

## AN AMERICAN ARTIST IN JAPAN.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR.



HE Japanese very naturally have been severely criticized for sweeping away their old and unique civilization, their distinctive customs and institutions, and substituting for them those of Europe.

As a consequence they have often been unfavorably compared with their more conservative neighbors the Chinese. However, that very policy which China with three hundred millions of inhabitants and an unlimited territory has successfully pursued would have been fatal to Japan. The numerous islands of the mikado's empire, scattered about in the Eastern sea, would have been forever open to attack and plunder by stronger naval powers, and they would have lost their independence had they not realized that this disaster could be averted only by adopting European ways and methods. Constant and unprovoked attacks by united naval forces, and unjust extortion of indemnities on the slightest pretexts, brought the Japanese to the conclusion that they could receive the treatment due a civilized nation only by making a radical change in their customs and adopting the laws, dress, and institutions of the West. They did not do this willingly, they were forced to do it. It was not, as has often been asserted, a mere childlike freak, a desire for novelty and lack of reverence for their ancient institutions. Their very existence depended upon taking this step, and as they have consistently adhered to this policy, the changes have necessarily been wide and sweeping.

The feudal system, resembling that of Europe in the Middle Ages, prevailed in Japan before this great upheaval. The great daimios practically ruled their respective provinces and were surrounded by thousands of brave and devoted clansmen; but when they realized that the old order of things could no longer continue, they bowed to fate and for their country's good obeyed the order of the new central authority. They disarmed and dismissed their followers, left their homes and retired to private life, living on pensions granted them by the Government. Many of them are still living in the peaceful retirement of their homes, in the enjoyment of their gardens and art treasures, surrounded by a few of their old retainers. But they are forgotten by modern Japan, of which in turn they are well-nigh oblivious, and live

only in the recollections of the past. Thus has one of the oldest, most unique, and perfect civilizations abruptly ended and another been substituted, hardly as well suited, it must be confessed, to the wants and natures of the people.

But if this revolution has in many respects been a misfortune to Japan, the world at large has gained, for the benefit we have derived through contact with their art is inestimable.

It was with this wonderful art, and the conditions under which it flourished, that I endeavored to familiarize myself during my three-years' residence in Japan. I was not long in discovering that my knowledge of Japanese art and industries had been confined almost exclusively to the modern articles of trade, which were but poor specimens of that art which I now for the first time learned to know. Not that I wish to pronounce against everything modern in Japan, for there is much produced at present that would be a credit to its art of any period; but good art is always rare, and the few examples of the better kind that have reached us are all but lost in an overwhelming mass of cheap and inferior articles. Many of these objects under the general classification of "bric-à-brac" are unknown and unused by the Japanese, and are manufactured to order for the foreign traders of the treaty ports, who have, through their constant demands for cheaper and ever cheaper work, greatly lowered the standard. They are to a great extent responsible for what is poor and trashy in Japanese art.

In this category may be placed many of the objects most familiar to us; for instance, the common bronze and porcelain ware, gold embroidered screens, dressing gowns, cheap cloisonné and flashy satsuma. Even the familiar brightly colored paper parasol is unknown to the Japanese.

At present there are still living many of the old skilled artisans of the preceding generation, who continue their calling; but they have undergone many privations, for no new wealthy class of patrons have succeeded to the daimios, and they now have only little opportunity to exercise their talents. It is hard to foretell what will be the future of Japanese art when the last of those guiding spirits shall have passed away; for in the confusion of this transition stage of government the young men are not

subjected to the same strict apprenticeship as their predecessors, and it is doubtful whether they will inherit and hand down to their successors the noble art traditions of the past.

I was fortunate enough to arrive in Japan in the early springtime, when both nature and man were to be seen at their best. The bright faces, happy dispositions, and general appearance of contentment I met with everywhere amidst sunny gardens and cheerful homes, and the scrupulous cleanliness of the people and their surroundings, combined at once to make a most delightful impression on my mind. The contrast in coming from a purely commercial community with its prosaic and practical spirit made this seem almost like another world.

I found the people polite, refined, and considerate to one another, while there seemed to be an utter absence, in any form, of that brutality which prevails, more or less, elsewhere; and this fact I found to be true of all classes. It will very naturally be asked, What is the reason, the cause of this general contentment and happiness? This is precisely the question which presented itself to me; and in order to solve this and many other problems, and to gain an understanding and a proper insight into their life and customs, I concluded that it would be absolutely necessary for me to acquire at least a partial knowledge of their language and live the life of the people. Indeed, this entailed no sacrifice of comfort, for a Japanese house is clean, neat, and artistically constructed; in fact, "a thing of beauty," and "a joy" as long as one lives in it. One's neighbors are all that can be desired, and, what is more unusual, servants are honest and efficient.

But there was an obstacle in the way that had first to be overcome. Foreigners residing in Japan are required to live within treaty limits, and my desire to live beyond them did not seem likely to be realized until the following expedient was suggested to me.

There is an exception made to this law in favor of Government employees. A young Japanese friend of mine, Yasumaru by name, explained the case to his father, who was a high official, and he kindly arranged the matter by engaging me nominally as teacher of painting for his children. In this way we managed, between us, to evade the law, a proceeding, however, which I had to admit was not confined to Japan. A neat little Japanese house, surrounded by a pretty garden, was rented by my friend in the vicinity of his home, and I was soon established in these new and quaint surroundings.

Having determined to conform so far as possible to the customs of the country, at my friend's suggestion I sent my servant with a

tray of buckwheat cakes to each of my neighbors. This, he informed me, was *de rigueur* in moving into a new home. In return, my neighbors made a most ceremonious call and expressed unbounded astonishment that a foreigner should be so well versed in Japanese etiquette. I also duly impressed upon my servants the fact that my household was to be managed in the same orderly manner as is expected of them by a Japanese master, and even made a point of conforming to the general custom of removing my shoes at the threshold of my house.

Of course in all these matters I was kept well posted by my young friend, who now came and made his home with me, as his father desired him to take advantage of this opportunity to practice in and increase his knowledge of the English language. Yasumaru, in common with most of the rising generation of his class, had studied English at school. He was of great assistance to me, and during my long residence among the Japanese he invariably proved himself to be a most trusty and faithful friend.

His parents' home was always open to me, and I found his family life most charming. His parents, though themselves feeling too old to change their mode of life and thought, were fully alive to the importance of bringing up their children in the new, the modern, spirit of Japan.

I could not but compare the fond mother of Yasumaru to the maternal hen, of popular illustration, blessed with a brood of ducklings whose ways of life she did not know. Yasumaru had two brothers and four sisters, the latter being named Okiku, Omatzu, Oume, and Oyuki, and their ages ranged from twelve to nineteen years.

It was a source of constant delight to observe the deferential manner they maintained and the respectful form of language they employed towards their parents. These girls were highly accomplished and well educated, speaking English fluently.

In Japan women have always held a higher position than in other Asiatic countries. They go about freely wherever they please, and the seclusion of the Chinese is wholly unknown to them. The schools receive as many girls as boys; and as a result of my observations I can safely say, without idle compliment, that the former are brighter than the latter.

By degrees, and under these favorable conditions for general observation, some of the causes of the people's happy spirit of independence began to be revealed to me. The simplicity of their lives, in which enters no selfish rivalry to outdo one another, accounts in a large measure for this enviable result. Regard-

ing one another very much as belonging to one family, their mode of life is more or less on the same plane, and consequently a spirit of great harmony prevails. A very small income is sufficient to supply the ordinary necessities of life, and everything else is secured with but little effort. Household effects are few and inexpensive; and should everything be destroyed by fire or lost in any way, it is not an irreparable calamity. All can be replaced at a small outlay and life go on as before.

The tenant upon renting a house is put to little expense to furnish it; indeed, he requires absolutely no furniture at all. The clean, finely woven mats which cover the floor serve as table, chair, and bed; and as it is the universal custom to remove the shoes before entering a house, there is no danger of one's bringing with him the dirt from the streets.

His bedding consists of cotton quilts, which are spread out on the floor at night, rolled together in the morning, and stored away in a closet during the day. A few pictures (*kakemono*) and specimens of beautiful script decorate the walls, a few vases contain sprays of flowers, and a number of cushions on the floor complete the furnishing of a room. Yet it does not seem empty or cheerless; for the general arrangement of harmonious colors, the different woods employed in its visible construction, and the beauty of the finished workmanship, make a most harmonious and pleasing combination. Paint is never used to cover the wood, much less to substitute a false grain.

The love of flowers in Japan amounts almost to adoration. They are inseparable from the life, art, and literature of the people, and to deprive the Japanese of them would be to take the sunshine out of their lives. On one occasion I received through my young friend an invitation from his parents to accompany them on a visit to a very celebrated grove of plum trees that were then in full bloom. After an hour's ride in a "jinrikisha," or "kuruma," as these little man-carriages are more commonly called, we arrived at our destination, where great numbers of people were flocking from all points.

Yasumaru's sisters, in common with most of the visitors, were arrayed in their brightest and most beautiful *kimonos*, their mother's dress, however, being of more sober color, for it is considered very unbecoming for an elderly woman to wear anything bright. I don't think I ever observed a deviation from this rule. As we left our jinrikishas and entered the grove, which consisted of old, gnarled, and moss-covered trees, a glorious sight burst upon our view.

The trees were one mass of fragrant white and delicate pink blossoms. Hundreds of

visitors in holiday attire were strolling about under the branches with extreme delight depicted on their countenances. Others again had spread rugs under the trees, where they were served with delicious tea free from the neighboring tea house. The brightly clad children were dancing and frolicking in the shade of the blossoms, and a more perfect picture of sunshine and happiness can hardly be imagined. Innumerable little strips of paper fluttering amidst the blossoms attracted my attention. Miss Okiku informed me that it was the happy custom of the people to give vent to their delight on these occasions by inscribing poetic sentiments, too brief perhaps to be called poems, and hanging them up in the boughs. And sure enough, as I looked about me, I observed several persons with paper and pocket inkstands in hand engaged in composing these little sonnets in praise of the blossoms.

Yasumaru was at some pains to explain to me that these poetic effusions were supposed to be composed on the spot — that the expression, the form of the idea, was derived from the inspiration of the scene; but his father added, with a twinkle in his eye, that many came with their poems already prepared. I was honest enough to confess to the old gentleman that this proceeding was not altogether different from the habit of our after-dinner orators who surprise their friends with impromptu composed, as the French put it, *à loisir*; that is to say, at their ease. Some months later I painted a picture entitled "Spring's Inspiration," in which two young girls are represented walking over the huge stepping-stones through a grove of blossoming plum trees and reading these poems; for, although it is not recorded that the Japanese lover takes this means of praising his Rosalind, none the less do Japanese maidens delight in passing from tree to tree perusing the fluttering inscriptions. The daughter of one of my neighbors, a highly accomplished young lady, kindly consented to write an appropriate poem that could be introduced into my painting. This was, in due time, sent to me with her own translation into English, and a little added note of explanation. Her translation of this note is as follows:<sup>1</sup>

"When Mr. Wores will set out to America he asked me to write down a nice poem to his picture which he has painted in Japan and represents that a pretty girls are standing under a plum blossoms, so I have made the poem and written it here:

<sup>1</sup> Although I feel constrained to ask the reader's charity for the form of this note, it would lose its charm by revision. After all, the question is, How many mistakes would an American girl make under the same circumstances in writing a note in Japanese?



"SPRING'S INSPIRATION."

"O, how lovely the plum blossoms smell, I must keep the sweet smell into my sleeves. They will be able to make me happy for the sorrow which the beautiful and cheerful blossoms should have gone."

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Another of these poems reads in this wise :  
 "How happy I will be if a gentle breeze blows and wafts the fragrance of the blossoms slowly by, and I hope no wild wind will come to scatter them away."

The plum may be considered the favorite flower of the Japanese, for the snow has hardly disappeared from the ground when its earliest blossoms burst forth and are hailed by the delighted people as the first token of spring, a time to store away their winter garments and substitute for them the lighter ones of spring; for these children of the "Sunrise Land" have no love for cold, cheerless winter, and the early plum blossoms herald but the awakening of nature from her long winter's sleep.

The cherry blossom follows and almost rivals the plum. Great avenues and groves of these trees are planted for the sake of their blossoms only, for these trees bear no fruit. But in this esthetic land, where the sense of sight receives as much consideration as that of taste, these trees in exhibiting themselves once a year in floral attire are considered as having fully performed their duty.

As in plum-blossom time, the people make holiday and amidst the fragrant flowers drink tea made of last year's blossoms that have been dried and kept for that purpose.

This intense love for flowers and plants furnishes but another indication of the general refinement of the people, for it is shared alike by high and low, rich and poor; the poorest being never so poor but that they can, for a copper or two, buy a few sprigs of flowers from the *nannaye*, the street flower seller, who carries his fragrant burden in two large baskets suspended from a pole on his shoulder, setting it down from time to time along the thoroughfare.

As I have said, flowers enter into the life and art of the Japanese to such an extent that the loss of them would be like taking the sun out of their world. But herein they show their consistency by their admiration more for the individual flower and plant, the graceful lines and the color and forms of which give them far more satisfaction than great confused masses of differently colored flowers. Indeed one rarely sees more than a very few sprigs and blossoms arranged together, but the result is almost invariably artistic. This is, however, not left to chance; for the art of flower arrangement is one of the most important branches in the education of young ladies of the upper classes, who devote years of study under proficient masters in acquiring the accomplishment.

Near the entrance to the plum garden we passed a temple, from the veranda of which a priest was feeding a great fluttering and dazzling flock of pigeons which were so tame that without the slightest fear they ate the rice that was held out to them in the open hands of the visitors. Seated before the temple was a man with a large cage filled with little birds, one of which was purchased by Oyuki, the young-

est girl of our party, who, according to a charming custom, threw the little feathered prisoner into the air and gave him his freedom.

We had now spent several hours among the plum blossoms and were preparing to depart when Yasumaru's father suggested that we finish the day in a visit to the theater. "We are rather late," he said. "It is now eleven o'clock and the play commenced at seven in the morning; but you will see enough," he added, "especially as this will be your first visit; and by the time it closes, between ten and eleven o'clock this evening, I am sure you will have had quite enough for a first experience." Our conversation was carried on through the medium of his children; for my knowledge of Japanese was rather limited at that time, and although the old gentleman read English without difficulty, he never attempted to speak it. He had on a former occasion said to me, "When I was a young man the only intercourse we had with the outer world was through the Hollanders, and then it was quite the proper thing for a young man to study the Dutch language, as my sons now study English." He had a very good library of old Dutch books, treating of every possible subject, and, like many others, he had been well posted on much that was going on in the Western world long before the gates of Japan were opened.

After a half-hour's ride through the streets of Tokio we arrived at the theater. The entire front of the building was covered with showy colored pictures of the actors and scenes of the play. But we did not draw up before the crowded entrance, buy our tickets, and elbow our way in, for that would be altogether too undignified a proceeding for a Japanese gentleman and lady. That is all obviated through the medium of the adjoining tea houses, in front of one of which we now descended from our jinrikishas. The host received us with profound and respectful bows as we entered, and after having served tea he was consulted about the seats, location, etc., and a man sent to secure places for us as well as for the servants; for the Japanese treat their servants in many respects much as members of the family. After resting for a few moments, and leaving all our unnecessary luggage behind, we followed the servant across the street to the theater, and were conducted to our boxes. The theater, though roughly constructed, was in general arrangement similar to those in the United States. Instead of chairs or stalls, however, the pit was divided by low partitions into boxes about five feet square, each of which accommodated from four to six persons, who sat on cushions on the floor. The gallery was likewise divided into boxes, and at the highest and extreme end was a space



THE RETURN FROM THE CHERRY GROVE.

separated by strong wooden bars and occupied, as with us, by the "gallery gods."

A raised walk on a level with the stage and running from it through the orchestra or pit extended along each side of the theater, by means of which the actors were enabled to traverse the entire length of the house—a great advantage in representing approaches from a

distance. On each side of the stage were boxes containing the orchestra and the chorus, the latter chanting in doleful tones the plot of the play as it progressed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Japanese chorus, unlike the Greek, consists of but two or three performers. However, the comparison with the chorus of the Greek tragedians is interesting.

The stage revolves on wooden balls, placed in a well-greased groove, thus enabling a scene to be changed without loss of time or lowering the curtain. A scene, for instance, is represented in which a party of travelers arrive before a tavern. They decide to enter, and as the first passes through the door the stage slowly revolves and brings to view the interior of the house with the traveler entering through the same door. I was agreeably surprised at the effectiveness of the scenery and the make-up of the actors, especially those who impersonated female characters, which, as in Shakespeare's time, are always taken by young men; but so successful in speech as well as in action is this impersonation that it is difficult for a stranger to realize that they are not women. The acting was so expressive that I could almost, without the explanations of my friends, follow and enjoy the plot, which contained many of the usual elements of our own drama—the oppression of virtue and innocence and the final triumph over vice and crime. I have never known an audience so easily moved to tears as were these sympathetic spectators, especially those of the gentler sex, who were at times, almost without exception, weeping over the sad fate of some hero or heroine.

The leading character and chief attraction of the play was an actor named Danjero, the Booth or Irving of Japan, and it required no understanding of the language to appreciate his great art. There was also a ghost, who, like his familiar counterpart in Hamlet, spoke in the conventional hollow, sepulchral tone of voice. This ghost, Yasumaru assured me, was very celebrated; he belonged, in fact, to a famous family of ghosts, the successive members of which had acted in that capacity for many generations.<sup>1</sup>

Intermissions take place from time to time, during which servants from the neighboring tea houses bring in great trays filled with all kinds of refreshments, for at these all-day performances the audience take their meals in their boxes. We had both dinner and supper served to us by our host of the tea house, and the servants also appeared with refreshing tea at intervals between the meals.

Long as the play may seem, it passed only too rapidly, and I found my interest increasing to a feverish degree as the end was neared. A young daimio, the hero of the play, had committed a political offense and had been con-

demned to commit *hara-kiri*. Under these circumstances the code of honor of Japan enjoins upon a man the necessity of taking his life with perfect stoicism. In this case the young man showed evidences of a mental struggle. In a mournful soliloquy he expressed his unwillingness to die in the spring of his hopes and in the flower of his youth. Finally, strengthening his resolutions, he gave one last fond glance at a plum tree the blossoms of which overshadowed the door, and entered the fatal room, where, concealed from the view of the audience, he was to disembowel himself.

A few moments passed in silence and then a single blossom from the plum tree slowly fluttered to the ground. This was followed by a second, then by a few more, and then by a shower of blossoms.

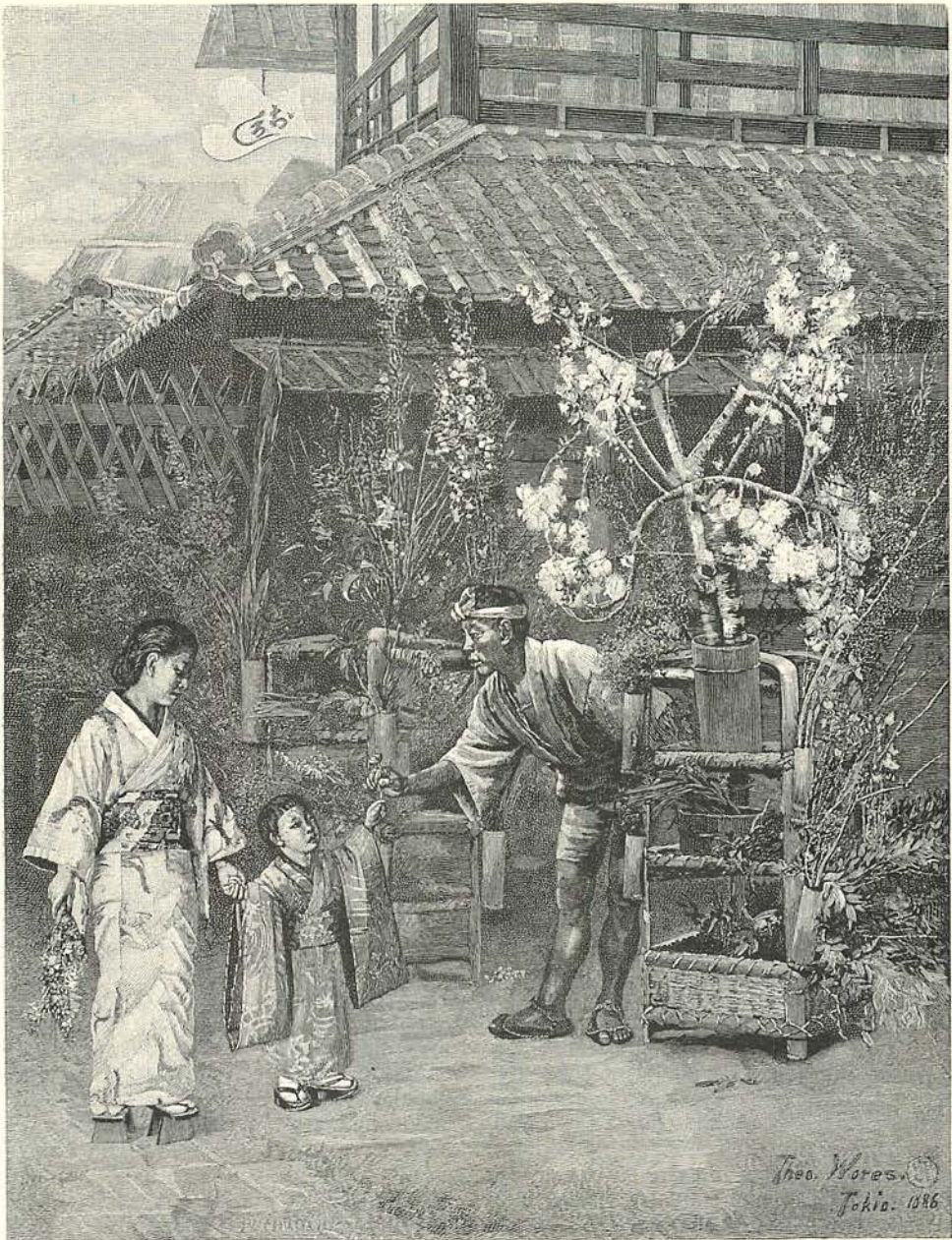
"It is ended," said my friend. "Let us go."

An utter absence of sham, a perfect freedom from all affectation, constitutes one of the most admirable qualities of the people. They show no false or veneered front to the world, and their lives and actions are free and natural. The beauty of their homes lies more in the interior finish than in a showy outside, and the most beautiful rooms are generally those facing a garden in the rear. Even in their dress they are consistent, for the lining of their gowns is often of a more expensive and finer material than the outer stuff. However large and valuable a collection of works of art a Japanese gentleman may possess, the invariable severe simplicity prevails in his home. A few of his treasures may adorn his rooms, but the greater number of them—his pictures, bronzes, lacquer, and porcelain—are carefully stored away, each in its separate case, in the *kura*, or storehouse, and one may make many visits to his house before becoming aware of their existence. The few that may be observed about the rooms are occasionally changed for others, and only when the owner is visited by an art-loving friend who understands and can appreciate his treasures are they brought out. He never makes a vulgar display of them, for it is a true and genuine love for the beautiful which prompts him to acquire them; and through his enjoyment of these things he derives far more pleasure out of his life than the restless foreign observer may realize, who is only too apt to consider it uneventful and monotonous.

A Japanese friend once confided to me that

<sup>1</sup> A play in the modern Japanese repertoire is our own "Merchant of Venice," with Portia left out. Some of the features of the adaptation are as follows: The Jew is a money-lender of Tokio. The 3000 ducats become 300 yen. To give character to the trial scene a few malefactors are introduced and sentenced and tortured on the stage. Then comes the *cause célèbre*. The money-

lender flourishes his knife and demands his pound of flesh. The judge sees no way out of the difficulty and declares that the money-lender is entitled to it, when suddenly a door opens and a superior judge enters, supplying the necessary equity. Japanese etiquette would entirely forbid the rôle of Portia in Shakespeare's play.



A FLOWER SELLER.

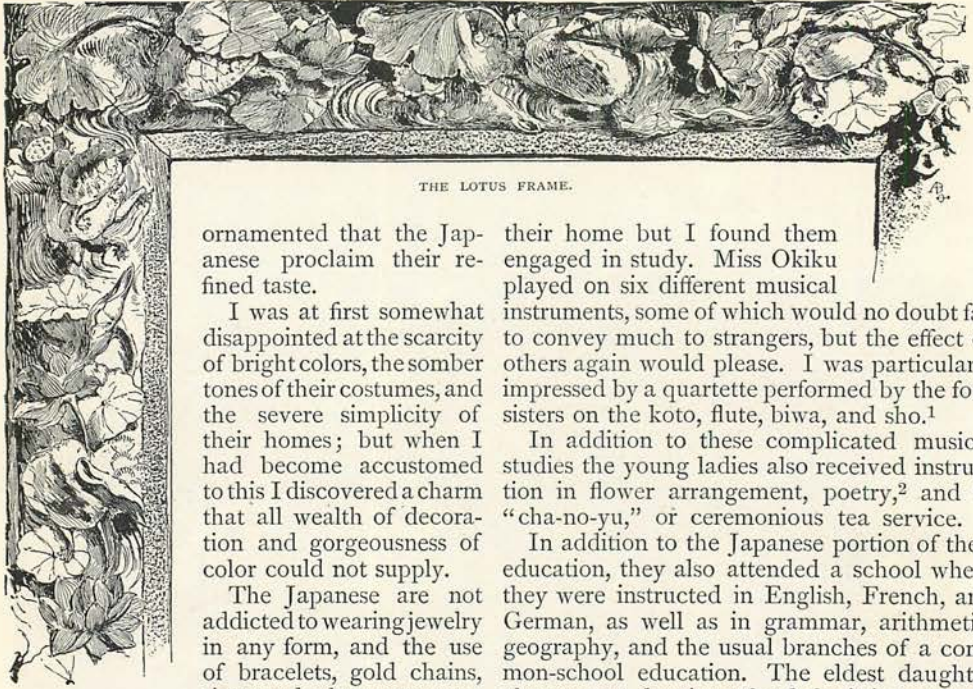
although there was much that he admired in the appointment of our American homes, all this furnishing and decoration confused him. He did not know if he was right, he ventured to say, but it seemed to him that there was too much of everything; in fact, they seemed to him more like curio shops than living-rooms.

In this respect the difference between the Japanese and ourselves lies in the fact that

whatever one may find in their houses, beautiful as it may be, is for use as well as for ornament. Its beauty, in a great degree, lies in its utility, whereas with us half of the objects that decorate our crowded rooms serve no useful purpose.

Although the term "barbaric splendor" is often used in descriptions of Japan, it could not be more wrongly applied, for it is in the very avoidance of all that is gaudy and over-





THE LOTUS FRAME.

ornamented that the Japanese proclaim their refined taste.

I was at first somewhat disappointed at the scarcity of bright colors, the somber tones of their costumes, and the severe simplicity of their homes; but when I had become accustomed to this I discovered a charm that all wealth of decoration and gorgeousness of color could not supply.

The Japanese are not addicted to wearing jewelry in any form, and the use of bracelets, gold chains, rings, and other ornaments,

which can only be regarded as relics of barbarism, they have long since outgrown. Nothing could be more shocking to a Japanese lady than the custom of piercing the ears and suspending rings from them. In their freedom from this custom they perhaps stand alone among nations.

I have often been asked what constituted the Japanese ideal of feminine beauty and how it corresponded to our own. I found that the type most admired is of a slender, ethereal order with oval face, slightly aquiline nose, and light complexion. This represents the aristocratic type, and I could not but concede to many examples of this class a high degree of beauty; but when I ventured to express admiration for another type, the robust, red-cheeked, and well-developed country girl, I could not fail to notice the expression of pain and pity that came over the faces of my friends. Such taste seemed to them perfectly barbarous!

Yasumaru's sisters, whom I mention at all times more as typical examples of their class than as individuals, were well educated in all the branches that go to make up the accomplishments of a Japanese girl. I rarely visited

their home but I found them engaged in study. Miss Okiku played on six different musical instruments, some of which would no doubt fail to convey much to strangers, but the effect of others again would please. I was particularly impressed by a quartette performed by the four sisters on the koto, flute, biwa, and sho.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these complicated musical studies the young ladies also received instruction in flower arrangement, poetry,<sup>2</sup> and in "cha-no-yu," or ceremonious tea service.

In addition to the Japanese portion of their education, they also attended a school where they were instructed in English, French, and German, as well as in grammar, arithmetic, geography, and the usual branches of a common-school education. The eldest daughter also went to dancing-school, for it is now considered quite as important for a Japanese as for an American girl to learn to waltz. The square dances, however, seem to be the most popular. Of course only the younger generation indulge in this pastime, for with a Japanese of the old school such an undignified performance would be out of question.

Although I entered into my new life in Kanasugimura ("golden cedar village") with great zest, I cannot say that my arrival was regarded with unmixed pleasure by my neighbors. I was the first foreigner who had come to live in the midst of them; and therefore I was the subject for daily discussion in the adjoining tea house of the "Nightingale Spring," so named from the fact that nightingales were said to abound in the vicinity, which had also been a favorite resort of the poets, who loved its peaceful quiet and the beauty of the adjoining park of Uweno.

I was greatly amused at the terror displayed by the little children, who at first fled at my approach. But in a little while they grew more trustful and stood as I passed, gravely bowing their little shaven heads. I invariably found them well behaved and respectful. As

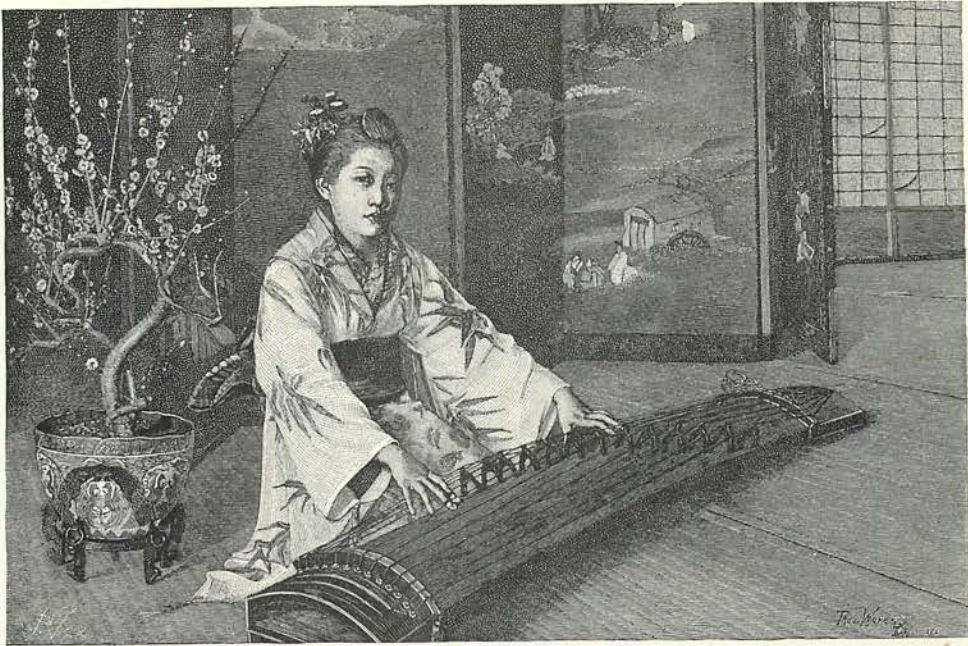
<sup>1</sup> Music-teachers in Japan are invariably blind, the practice of that profession being by general consent restricted to these afflicted people, and no infringement on their rights is tolerated.

<sup>2</sup> Japan is emphatically the land of poetry, for it is customary to express the most trivial feeling of the day by quoting a verse from some Japanese poet. I asked one of my friends what he should say to a young lady

if he wished to compliment her highly. "Oh," said he, laughing, "we never leave that to chance. We have a verse which exactly suits the occasion. This verse is worthy of the most high-flown period of French gallantry. The maid is informed that her beauty is 'so dazzling that the fishes sink to the bottom of the sea, that the flowers wither at her approach, and the birds fall helplessly at her feet.'"

they are treated with great kindness and consideration by their elders, who never, under any circumstances, resort to corporal punishment, they retain in consequence much self-respect and pride, and resent being treated with patronizing condescension. Nevertheless they are thoroughly childlike, and indulge in all plays and frolics with the same enjoyment as other children. Their sweet and melodious voices attracted my attention as would the

workshops I was surprised at the almost universal ability displayed for drawing in a free, off-hand manner. Almost every artisan could with the greatest facility make a quick effective sketch for any design that might be suggested to him. This facility in rendering forms and designs in flowing lines with brush and ink is undoubtedly owing to the graceful form of their writing, to which years of study are devoted; and this is in itself an art education.



THE KOTO PLAYER.

warbling notes of a bird. This is not purely nature's gift, but more or less the result of training.

I had not long been in Tokio before I became acquainted with a number of native artists, who all expressed the greatest desire to see my pictures, and to have me give opinion on their work. On the other hand I felt the same eagerness to become better acquainted with their art and methods, and to study the conditions under which they had developed into the only purely artistic nation of the world.

With us the artist, whose technical education and taste has been fostered in an artificial atmosphere, is but little understood by his public, and receives little sympathy except from a limited class. But the Japanese artist is in harmony with his public; he is free to follow his natural instinct with the conviction that everything he produces will be understood.

In associating with the people and visiting

This conviction, I may add, is shared by all Chinese and Japanese critics, who assert that painting is but a species of writing. They are taught from childhood to draw the Chinese characters in bold, free, and graceful lines, and beautiful writing is regarded as good drawing. The expression "It is alive" is applied to writing as well as to drawing.

One day, attracted by a bit of wood carving in a carpenter's shop, I entered, with the thought of possibly having a frame carved for a certain picture. But finding the master of the shop, a bright, intelligent-looking old man, engaged with his two sons in constructing some rude tables, I was not inspired with much confidence. But when I told him what I wanted he hastened to assure me that he could execute my order without the slightest difficulty, and displayed such eagerness to undertake the work that I resolved to give him a trial. The design of this frame, I explained to him, was to consist of lotus leaves,

flowers, and turtles, carved in relief. With the assistance of a few rough suggestions with a pencil I made my idea clear to him and he volunteered to make a drawing. The next morning he presented himself with a large and elaborate sketch.

I could hardly believe it possible that such a beautiful work, which embodied in the most artistic manner all I had suggested, could have been executed in so short a time. His ability was therefore no longer to be questioned, and when a few days later I again called at his

covered him intently watching a little turtle which he had fastened to a string, and when he observed a movement that struck his fancy he reproduced it in his work. But this was rather exceptional; for like the painters of Japan he rarely copied nature directly, as her impressions seemed to remain fixed in his mind.

But skillful though he was, there seemed no opportunity for him to display his ability in the proper channels, and he was compelled, in order to earn his daily bread, to devote himself to the most ordinary carpenter's work.



A CANDY SELLER.

shop he was already hard at work on the frame. It was most fascinating to observe its progress. A rough piece of camphor wood, which represented one side of the frame, lay before him. With a few rapid strokes of his brush he indicated the general design, and then, without any further preparation, seized his hammer and chisel and without hesitation boldly hacked away at the wood, making the chips fly in every direction. Before long the unmistakable forms of lotus leaves, flowers, turtles, and water lines, gracefully intermingled, began to appear.

This man, besides possessing the greatest mechanical skill, was thoroughly artistic in temperament. On one of my visits I dis-

After this he carved a number of other frames for me, and each successive one seemed an improvement on the last. I learned that he belonged to an old and celebrated family of wood carvers, and that his ancestors had, three hundred years ago, carved the ornaments of the famous temples of Nikko.

There are many such skillful artisans in Japan who are without employment and who could, did they but receive the proper encouragement, produce work equal to that of any period. I have even met with beggars whom I envied for their artistic ability. On one occasion I noticed a ragged old man seated by the wayside. He had carefully cleared and smoothed the ground before him, over which he had

sprinkled with a sieve a layer of fine dust. By his side were a number of boxes containing sand of different colors. As I stopped before him he plunged his hand into the box of black sand, and letting it run through his closed fists began to form the outlines of a graceful figure on the gray dust. He shaded the lines as gracefully as with a brush, and in a few moments the contour of a well-drawn female figure appeared on the ground before me. He next proceeded to fill in the various shades of the dress and its patterns with the differently colored sands, and almost before I could realize it he had produced a most beautiful effect, and I only regretted that this sand painting could not be preserved and carried away.

I followed the example of the other bystanders and threw him a few small coins, whereupon he brushed away this picture and began another. So it went on, figure after figure, varied occasionally by beautiful script, flowers, and birds, and so long as the money was forthcoming so long the pictures appeared, as though the supply was inexhaustible.

Another artist of this class whom I often met was the street candy seller. He carried his stock on his back, and stopped from time to time to blow his trumpet and make his presence known to the children of the neighborhood. Putting his stand on the ground he stuck a lump of soft candy to the end of a bamboo straw and proceeded to blow all kinds of familiar objects, after the manner of a glass blower. He formed, for instance, a gourd with its hollow stem wound around the straw, then he added a few leaves, a snail or two crawling, most naturally, along the stem, and behold, the work was complete. Thus he created birds, animals, masks, or whatever might be suggested to him by his child patrons, who surrounded him and eagerly bought his productions.

Love of nature tends to make the Japanese great travelers within the limits of their native land. There are a number of well-known views and historical places that have for centuries formed subjects for painter and poet.

To visit these celebrated places is the ambition of every one of high or low degree, the former traveling leisurely, with all comforts, and attended by a retinue of servants, while the latter more generally dons the pilgrim's white habit and with staff in hand wanders from shrine to shrine, thus performing a religious duty and enjoying the natural beauty of the country at the same time. In traveling about the country I constantly had my notice drawn to certain fine views and attractive spots, and almost invariably found that they had been well selected and were worth a visit.

I once accompanied a Japanese gentleman to a celebrated valley, or cañon, near Kioto,

through which flowed a wild and rapid stream. We took a boat and were guided by skillful boatmen down the stream through the rapids. As we floated along, my companion would from time to time utter exclamations of delight and point out some beautiful or historical spot, giving, at the same time, an interesting little description or anecdote relating to it. I therefore very naturally supposed that he had repeatedly visited this place, but on inquiry I learned, to my astonishment, that this was his first visit, and what he recognized and knew was owing to the pictures he had seen and the books and poems he had read since his childhood.

Japan, more than any other country, perhaps, owes much of its general beauty and attractiveness to the hand of man; but so successful is the harmonious combination of man and nature that one at first fails to realize how much each has contributed in forming the character of the country. But there is no conflict between them. Man has made no attempt to supplant or to improve nature, and has been but a loving assistant. Thus has this process gone on for ages and ages, until the people and their surroundings form one harmonious whole.

One day I received an invitation to visit an exhibition of paintings given by one of the leading art societies of Tokio. The day and hour of my visit were fixed so that the members of the society who wished to be present could on this occasion make my acquaintance. The exhibition was held in a temple, situated on a small island in a lake near Uweno Park.

I was warmly welcomed with much ceremonious bowing by a number of the artists who constituted the reception committee. They led me through a series of rooms, the walls of which were hung with a great variety of *kakemonas*, as the roll paintings are called. There were many different schools of painting represented, some of them consisting of most conventional productions, while others again seemed natural and lifelike.

But I felt in looking at these pictures that too many of them represented but occasionally varied efforts to reproduce well-known subjects and effects, the creations, in an inspired moment, of some great master of the past.

After the examination was over, I was conducted to an adjoining tea house, where a collection of representative works of the old masters had been brought together for my especial benefit. These were certainly the finest specimens of Japanese art that I had yet seen, and how they stood out by contrast against the modern ones of the exhibition we had just left! As I passed from one to the other the



HIAKU NEN'S DRAWING.

how identical in many respects with those of the best of our artists. They asked me many questions about European art and artists. I had some photographs of pictures with me which I showed them. They seemed pleased, but were astonished when I told them the amount of time which had been required in painting them. They argued that a painter should spend a great deal of time in observing nature, and when he had thought out his picture perfectly in his mind, and was saturated with the subject, then he

different styles and schools they represented were explained to me, and the artists were much pleased that I should express admiration for what I saw.

They all evinced the greatest curiosity to know to which of these pictures I would, from my standpoint of art, give the preference; and when, after due deliberation, I made my decision, it was received with a perfect outburst of astonishment. I had, they assured me, selected the masterpieces, the very pictures that they prized most highly. It took them some time to recover from this surprise; but when they did, all barriers of race seemed to have disappeared. We were now but a company of artists, bound together by mutual sympathies and common ideals. I never spent a more delightful afternoon. I was surprised to see how thoroughly cultivated were their art ideas, and

should seize his brush and dash off the picture in a few hours or minutes.

It is the spirit more than the substance that the Japanese artist strives to produce. He does not attempt slavishly to reproduce the textures of the trees, rocks, and other objects in a landscape. A mere suggestion of one of nature's moods that serves to bring back to the mind the impression it received is, in his opinion, quite enough, even if expressed in half a dozen strokes of the brush. The graceful and life-like action of a bird, suggested in a few strokes, is far more commendable in his eyes than the most clever and realistic rendering of its feathery texture.

After several hours agreeably passed in art discussion I was duly elected an honorary member of the institution, and was informed that a full account of the reception would appear in the monthly journal published by the society.

As Japanese art was derived from China directly and indirectly through Corea, so does China owe much of its preservation and continuation to Japan. The Japanese rulers were eager collectors of Chinese paintings, and great numbers have in this manner been preserved and handed down. It is not difficult to secure an old Chinese painting in Japan, whereas it is almost impossible to find any in China. This is also the case with musical instruments; for although nearly all those in Japan were derived from China centuries ago and are still in common use, many of them are no longer known in China. In architecture also the construction is in the main Chinese, but a marvelous transformation has taken place in time. The superior beauty, refinement in color, and form of the details and ornamentation are purely Japanese.

The temples of Japan, as was the Church of Rome in the Middle Ages, were great patrons of art, and are to this day the store-houses and guardians of the most valuable art treasures. Owing, however, to constant thefts and to sales by the priests, the Government a few years ago declared these treasures the property of the state, and officials were sent to the various temples to take inventories of them. Every few years a tour of inspection is made, and the heads of the temples are held strictly responsible for what may be lost. It was only since these investigations have taken place that the Japanese could form any idea how much of this ancient art their country contained.

I had many meetings with artists in various cities, and was always politely received. On one occasion I visited the house of a well-known artist of Kioto named Hiaku Nen, literally Mr. Hundred Years.

Mr. Hundred Years belonged to a very old

family of artists, but this is not unusual in Japan, where many of the artists bear the names and are the direct descendants of those who were founders of great schools of painting four or five centuries ago.<sup>1</sup> During the afternoon several other artists came in, and in the midst of an interesting interchange of ideas the old man suddenly jumped to his feet and clapped his hands, exclaiming, "This is too instructive; my pupils must also receive the benefit of your remarks." Obedient to their master's call, a string of five or six young boys filed noiselessly into the room, and, bowing their heads respectfully to the ground, seated themselves at the farther end of the room and listened attentively to all that was said.

The old man seemed to think that art had of late sadly declined in Japan. He was of the opinion that too many of the young men were striving merely to acquire the "brush stroke facility" of their great predecessors, losing sight, in the meanwhile, of the spirit of their work. They did not seem to realize that these brush strokes were but the means of expressing great ideas. "The result is," he added sadly, "clever brush strokes and nothing more." As I expressed a desire to see some of the work of his young pupils, he ordered ink, brushes, and a large sheet of paper to be brought. Then one after another these little men gravely seated themselves before the paper and in a few moments made a graceful little drawing, each signing his name to the work. Mr. Keinan, also a well-known Kioto artist, who was present, then made a very clever sketch of two swimming ducks, one of them half under water. The others followed his example, and, last of all, the master took the brush and in a few moments sketched a most lifelike crow, seated on a bough and gazing at a persimmon growing overhead. So realistic is the action of the bird that I have often feared he would hop off the bough and leave me; for, as the master rolled the pictures together and kindly presented them to me as a souvenir of my visit, I came into the possession of this masterpiece.

One of these artists afterwards visited me at my studio. Although he seemed pleased with much that he saw, he expressed himself as follows: "I hardly know what to say, this is all so strange and new to me. However, it seems to me," he added rather reluctantly, "that your chief aim is to produce a real effect; in fact, you strive to make your picture look so real as to deceive one into the belief

that he is looking at nature. Now do you think that this can be accomplished with paint? Do you think you can succeed well enough to warrant your making that your chief aim?" And, indeed, I found it to be a very general belief among Japanese artists that European painters strive to produce realistic effects only, and never attempt to express noble thoughts or poetic ideas in their works.

The Japanese artist depends but little on direct sketches or studies from nature, and his work is almost entirely the result of observation. His mind seems to retain, to a wonderful degree, the impressions it receives of color and form. Subordinate details, however, are not so firmly impressed on his mind as to cause him to lose sight of the general effects



A PUPIL'S DRAWING.

of line and color. It is hardly conceivable to the European artist, who is accustomed to make most careful studies direct from nature, that realism can be carried so far with mental

<sup>1</sup> A Botticelli, Raphael, or Titian living among us, the lineal descendant, through successive generations of artists, of an illustrious ancestor, would not possess a more remarkable pedigree than do some of these living painters of Japan. I have seen a collection of pictures, consisting of one or two examples of each successive member of one of these artist families,

covering a period of over four hundred years. It was curious to observe the hereditary variations, artistically speaking, that this family had undergone. In one period generation after generation seemed to deteriorate, then in another a brilliant genius would appear whose works would throw a glamour on the family name.



A JAPANESE GARDEN.

studies only. I once saw an exquisite work in one of the curio shops of Yokohama. It consisted of a figure bound to a cross,—for crucifixion was formerly one of the modes of punishment in Japan,—and for its action and anatomically correct modeling it ranked, in my estimation, as high as anything in the sculptor's art of modern times.<sup>1</sup> I later saw a group by the same artist representing two dancing devils, about three feet in height, at an exhibition in Yokohama, that was quite as masterly in its action and modeling. I greatly desired to know something of the author of these productions, and, if possible, to meet him and to learn something of his mode of work. This, however, I found difficult, as the dealers who monopolized his works were evidently not disposed to reveal his identity. But eventually I succeeded in locating him. About the only information the dealers had volunteered to give me was to the effect that he was a very old man, about ninety years of age, and the works I had seen were probably the last he would ever produce. It was therefore with satisfaction and surprise that I discovered him in his workshop, a bright, intellectual looking young

man of thirty years of age. He was greatly astonished when I told him of the reputation he had acquired through his works in Yokohama, and the prices that were being asked and paid for them. As I supposed, he had been working for mere carpenter's wages, and that accounted for the mystery with which the dealers endeavored to invest him. On the occasion of my visit he was engaged in carving some grotesque masks, and showed me several unfinished figures that convinced me more than ever of his great genius. The action, as well as the details, the hands, the feet, were executed in the most masterly manner. I asked him many questions with regard to his methods, and received the astonishing information that he worked entirely without models and knew nothing of anatomy beyond what his observation of living figures had taught him.<sup>2</sup>

Much of the grotesque character and exaggerated action that undoubtedly exists in Japanese art, when compared with ours, seems to disappear on better acquaintance, and especially as we become familiar with the people and their impulsive ways. A few years passed under these influences is very apt to change

<sup>1</sup> I believe that my opinion would receive general support were the works of this sculptor placed in a European exhibition.

<sup>2</sup> With such an example for us it is not unreasonable to suppose that it was under similar conditions that the great works of the Greek sculptors were produced.

many preconceived points of view. The action of figures, for instance, in some of our best figure paintings seems posed and statuesque—greatly lacking in the lifelike and natural action of those of the Japanese. Much of this may be the result of that study of Greek art which forms the foundation of our art as taught in all the great academies, and which ever after tends to blind the student to life in its graceful and natural action.

I was much impressed with the calm and serious religious spirit of many of the large wall-paintings in the old temples. They reminded me strongly, both in spirit and execution, of the Byzantine and pre-Raphaelite paintings in church and cloister. I cannot help thinking, however, that the art of painting in Japan will not, except in a few branches, bear comparison with the best works of the old masters of Europe, and it has never been developed to that degree of perfection or attained the completeness of the best of Western art.

But then the Japanese art of painting cannot, as with us, be treated separately, for with them it is closely connected with all the other arts, which mutually strengthen and complete one another. This harmonious combination of art and industries, taken as a whole, excels anything that Western civilization can produce.

Shortly before my departure from Japan I was prevailed upon to exhibit my pictures at the *Mōgaku*—the Tokio asylum for deaf-mutes and the blind—for the benefit of that institution. Great interest was taken in the affair by both managers and public, and the exhibition was largely attended.<sup>1</sup> Before it formally opened, a private view was held for the members of the mikado's family and officials of high rank. On this occasion Prince Harunomiya, the son of the mikado, a child of six years of age, made a most ceremonious visit, attended by his aides-de-camp and a numerous suite of court officials.

The little fellow had been driven to the building in an English coach and four, with liveried footmen, and he was dressed in an American boy's suit, with the exception of a military cap. As he entered the hall his escort followed respectfully and the director of the institution received him with profound bows, but when I was introduced to him he stepped forward with great self-possession and shook hands with me. He then passed from picture to picture, motioning for me to accompany

him. He gravely examined each picture separately and listened attentively to the director's explanation, giving me from time to time a nod of approval. He bought a number of photographs of the pictures which were on sale for the benefit of the institution, and as he took his departure the director advanced to escort him to his carriage. He turned at the threshold of the door, however, and gravely motioned him back, as if to say, "We will dispense with further ceremony." And he did, for he jumped quickly into his carriage, and touching his cap in military salute, the heir-apparent to the throne of Japan was rapidly driven off.<sup>2</sup>

The skilled artisan of Japan not only executes but in most cases designs his own work.<sup>3</sup> He perfectly understands the capabilities of the materials he employs, be they of wood, bronze, lacquer, or ivory, and he designs his forms to adapt them to the materials used. He does not consider it necessary that the form he plans should be a perfect or accurate reproduction of the object he undertakes to represent, but he does endeavor to give its character, however he may vary the design in conforming to the character of his materials.

In this he is undoubtedly guided more or less by his artistic instinct, which is but an inheritance from generations of artisan forefathers who have bequeathed to him their accumulated knowledge. Thus it is that the Japanese artisan is instinctively artistic, and produces artistic work almost unconsciously by simply following out his natural tastes and inclinations.

With us, whatever the designer produces is planned with the deliberate intention of making what he knows to be considered artistic. It is but what he knows, and not what he feels.

Many of the artists of Kioto, the ancient capital of Japan, continue to a greater degree than those of Tokio to remain true to the art traditions of the old time, and the modern commercial spirit had not yet encroached to such a demoralizing extent upon their work.

This fact was impressed upon me on the occasion of a visit to a celebrated cloisonné maker of the former city, who was renowned for the beautiful form, color, and workmanship of his ware. He received me with the usual courtesy in a home which was exceptionally refined and esthetic. One side faced and opened

<sup>1</sup> The exhibition lasted four days and the price of admission was only 15 *sen*—about 10 cents. The sum netted for the benefit of the asylum, however, was over a thousand dollars.

<sup>2</sup> The prince's family has reigned in Japan over two thousand five hundred years. I could not help speculating, therefore, as to whether his majestic manners were not, like the skill of the artists, inherited.

<sup>3</sup> This was true also of the great gold and silver smiths of Europe. Compare Benvenuto Cellini's account of art and artists of that period. Art historians could obtain a much better insight into the conditions under which the art of Europe during that period flourished by familiarizing themselves with the living art of the workshops of Japan.



on a most charming garden. A little waterfall murmured in one corner and emptied its waters into a deep pool in which great golden carp sluggishly swam about. The garden was inclosed by a high hedge and tall trees that completely shut out the busy world beyond. Although we were in the middle of the city, the illusion of distance was perfect. Here and there the hedge had been cut away just enough to give a glimpse of a distant range of mountains or a picturesque old temple or pagoda. We walked through the garden, crossed a little bridge consisting of one roughly hewn slab of stone which spanned the dry bed of a brook, artificially constructed with water-worn stones so ingeniously placed as to make it seem nature itself. Presently we caught a glimpse of the workshop with its busy workers. All the beauty of this garden was spread out before their eyes, and the master, who seemed to read my thoughts, asked me whether I did not think it likely that these workers in beautiful forms and combination of harmonious colors would be favorably influenced and assisted by their inspiring surroundings. Who could not but agree with him? We returned to his house, where he told me something of his life, and my admiration for the man increased. He employed only a few

assistants and executed but a limited quantity of work. He was ever striving to improve the quality of his ware, and proudly pointed out the contrast between his former efforts and his present work. A few years ago he told me he had sent a collection of his cloisonné to the Paris Exposition, where he had received a medal and had been fortunate enough to dispose of the greater portion of his stock at very good prices. Thus he was, for the first time in his life, in possession of a considerable amount of money.

Some of his friends advised him to enlarge his workshop, employ more men, and conduct his business on a larger scale. "It was a great temptation," he said, "and I would undoubtedly have become rich; but I felt that work of this kind could not be turned out in great quantities and be good. I could not go on improving, and I would derive but little satisfaction in turning out unsatisfactory work. So I decided to continue as before, and I have never regretted it. All that money," he added quietly, "went to make this garden."

These are motives and ideas worthy of a golden age; and in sentiments such as these, operating through centuries of seclusion, lies the true secret of Japan's artistic greatness.

*Theodore Wores.*



## IN THE ORCHARD.

THE autumn leaves are whirled away;  
The sober skies look down  
On faded fields and woodlands gray,  
And the dun-colored town.

Through the brown orchard's gusty aisle,  
In sad-hued gown and hood  
Slow passes, with a peaceful smile,  
A maiden pure and good.

Her deep, serene, and dove-like eyes  
Are downward bent; her face,  
Whereon the day's pale shadow lies,  
Is sweet with nameless grace.

The frolic wind beside her blows;  
The sear leaves dance and leap;  
With hands before her clasped, she goes  
As in a waking sleep.

To her the ashen skies are bright,  
The russet earth is fair;  
And never shone a clearer light,  
Nor breathed a softer air.

O wizard love! whose magic art  
Transmutes to sun the shade,  
Thine are the beams that fill the heart  
Of this meek Quaker maid.

*James B. Kenyon.*