. But all submissive sweetness and courtesy are inseparable from the high-bred reserve belonging to the finest native culture. And the guest must not allow himself to be less reserved. Unless possessing the privilege of great age, which would entitle him to paternal freedom of speech, he must never venture upon personal compliment, or indulge in anything resembling light flattery. What would be deemed gallantry in the West may be gross rudeness in the East. On no account can the visitor compliment a young girl about her looks, her grace, her toilette, much less dare address such a compliment to the wife. But, the reader may object, there are certainly occasions

upon which a compliment of some character cannot be avoided. This is true, and on such an occasion politeness requires, as a preliminary, the humblest apology for making the compliment, which will then be accepted with a phrase more graceful than our "Pray do not mention it;" that is, the rudeness of making a compliment at all.

But here we touch the vast subject of Japanese etiquette, about which I must confess myself still profoundly ignorant. I have ventured thus much only in order to suggest how lacking in refinement much of our Western society fiction must appear to the Oriental mind.

To speak of one's affection for wife or children, to bring into conversation anything closely related to domestic life, is totally incompatible with Japanese ideas of good breeding. Our open acknowledgment, or rather exhibition, of the domestic relation consequently appears to cultivated Japanese, if not absolutely barbarous, at least uxorious. And this sentiment may be found to explain not a little in Japanese life which has given foreigners a totally incorrect idea about the position of Japanese women. It is not the custom in Japan for the husband even to walk side by side with his wife in the street, much less to give her his arm, or to assist her in ascending or descending a flight of stairs. But this is not any proof upon his part of want of affection. It is only the result of a social sentiment totally different from our own; it is simply obedience to an etiquette founded upon the idea that public displays of the marital relation are improper. Why improper? Because they seem to Oriental judgment to indicate a confession of personal, and therefore selfish sentiment. For the Oriental the law of life is duty. Affection must, in every time and place, be subordinated to duty. Any public exhibition of personal affection of a certain class is equivalent to a public confession of moral weakness. Does this mean that

to love one's wife is a moral weakness? No; it is the duty of a man to love his wife; but it is moral weakness to love her more than his parents, or to show her, in public, more attention than he shows to his parents. Nay, it would be a proof of moral weakness to show her even the *same* degree of attention. During the lifetime of the parents her position in the household is simply that of an adopted daughter, and the most affectionate of husbands must not even for a moment allow himself to forget the etiquette of the family.

Here I must touch upon one feature of Western literature never to be reconciled with Japanese ideas and customs. Let the reader reflect for a moment how large a place the subject of kisses and caresses and embraces occupies in our poetry and in our prose fiction; and then let him consider the fact that in Japanese literature these have *no existence whatever*. For kisses and embraces are simply unknown in Japan as tokens of affection, if we except the solitary fact that Japanese mothers, like mothers all over the world, lip and hug their little ones betimes. After babyhood there is no more hugging or kissing. Such actions, except in the case of infants, are held to be highly immodest. Never do girls kiss one another; never do parents kiss or embrace their children who have become able to walk. And this rule holds good of all classes of society, from the highest nobility to the humblest peasantry. Neither have we the least indication throughout Japanese literature of any time in the history of the race when affection was more demonstrative than it is to-day. Perhaps the Western reader will find it hard even to imagine a literature in the whole course of which no mention is made of kissing, of embracing, even of pressing a loved hand; for hand-clasping is an action as totally foreign to Japanese impulse as kissing. Yet on these topics even the naïve songs of the country folk, even the old ballads of the

people about unhappy lovers, are quite as silent as the exquisite verses of the court poets. Suppose we take for an example the ancient popular ballad of Shuntokumaru, which has given origin to various proverbs and household words familiar throughout western Japan. Here we have the story of two betrothed lovers, long separated by a cruel misfortune, wandering in search of each other all over the Empire, and at last suddenly meeting before Kiomidzu temple by the favor of the gods. Would not any Aryan poet describe such a meeting as a rushing of the two into each other's arms, with kisses and cries of love? But how does the old Japanese ballad describe it? In brief, the twain only sit down together *and stroke each other a little*. Now, even this reserved form of caress is an extremely rare indulgence of emotion. You may see again and again fathers and sons, husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, meeting after years of absence, yet you will probably never see the least approach to a caress between them. They will kneel down and salute each other, and smile, and perhaps cry a little for joy; but they will neither rush into each other's arms, nor utter extraordinary phrases of affection. Indeed, such terms of affection as "my dear," "my darling," "my sweet," "my love," "my life," do not exist in Japanese, nor any terms at all equivalent to our emotional idioms. Japanese affection is not uttered in words; it scarcely appears even in the tone of voice; it is chiefly shown in acts of exquisite courtesy and kindness. I might add that the opposite emotion is under equally perfect control; but to illustrate this remarkable fact would require a separate essay.

### III.

He who would study impartially the life and thought of the Orient must also study those of the Occident from the Oriental point of view. And the results of such a comparative study he

will find to be in no small degree retro-active. According to his character and his faculty of perception, he will be more or less affected by those Oriental influences to which he submits himself. The conditions of Western life will gradually begin to assume for him new, undreamed-of meanings, and to lose not a few of their old familiar aspects. Much that he once deemed right and true he may begin to find abnormal and false. He may begin to doubt whether the moral ideals of the West are really the highest. He may feel more than inclined to dispute the estimate placed by Western custom upon Western civilization. Whether his doubts be final is another matter; they will be at least rational enough and powerful enough to modify permanently some of his prior convictions, — among others his conviction of the moral value of the Western worship of Woman as the Unattainable, the Incomprehensible, the Divine, the ideal of "*la femme que tu ne connaîtras jamais*,"<sup>1</sup> the ideal of the Eternal Feminine. For in this ancient East the Eternal Feminine does not exist at all. And after having become quite accustomed to live without it, one may naturally conclude that it is not absolutely essential to intellectual health, and may even dare to question the necessity for its perpetual existence upon the other side of the world.

## IV.

To say that the Eternal Feminine does not exist in the Far East is to state but a part of the truth. That it could be introduced therewith, in the remotest future, is not possible to imagine. Few, if any, of our ideas regarding it can even be rendered into the language of the country: a language in which nouns have no gender, adjectives no degrees of comparison, and verbs no persons; a language in which, says Professor Chamberlain, the absence of personifica-

tion is "a characteristic so deep-seated and so all-pervading as to interfere even with the use of neuter nouns in combination with transitive verbs."<sup>2</sup> "In fact," he adds, "most metaphors and allegories are incapable of so much as explanation to Far-Eastern minds;" and he makes a striking citation from Wordsworth in illustration of his statement. Yet even poets much more lucid than Wordsworth are to the Japanese equally obscure. I remember the difficulty I once had in explaining to an advanced class this simple line from a well-known ballad of Tennyson, —

"She is more beautiful than day."

My students could understand the use of the adjective "beautiful" to qualify "day," and the use of the same adjective, separately, to qualify the word "maid." But that there could exist in any mortal mind the least idea of analogy between the beauty of day and the beauty of a young woman was quite beyond their understanding. In order to convey to them the poet's thought, it was necessary to analyze it psychologically, — to prove a possible nervous analogy between two modes of pleasurable feeling excited by two different impressions.

Thus, the very nature of the language tells us how ancient and how deeply rooted in racial character are those tendencies by which we must endeavor to account — if there be any need of accounting at all — for the absence in this Far East of a dominant ideal corresponding to our own. They are causes incomparably older than the existing social structure, older than the idea of the family, older than ancestor worship, enormously older than that Confucian code which is the reflection rather than the explanation of many singular facts in Oriental life. But since beliefs and practices react upon character, and character again must react upon practices and

<sup>1</sup> A phrase from Baudelaire.

<sup>2</sup> See Things Japanese, second edition, pages 255, 256; article, Language.

beliefs, it has not been altogether irrational to seek in Confucianism for causes as well as for explanations. Far more irrational have been the charges of hasty criticisms against Shintō and against Buddhism as religious influences opposed to the natural rights of woman. The ancient faith of Shintō has been at least as gentle to woman as the ancient faith of the Hebrews. Its female divinities are not less numerous than its masculine divinities, nor are they presented to the imagination of worshipers in a form much less attractive than the dreams of Greek mythology. Of some, like So-tohori-no-Iratsumé, it is said that the light of their beautiful bodies passes through their garments; and the source of all life and light, the eternal Sun, is a goddess, fair Ama-terasu-cho-mi-kami. Virgins serve the ancient gods, and figure in all the pageants of the faith; and in a thousand shrines throughout the land the memory of woman as wife and mother is worshiped equally with the memory of man as hero and father. Neither can the later and alien faith of Buddhism be justly accused of relegating woman to a lower place in the spiritual world than monkish Christianity accorded her in the West. The Buddha, like the Christ, was born of a virgin; the most lovable divinities of Buddhism, Jizō excepted, are feminine, both in Japanese art and in Japanese popular fancy; and in the Buddhist as in the Roman Catholic hagiography, the lives of holy women hold honored place. It is true that Buddhism, like early Christianity, used its utmost eloquence in preaching against the temptation of female loveliness; and it is true that in the teaching of its founder, as in the teaching of Paul, social and spiritual supremacy is accorded to the man. Yet, in our search for texts on this topic, we must not overlook the host of instances of favor shown by the Buddha to women of all classes, nor that remarkable legend of a later text, in which a dogma deny-

ing to woman the highest spiritual opportunities is sublimely rebuked.

In the eleventh chapter of the Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law, it is written that mention was made before the Lord Buddha of a young girl who had in one instant arrived at supreme knowledge; who had in one moment acquired the merits of a thousand meditations, and the proofs of the essence of all laws. And the girl came and stood in the presence of the Lord.

But the Bodhissattva Pragnakuta doubted, saying, "I have seen the Lord Sakyamuni in the time when he was striving for supreme enlightenment; and I know that he performed good works innumerable through countless æons. In all the world there is not one spot so large as a grain of mustard seed where he has not surrendered his body for the sake of living creatures. Only after all this did he arrive at enlightenment. Who then may believe this girl could in one moment have arrived at supreme knowledge?"

And the venerable priest Sariputra likewise doubted, saying, "It may indeed happen, O Sister, that a woman fulfill the six perfect virtues; but as yet there is no example of her having attained to Buddhahip, because a woman cannot attain to the rank of a Bodhissattva."

But the maiden called upon the Lord Buddha to be her witness. And instantly in the sight of the assembly her sex disappeared; and she manifested herself as a Bodhissattva, filling all directions of space with the radiance of the thirty-two signs. And the world shook in six different ways. And the priest Sariputra was silent.<sup>1</sup>

v.

But to feel the real nature of what is surely one of the greatest obstacles to

<sup>1</sup> See the whole wonderful passage in Kern's translation of this magnificent Sutra, Sacred Books of the East, vol. xxi. chap. xi.



intellectual sympathy between the West and the Far East, we must fully appreciate the immense effect upon Occidental life of this ideal which has no existence in the Orient. We must remember what that ideal has been to Western civilization, — to all its pleasures and refinements and luxuries; to its sculpture, painting, decoration, architecture, literature, drama, music; to the development of countless industries. We must think of its effect upon manners, customs, and the language of taste, upon conduct and ethics, upon endeavor, upon philosophy and religion, upon almost every phase of public and private life, — in short, upon national character. Nor should we forget that the many influences interfused in the shaping of it — Teutonic, Celtic, Scandinavian, classic or mediæval, the Greek apotheosis of human beauty, the Christian worship of the mother of God, the exaltations of chivalry, the spirit of the Renaissance steeping and coloring all the preëxisting idealism in a new sensuousness — must have had their nourishment, if not their birth, in a race feeling ancient as Aryan speech, and as alien to the most eastern East.

Of all these various influences combined to form our ideal, the classic element remains perceptibly dominant. It is true that the Hellenic conception of human beauty, so surviving, has been wondrously informed with a conception of soul beauty never of the antique world nor of the Renaissance. Also it is true that the new philosophy of evolution, forcing recognition of the incalculable and awful cost of the Present to the Past, creating a totally new comprehension of duty to the Future, enormously enhancing our conception of character values, has aided more than all preceding influences together toward the highest possible spiritualization of the ideal of woman. Yet, however further spiritualized it may become through future intellectual expansion, this ideal must in

its very nature remain fundamentally artistic and sensuous.

We do not see Nature as the Oriental sees it, and as his art proves that he sees it. We see it less realistically, we know it less intimately, because, save through the lenses of the specialist, we contemplate it anthropomorphically. In one direction, indeed, our æsthetic sense has been cultivated to a degree incomparably finer than that of the Oriental; but that direction has been passional. We have learned something of the beauty of Nature through our ancient worship of the beauty of woman. Even from the beginning it is probable that the perception of human beauty has been the main source of all our æsthetic sensibility. Possibly we owe to it likewise our idea of proportion; <sup>1</sup> our exaggerated appreciation of regularity; our fondness for parallels, curves, and all geometrical symmetries; even our propensity to pair things, and our pleasure in rhyme, as distinguished from measure, in the architecture of verse. And in the long process of our æsthetic evolution, the ideal of woman has at last become for us an æsthetic abstraction. Through the illusion of that abstraction only do we perceive the charms of our world, even as forms might be perceived through some tropic atmosphere whose vapors are iridescent.

Nor is this all. Whatsoever has once been likened to woman by art or thought has been strangely informed and transformed by that momentary symbolism: wherefore, through all the centuries Western fancy has been making Nature more and more feminine. Whatsoever delights us imagination has feminized, — the infinite tenderness of the sky, the mobility of waters, the rose of dawn, the vast caress of Day, Night and the lights of heaven, even the undulations of the eternal hills. And flowers, and

<sup>1</sup> On the origin of the idea of bilateral symmetry, see Herbert Spencer's essay, *The Sources of Architectural Types*.

the flush of fruit, and all things fragrant, fair, and gracious; the genial seasons with their voices; the laughter of streams, and whisper of leaves, and rippings of song within the shadows; all sights, or sounds, or sensations that can touch our love of loveliness, of delicacy, of sweetness, of gentleness, make for us vague dreams of woman. Where our fancy lends masculinity to Nature, it is only in grimness and in force,—as if to enhance by rugged and mighty contrasts the witchcraft of the Eternal Feminine. Nay, even the terrible itself, if fraught with terrible beauty,—even Destruction, if only shaped with the grace of destroyers,—becomes for us feminine. And not beauty alone, of sight or sound, but well-nigh all that is mystic, sublime, or holy, now makes appeal to us through some marvelously woven intricate plexus of passional sensibility. Even the subtlest forces of our universe speak to us of woman; new sciences have taught us new names for the thrill her presence wakens in the blood, for that ghostly shock which is first love, for the eternal riddle of her fascination. Thus, out of simple human passion, through influences and transformations innumerable, we have evolved a cosmic emotion, a feminine pantheism.

## VI.

And now may not one venture to ask whether all the consequences of this passional influence in the æsthetic evolution of our Occident have been in the main beneficial? Underlying all those visible results of which we boast as art triumphs, may there not be lurking invisible results, some future revelation of which will cause more than a little shock to our self-esteem? Is it not quite possible that our æsthetic faculties have been developed even abnormally in one direction by the power of a single emotional idea which has left us nearly, if not totally blind to many wonderful aspects of Nature? Or rather, must not this be

the inevitable effect of the extreme predominance of one particular emotion in the evolution of our æsthetic sensibility? And finally, one may surely be permitted to ask if the predominating influence itself has been the highest possible, and whether there is not a higher, known perhaps to the Oriental soul.

I may only suggest these questions, without hoping to answer them satisfactorily. But the longer I dwell in the East, the more I feel growing upon me the belief that there are exquisite artistic faculties and perceptions, developed in the Oriental, of which we can know scarcely more than we know of those unimaginable colors, invisible to the human eye, yet proven to exist by the spectroscope. I think that such a possibility is indicated by certain phases of Japanese art.

Here it becomes as difficult as dangerous to particularize. I dare hazard only some general observations. I think this marvelous art asserts that, out of the infinitely varied aspects of Nature, those which for us hold no suggestion whatever of sex character, those which cannot be looked at anthropomorphically, those which are neither masculine nor feminine, but neuter or nameless, are those most profoundly loved and comprehended by the Japanese. Nay, he sees in Nature much that for thousands of years has remained invisible to us; and we are now learning from him aspects of life and beauties of form to which we were utterly blind before. We have finally made the startling discovery that his art—notwithstanding all the dogmatic assertions of Western prejudice to the contrary, and notwithstanding the strangely weird impression of unreality which at first it produced—is never a mere creation of fantasy, but a veritable reflection of what has been and of what is: wherefore we have recognized that it is nothing less than a higher education in art simply to look at his studies of bird life, insect life, plant life, tree life.

Compare, for example, our very finest drawings of insects with Japanese drawings of similar subjects. Compare Giamelli's illustrations to Michelet's *L'Insecte* with the commonest Japanese figures of the same creatures decorating the stamped leather of a cheap tobacco pouch or the metal work of a cheap pipe. The whole minute exquisiteness of the European engraving has accomplished only an indifferent realism, while the Japanese artist, with a few dashes of his brush, has seized and reproduced, with an incomprehensible power of interpretation, not only every peculiarity of the creature's shape, but every special characteristic of its motion. Each figure flung from the Oriental painter's brush is a lesson, a revelation, to perceptions unobscured by prejudice, an opening of the eyes of those who can see, though it be only a spider in a wind-shaken web, a dragonfly riding a sunbeam, a pair of crabs running through sedge, the trembling of a fish's fins in a clear current, the lilt of a flying wasp, the pitch of a flying duck, a mantis in fighting position, or a *semi* toddling up a cedar branch to sing. All this art is alive, intensely alive, and our corresponding art looks absolutely dead beside it.

Take, again, the subject of flowers. An English or German flower painting, the result of months of trained labor, and valued at several hundred pounds, would certainly not compare as a nature study, in the higher sense, with a Japanese flower painting executed in twenty brush strokes, and worth perhaps five *sen*. The former would represent at best but an ineffectual and painful effort to imitate a massing of colors. The latter would prove a perfect memory of certain flower shapes instantaneously flung upon paper, without any model to aid, and showing, not the recollection of any individual blossom, but the perfect realization of a general law of form expression, perfectly mastered, with all its moods, tenses, and inflections. The

French alone, among Western art critics, seem fully to understand these features of Japanese art; and among all Western artists it is the Parisian alone who approaches the Oriental in his methods. Without lifting his brush from the paper, the French artist may sometimes, with a single wavy line, create the almost speaking figure of a particular type of man or woman. But this high development of faculty is confined chiefly to humorous sketching; it is still either masculine or feminine. To understand what I mean by the ability of the Japanese artist, my reader must imagine just such a power of almost instantaneous creation as that which characterizes certain French work applied to almost every subject except individuality, to nearly all recognized general types, to all aspects of Japanese nature, to all forms of native landscape, to clouds and flowing water and mists, to all the life of woods and fields, to all the moods of seasons and the tones of horizons and the colors of the morning and the evening. Certainly, the deeper spirit of this magical art seldom reveals itself at first sight to unaccustomed eyes, since it appeals to so little in Western æsthetic experience. But by gentle degrees it will so enter into an appreciative and unprejudiced mind as to modify profoundly therein almost every preëxisting sentiment in relation to the beautiful. All of its meaning will indeed require many years to master, but something of its reshaping power will be felt in a much shorter time when the sight of an American illustrated magazine or of any illustrated European periodical has become almost unbearable.

Psychological differences of far deeper import are suggested by other facts, capable of exposition in words, but not capable of interpretation through Western standards of æsthetics or Western feeling of any sort. For instance, I have been watching two old men planting young trees in the garden of a neigh-

boring temple. They sometimes spend nearly an hour in planting a single sapling. Having fixed it in the ground, they retire to a distance to study the position of all its lines, and consult together about it. As a consequence, the sapling is taken up and replanted in a slightly different position. This is done no less than eight times before the little tree can be perfectly adjusted into the plan of the garden. Those two old men are composing a mysterious thought with their little trees, changing them, transferring them, removing or replacing them, even as a poet changes and shifts his words, to give to his verse the most delicate or the most forcible expression possible.

In every large Japanese cottage there are several alcoves, or *tokonoma*, one in each of the principal rooms. In these alcoves the art treasures of the family are exhibited.<sup>1</sup> Within each *toko* a *kakemono* is hung; and upon its slightly elevated floor (usually of polished wood) are placed flower vases and one or two artistic objects. Flowers are arranged in the *toko* vases according to ancient rules which Mr. Conder's beautiful book will tell you a great deal about; and the *kakemono* and the art objects there displayed are changed at regular intervals, according to occasion and season. Now, in a certain alcove, I have at various times seen many different things of beauty: a Chinese statuette of ivory, an incense vase of bronze, — representing a cloud-riding pair of dragons, — the wood carving of a Buddhist pilgrim resting by the wayside and mopping his bald pate, masterpieces of lacquer ware and lovely *Kyōtō* porcelains, and a large stone placed on a pedestal of heavy, costly

wood, expressly made for it. I do not know whether you could see any beauty in that stone; it is neither hewn nor polished, nor does it possess the least imaginable intrinsic value. It is simply a gray water-worn stone from the bed of a stream. Yet it cost more than one of those *Kyōtō* vases which sometimes replace it, and which you would be glad to pay a very high price for.

In the garden of the little house I now occupy in Kumamoto, there are about fifteen rocks, or large stones, of as many shapes and sizes. They also have no real intrinsic value, not even as possible building material. And yet the proprietor of the garden paid for them something more than seven hundred and fifty Japanese dollars, or considerably more than the pretty house itself could possibly have cost. And it would be quite wrong to suppose the cost of the stones due to the expense of their transportation from the bed of the *Shirakawa*. No; they are worth seven hundred and fifty dollars only because they are considered beautiful to a certain degree, and because there is a large local demand for beautiful stones. They are not even of the best class, or they would have cost a great deal more. Now, until you can perceive that a big rough stone may have more æsthetic suggestiveness than a costly steel engraving, that it is a thing of beauty and a joy forever, you cannot begin to understand how a Japanese sees Nature. "But what," you may ask, "can be beautiful in a common stone?" Many things; but I will mention only one, — irregularity.

In my little Japanese house, the *fusuma*, or sliding screens of opaque paper

the *toko* of a guest-room. The *toko* is still, however, a sacred place in a certain sense. No one should ever step upon it, or squat within it, or even place in it anything not pure, or anything offensive to taste. There is an elaborate code of etiquette in relation to it. The most honored among guests is always placed nearest to it; and guests take their places, according to rank, nearer to or further from it.

<sup>1</sup> The *tokonoma*, or *toko*, is said to have been first introduced into Japanese architecture about four hundred and fifty years ago, by the Buddhist priest Eisai, who had studied in China. Perhaps the alcove was originally devised and used for the exhibition of sacred objects; but to-day, among the cultivated, it would be deemed in very bad taste to display either images of the gods or sacred paintings in

between room and room, have designs at which I am never tired of looking. The designs vary in different parts of the dwelling; I will speak only of the fusuma dividing my study from a smaller apartment. The ground color is a delicate cream-yellow; and the golden pattern is very simple,—the mystic-jewel symbols of Buddhism scattered over the surface by pairs. But no two sets of pairs are placed at exactly the same distance from each other; and the symbols themselves are curiously diversified, never appearing twice in exactly the same position or relation. Sometimes one jewel is transparent, and its fellow opaque; sometimes both are opaque or both diaphanous; sometimes the transparent one is the larger of two, sometimes the opaque is the larger; sometimes both are precisely the same size; sometimes they overlap, and sometimes do not touch; sometimes the opaque is on the left, sometimes on the right; sometimes the transparent jewel is above, sometimes below. Vainly does the eye roam over the whole surface in search

of a repetition, or of anything resembling regularity, either in distribution, juxtaposition, grouping, dimensions, or contrasts. And throughout the whole dwelling nothing resembling regularity in the various decorative designs can be found. The ingenuity by which it is avoided is amazing,—rises to the dignity of genius. Now, all this is a common characteristic of Japanese decorative art; and after having lived a few years under its influences, the sight of a regular pattern upon a wall, a carpet, a curtain, a ceiling, upon any decorated surface, pains like a horrible vulgarism. Surely, it is because we have so long been accustomed to look at Nature anthropomorphically that we can still endure mechanical ugliness in our own decorative art, and that we remain insensible to charms of Nature which are clearly perceived even by the eyes of the Japanese child, wondering over its mother's shoulder at the green and blue wonder of the world.

“*He,*” saith a Buddhist text, “*who discerns that nothingness is law, — such a one hath wisdom.*”

*Lafcadio Hearn.*

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### TOM O' THE BLUEB'RY PLAINS.

THE sky is a shadowless blue; the noonday sun glows fiercely; a cloud of dust rises from the burning road whenever the hot breeze stirs the air, or whenever a farm wagon creaks along, its wheels sinking into the deep sand.

In the distance, where the green of the earth joins the blue of the sky, gleams the silver line of a river.

As far as the eye can reach, the ground is covered with blueberry bushes; red leaves peeping among green ones; bloom of blue fruit hanging in full warm clusters,—spheres of velvet mellowed by summer sun, moistened with crystal dew, spiced with fragrance of woods.

In among the blueberry bushes grow huckleberries, “choky pears,” and black-snaps.

Gnarled oaks and stunted pines lift themselves out of the wilderness of shrubs. They look dwarfed and gloomy, as if Nature had been an untender mother, and denied them proper nourishment.

The road is a little-traveled one, and furrows of feathery grasses grow between the long, hot, sandy stretches of the wheel-ruts.

The first goldenrod gleams among the loose stones at the foot of the alder bushes. Whole families of pale butterflies, just out of their long sleep, perch