

TAO: THE WAY.

AN ARTIST'S LETTERS FROM JAPAN.



NIKKO, July 28.—Osomi and Tategawa were the architects of Nikko; Osomi planned the lovely pagoda,—so I am told,—and I hasten to put down their names. At that time the great Tenkai was abbot. He was a friend and adviser of Iyéyasū, as he was the teacher of Iyémitsū, the grandson, and of Hidetada, the less illustrious son. It may be with him that Iyéyasū arranged the plan of fixed endowment for the church; an endowment not to be added to or diminished, so that it should be an element of stability and no longer a fluctuating danger.

With this seems to have ended the possible reasons for military dependents in the service of the church. Tenkai is said to have planned or prepared beforehand the temples of Iyéyasū, which might explain the extremely short time given in the record for their building; so that, begun in 1616, the stable, the surrounding edifices, and the shrine were completed in the third month of 1617.

I have been careful to give you some account of the temples of Iyéyasū and Iyémitsū, because I regret having said so little of those temples of Shiba in Tokio, where the remainder of the Tokugawa rulers repose in a state adorned by similar splendors. But these temples of the founders are of a more complete type, and with one exception seem to me more impressive. Yet even with the beauties that I have tried to describe, I am still not quite so carried away as I might have been by such complete works of art. There is a something, a seeming of pretense or effort or ingeniousness, which I cannot seize, but which seems to me to belong to a splendor not quite secure, or perhaps only just secured, something like what I might call the mark of the parvenu.

Yes; I think that is it. It is still, after all this time, just a little new. But what thorough adaptation of means to ends; how delicately subtle the arrangements, and simple; and how impossible to describe through words or drawings. How the result alone is aimed at, and what little parade is made of the intention and preparation. This work, which seems to betray an inferiority to its own ideal—this work, which has even a touch of the vulgar, is charming enough to look like a fairyland. It displays a capacity for arrangement which

none of us to-day could hope to control; has a charm that any passer-by could feel; has more details of beauty than all our architects now living, all together, could dream of accomplishing in the longest life. When I began to reflect how this wood and plaster had more of the dignity of art and of its accessible beauty than all that we have at home, if melted together, would result in, that these frail materials conveyed to the mind more of the eternal than our granite, it seemed to me that something was absolutely wrong with us.

And the cause of this result was not the splendor of line and color; it was not the refinement. The last time I could recall a similar sensation had been before some little church tower of England; it was certainly the subordination of all means to a single end, and their disappearance in one impression.

. . . . Since my first visit to the temples my mind has been dwelling more and more in an involuntary manner upon the contrast with all modern art, and I venture to note down for you some of the thoughts forced upon me. It seems as if I were merely reminded of what I always knew, or ought to have known; and perhaps what I may say about ourselves is as good a way as any other of giving an opinion upon what I see here. For, indeed, what I see here that I admire I feel as though I had always known, had already seen; it is rather most of our own that seems queer, strange, and often unreasonable.

I can make no set and orderly arrangement of my rather confused thinking, but can only trace it out as it occurred to me—as if it were from outside; as if something whispered to me now and then out of small occurrences, and said, "Don't you understand more clearly?"

. . . . On leaving the temples we went back to our friends' house, which was once the residence of the regent of Japan—a large, low wooden building of the kind so carefully described by Mr. Morse in his book. All is extremely simple; there is nothing to call any attention. The woodwork is merely put together with great care; some little panels of the closets are nicely trimmed with metal and highly ornamented. This, with metal nail-heads and a pretty wall-paper, is all the decoration.

Here we found the mail and papers, and

enjoyed the watering-place feeling of news from town. There were copies of "Life" and of the London "Punch," many of whose drawings did not look out of place in this land of clever sketchers. Indeed, that in them which once seemed good across the seas still held its own in presence of the little prodigies of technique that one meets in Japanese drawings.

Indeed, they recalled one another. Both call out one's sudden recollection of some facts in nature; and besides, all good sketches resemble one another as being the nearest approach to the highest finished work. They have in common with it the essential merit of being better than they appear, of indicating more than is necessary to tell the tale, of not being strictly measurable quantities. We grow so ungrateful when too well treated that we forget how Mr. Du Maurier throws in, over and above the social epigram in lines, an elegance and grace that might belong to a poetic picture; that Mr. Keene tells his story over and over again in the very folds of each individual's dress; that he will, unconcernedly, present us with a landscape as full of nature as his human figures, instead of the indifferent background which would have been sufficient for the story of the caricaturist. Now the feeling of disenchantment, of having "found out" appearances, of having gotten to the end of a thing, is never forgiven by the average healthy mind. In greater things one turns, some day, to those which are always richer and fuller of meaning with time,—as one looks to-day at a Corot or a Delacroix or a Millet once uncared-for,—and that means that at length our eyes are opened. The sketch, like the great work of art, is better than it appears, and recalls to me the emperor in the story, whom the old woman could not recognize in the presence of the big drum-major. We can appreciate what suffering the little old woman underwent when she discovered her mistake, and how she never forgave the big drum-major. For mankind has never believed at heart that the work itself is to be judged, but has always (at least in the case of one's neighbor) acknowledged that it is the *work of art which judges us*.

So says a Japanese friend, and I think that he has it exactly. Hence an importance attaches to criticism which otherwise would be inexplicable,—the importance there is in being right,—because we shall be judged ourselves if we are wrong, and often by ourselves as judges.

. . . . And late numbers of the magazines had come, pleasant to look over before dinner,—while the noiseless servants glided over the matting, and our hostess put on her Japanese costume,—serving to make the distance

greater, as we feel that all goes on at home with the usual regularity.

Some architectural sketches in facsimile in a magazine became entangled with the thread of my thinking and brought to my mind an inevitable lesson.

They were charming, and so different from the realities which they were meant to embody. One I dwelt upon, bright and clever, where every dark of window or of shadow intensified the joyfulness of the white wall of a residence at home, which you daily pass—while I am here. In the reality, alas! its Fifth Avenue monotony is unrelieved. The wall is not bright, the windows are paler than the walls, and the projections and adornment are duller yet. The drawing was an abstraction, probably meant for the sweet enticement of the client, and was what the building *should have been*. The draughtsman "knew better than he builded." As my mind analyzed this curious professional misstatement of truth, it seemed to me that I could see how the art of architecture in Japan was real compared to ours, even though none of their architects, any more than those of the great past of the world, could have made such a drawing—such a brilliant promise of a performance not to be, such a beautifully engraved check upon a bank where there were no funds. Not knowing the science and art of perspective drawing, nor the power of representing shadows according to rule, nor having the habit of ruling lines with a ruler to give interest, nor of throwing little witty accents of dark to fill up blanks, they were perhaps the more obliged to concentrate their powers upon the end of the work; and their real motive was the work itself.

This may seem strange and contradictory to the modern western mind, gradually accustomed to polished cartoons for bad paintings and worse glass, to remarkable designs for decoration and architecture which look their best in woodcuts, to great decorative paintings which are carried out so that they may be photographed without any injury to their color, nay, to its vast improvement. Do you remember how B——, the famous sculptor, used to preach to me that to-day no one looked at a thing itself, no one expected to, and that the fame of the artist was for those whose work could be adequately represented in the newspapers. That an excellence which could not be duplicated, that a tone which could not be matched, that a line which could not be copied, was not to be appreciated and could not be cared for. In fact, that such refinements were only worthy of the mind of an Oriental, "of a man accustomed to wear the moon embroidered on his back." Why spend

days in obtaining the color of a wall which any architect will think can be adequately replaced by his description of something like it to the painting firm around the corner? Why make the thing itself, if something like it will do as well? Why strike the note exactly, if any sound near it satisfies the average ear? For us, to-day, things and realities no longer exist. It is in their descriptions that we believe. Even in most cultivated France an architect or designer like Viollet-le-Duc will seriously undertake to restore old work, every square inch of which has had the patient toil of souls full of love and desire of the best, by rubbing it all out, and making a paper drawing or literary description for others to restore again in a few modern weeks the value of ancient years of ineffably intelligent care. Consider this impossibility of getting a decent restoration carried out by our best intelligence, and note that while they are unable with all money and talk and book-learning to replace the past in a way that can deceive us, there exist patient, obscure workmen who, beginning at the other end of the work, produce little marvels of deception in false antiquities — purchased by museums and amateurs for sums their authors never could get in their proper name. But these latter have only one object, the thing itself, and are judged by the result; while we, the arbiters and directors better known, who never employ them, are satisfied, and satisfy others, by our having filed in the archives of to-day notices that we are going to do something in the utterly correct way. I took as an example our friend Viollet-le-Duc, the remarkable architect whose works we have both studied, because he has written well,—in some ways, no one more acutely and more wisely,—because of his real learning, and on account of his very great experience. Is all that this man and his pupils did in their own art of making, worth, as art, the broken carving that I kick to-day out of my path?

Has such a risible calamity ever occurred before in any age? Destruction there has been, replacing of old, good work with better or with worse by people who did not understand, or care, or pretend to care; but the replacing of good with bad by people who do understand, and who claim to care, has never been a curse until to-day. This failure in all restoration, in all doing of the thing itself, must be directly connected with our pedantic education and with our belief in convenient appliances, in propositions, in labor-saving classifications, in action on paper, in projects for future work, in soul-saving theories and beliefs—in anything except being saved by the work itself.

Indeed I have always felt that perhaps in

the case of poor Richardson, just dead, we may begin to see the shape of an exception, and can realize what can be accomplished through what we called deficiencies. He was obliged, in the first place, to throw overboard in dealing with new problems all his educational recipes learned in other countries. Then, do you think that if he had drawn charming drawings beforehand he would have been able to change them, to keep his building in hand, as so much plastic material? No; the very tenacity needed for carrying out anything large would have forced him to respect his own wish once finally expressed, while the careful studies of his assistants were only a ground to inquire into, and, lastly, to choose from.

For many little prettinesses and perfections do not make a great unity. Through my mind passes the reminiscence of something I have just been reading, the words of an old Chinese writer, an expounder of Tao (the Way), who said what he thought of such matters some twenty-five centuries ago. What he said runs somewhat in this way:

The snake hissed at the wind, saying: "I at least have a form, but you are neither this nor that, and you blow roughly through the world, blustering from the seas of the north to the seas of the south."

"It is true," replied the wind, "that I blow roughly, as you say, and that I am inferior to those that point or kick at me, in that I cannot do the same to them. On the other hand, I blow strongly and fill the air, and I can break huge trees and destroy large buildings. *Out of many small things in which I do not excel I make ONE GREAT ONE in which I do excel.*"

In the domains of the one there may not be managing.

Hence, also, the difficulty, I had almost said the impossibility, of finding a designer to-day capable of making a *monument*: say, for instance, a tomb, or a commemorative, ideal building—a cathedral, or a little memorial. There is no *necessity* in such forms of art, nothing to call into play the energies devoted to usefulness, to getting on, to adaptation, to cleverness, which the same Taoist says is the way of man, while integrity is the way of God.

Art alone, pure, by itself, can be here the object of the maker's contemplation; the laws of the universe that men call beauty are the true and only sufficient materials of construction.

With what preparation does a designer of humbugs come to such work, failure in which cannot be excused because of any practical reasons, because of any pressing necessities. That really belongs to the public, to everybody more than to its possessor, or to its owner, or to those who have paid for it—that, finally, can

only be saved from adverse criticism for a short time, while passing interests are concerned in it.

Who knows this better than yourself? Where on earth to-day can you find a thing done by us designers that an artist will go to look at for love, for the deep desire of enjoyment that makes us visit so many little things of the past, and go far for them? If you can, imagine any painter desiring to note, so as to make them his own by copy, a modern set of moldings, the corner of a modern building.

And yet what a rush of delight comes upon us with a few Greek moldings, with a fragment of Greek or Gothic ornament, with the mere look of the walls of some good old building. How the pleasure and the emotions of those who made them have been built into them, and are reflected back to us, like the smile from a human face. I know that I have told you often how the fragment of a Gothic window from old English Boston set into the cloister of Trinity of the new Boston always seemed to me to outweigh the entire building in which it rests. And yet it is only a poor fragment of no great period. But then the makers thought and felt in the materials that they worked in, even if their drawings were rude and incomplete and often incorrect. And no architect seems to realize to-day that his walls could give us the same emotions that we receive from a Rembrandt, or a Van Eyck, or a Veronese, and for the same reasons, and through a similar use of a real technique.

You draw well; you can make a sketch, I am sure, which, like many others, would have spots of light on a black surface, or a pretty wash of sky above it, or little patches of shadow, like clever lichens, spread over it, and that would be correct in artificial perspective, and recall something of older design, and have no great blemishes to take hold of. How far would it help you to have made a million such if you seriously wished to do a thing for itself, not for its effects upon a client, nor for a claim upon the public, nor for a salve to your own vanity?

And now do you see how, as we architects and designers gradually work more and more on paper and not in the real, our energies are worked out in accomplishing before we get to our real work,—that of *building a work of art*,—and the result of our drawings grows feebler and feebler and tamer as it presses to its end. Then, for this weak frame of conception, the men who have come in to help (and that only because the director's time would not admit of his doing all himself, otherwise he would, in his jealous weakness, adorn as poorly as he imagines)—then, I say, if the painter, the sculptor, the decorator, shows any strength or power, there is another danger. There is danger that the sculptor's relief will be more

powerful than the weak projections of solid masonry, that the lines of the painter will be grander and more ample than those which were meant to guide and confine them—that the paint of the decorator will appear more massive and more supporting than the walls of the architect. Whence all will be tamed, all annulled and made worthless and paltry, so as not to disturb the weak efforts of the master directing. And for the first time in the history of art we shall have buildings which the Greek or the Roman, the Medieval or the Oriental, would have been unable to adorn, while in their times the masters who were architects, great and small, found no trouble in placing within their buildings, made famous to all time by this choice, the sculptures of the Parthenon or of Olympia, the glass or the statues of Christian cathedrals, or the carvings of India or of Japan.

So that when the greatest painter of the century left instructions for his tomb, he asked that it should be copied from some former one of antiquity or renaissance, so that it might have—to typify his love and his dislikes—masculine moldings and a manly character, contrary, as he said, “to all that is done to-day in architecture.”

You may say that through all this wandering of thought I am telling you little about Japanese art. Wait; perhaps I may be merely preparing your mind and mine for what I shall have to say later. Or, rather, let us think that I am carried away by the spirit, and that I am certainly talking of what I do not find here; and if there is no novelty in what I say, and that you know it, and have always known it, we shall come back to what you also know, that art is the same everywhere and always, and that I need not come this distance to learn its principles. If there is anything good here, it must resemble some of the good that we have with us. But here at least I am freer, delivered from a world of canting phrases, of perverted thought, which I am obliged to breathe in at home so as to be stained by them. Whatever pedantry they may have here, I have not had to live with it, and I bear no responsibility in its existence. And then again, art here seems to be a common possession, has not been apparently separated from the masses, from the original feeling of mankind.

To-day at dinner, Kato, who was waiting upon us, could give his opinion upon the authenticity of some old master's work, at the request of our host, himself a great authority. So that I could continue my dreaming through the conversation and the semi-European courses,—marked by my first acquaintance with the taste of bamboo shoots—a little delicacy sent in by A-chin, the children's nurse.

Much was talked of the Tokugawa race, and some cruelty was shown to their memory as a family of parvenus who had usurped the power theoretically invested in the mikados—an usurpation practised over and over again by every successful shogun, as by Yoritomo, Taikōsama. Indeed, the Ashikaga move through Japanese history against a background of mikados. And when O—— comes in later he talks of Masashigi, and of others, who during centuries, at long intervals, attempted to realize what has now been accomplished, the restoration of the mikado to his ancient powers and rulership of twenty centuries ago.

Yes, the Tokugawa splendor was that of parvenus. Their half-divine masters lie in no gilded shrines nor under monumental bronze, but buried beneath the elements, their graves marked only by mounds or trees, as it might have been with their earliest ancestors, the peaceful chieftains of a primitive family; a simplicity recalled to-day by the little fragment of dried fish that accompanies presents, in memory of the original humility of the fishing tribes, the ancestors of this almost over-cultivated race.

These Tokugawa, then, were parvenus, and naturally asked of art, which lasts and has lasted and is to last, an affirmation of their new departure. This splendor was made for them, and its delicious refinement has not quite escaped that something which troubled me at Shiba—an anxiety that all should be splendid and perfect, an unwillingness to take anything for granted. And yet, by comparison, this looks like a fairyland of refinement. What should we do when called to help a new man to assist or to sweeten his acquired position? What vulgarity of vulgarities should we produce? Think of the preposterous dwellings, the vulgar adornments given to the rich; the second-hand clothing in which newly acquired power is wrapped. The English cad and the Frenchman not good enough for home put the finishing touch upon the proofs of culture which are to represent them to their children.

I need not refer to what is seen in San Francisco as an example. At home in New York we have more than are pleasant to think of. I know that some may say that we have only what we deserve for thinking that we can escape, in the laws that govern art, the rules that we have found to hold in everything else.

Some years ago I told you how once a purveyor of decorations for the millionaire, a great man in his line, explained to me how and why he had met his clients half-way. "You despise my work," he said, "though you are too polite to say so,"—for we were friendly in a manner,—“and yet I can say that I am more thoroughly in the right than

those who would seek to give these men an artistic clothing fit for princes. Is there anything more certain than that the artist represents his age, and is all the greater for embodying it. Now, that is what I do. You will say, that my work is not deeply considered, though it is extremely careful in execution; that its aims are not high; that it is not sober; that it is showy, perhaps even more; that it is loud occasionally—when it is not tame; that it shows for all it is worth, and is never better than it looks. And who, pray, are the people that live surrounded by what I make? Are they not represented by what I do? Do they not want show of such a kind as can be easily understood, refinement that shall not remind others of a refinement greater than theirs, money spent largely, but showing for every dollar? They want everything quick, because they have always been in a hurry; they want it on time, whatever happens, because they are accustomed to time bargains; they want it advertisable, because they live by advertising; and they gradually believe in the value of the pretences they have made to others. They are not troubled by what they feel is transient, because their experience has been to pass on to others the things they preferred not to keep. They feel suspicious of anything that claims or seems to be better than it looks; is not their business to sell dearer than they buy? They must not be singular, because they must fit into some place already occupied.

"I claim to have fully expressed all this of them in what I do, and I care little for the envious contempt of the architects who have to employ me and who would like to have my place and wield my influence. And so I reflect my clients, and my art will have given what they are."

Thus the great German rolled out his mind with the Teutonic delight at giving an appearance of pure intellect to the interested working of his will—incidentally sneering at the peacock feathers, the sad-eyed dados, the poverty-stricken sentimentality, half esthetic, half shopkeeper, of his English rivals, or at the blunders in art which Mr. Stanford White once called our "native Hottentot style."

Of course my German was merely using a current sophistry that is only worth quoting to emphasize the truth.

Augustus, the greatest of all parvenus, did not ask of Virgil to recall in verse the cruelties of civil war. No true artist has ever sought to be degraded; no worker of the Middle Ages has reflected the brutality of the world around him. On the contrary, he has appealed to its chivalry and its religion. No treacherous adventurer of the Renaissance is pictured

in the sunny, refined architecture that was made for him. You and I know that art is not the attempt at reflecting others, at taking possession of others, who belong to themselves, but that it is an attempt at keeping possession of one's self. It is often a protest at what is displeasing and mean about us; it is an appeal to what is better. That is its most real value. It is an appeal to peace in time of brutal war, an appeal to courageous war in time of ignoble peace; it is an appeal to the permanent reality in presence of the transient; it is an attempt to rest for a moment in the true way.

We are augurs conversing together, and we can afford to laugh at any respected absurdity. We know that cleverness is not *the way* to the reality; cleverness is only man's weak substitute for integrity, which is from God.

All these words—miscalled ideas—poured out by my German friend and his congeners are merely records of merchants' ways of looking at the use of a thing, not at the thing itself. Such people are persuaded that they must surely know about the thing they sell or furnish. If not they, then who? For none can be so impartial, as none are so disinterested, in the use of the thing sold.

It is too far back for you to remember the charming Blanco, the great slave-dealer, but you may have heard of his saying, which covers the side of the dealer. He had been asked why he felt so secure in his judgment of his fellow creatures, and especially of women. "Because," said he, "I have traded in so many"—*J'en ai tant vendu*. I have sometimes quoted this saying to dealers in works of art, to dealers in knowledge about art, without, however, any success in pleasing them. In fact one has no judgment of one's own in regard to anything sold that is not a matter of utility until one feels quite thoroughly, as if it were one's own, the sense of Talleyrand's treatment of the persuasive dealer. I am sure that you do not know the story. Two friends of his, ladies of rank, had chosen his study as a place of meeting. They wished to select some ring, some bracelet, for a gift, and the great jeweler of Paris was to send one of his salesmen with sufficient to choose from. Of course the choice was soon limited to two, and there paused, until Talleyrand, sitting at the farther end of the long library, called out, "Let me undertake to help you to make your decision. Young man, of these two trinkets tell me which you prefer." "This one, certainly, your Excellency." "Then," ended the experienced cynic, "please accept it for your sweetheart, and I think, ladies, that you had better take the other." I tell you anecdotes; are they not as good as reasons?

Listen to what my Chinese writer says:

"Of language put into other people's mouths, nine-tenths will succeed. Of language based upon weighty authority, seven-tenths. But language which flows constantly over, as from a full goblet, is in accord with God. When language is put into other people's mouths, outside support is sought. Just as a father does not negotiate his son's marriage, for any praise he could bestow would not have the same value as praise by an outsider. Thus the fault is not mine, but that of others, who would not believe me as the original speaker." Again a story of China comes back to me, told by the same writer, who lived before our purer era, and who was, as a Japanese friend remarks, a strategist in thought, fond of side attacks, of presenting some point apparently anecdotal and unimportant, which once listened to turns the truthful mind into channels of fresh inquiry. The anecdote is old, told by the old writer many centuries before Christ, and before any reflections about art troubled our barbarian minds.

It is about a court architect who flourished in celebrity some twenty-seven centuries ago and who answered admiring queries as to how he did such wonderful things. "There is nothing supernatural about it," he said. "I first free my mind and preserve my vitality—my dependence upon God. Then, after a few days, the question of how much money I shall make disappears; a few more days, and I forget fame and the court whose architect I am; another day or so, and I think only of THE THING ITSELF. Then I am ready to go into the forest—the architect and the carpenter were one then—whose wood must contain the form I shall seek. As you see, there is nothing supernatural about it."

Twenty-seven centuries ago the formula of all good work was the same as it has been since. This looking for "the thing itself," not for the formula to control it, enabled men who were great and men who were little, far down towards us, far down into the times of the Renaissance (until pedantry and night covered human freedom and integrity), to be painters or poets, sculptors or architects, as the occasion required, to the astonishment of our narrowed, specialized vision of the last two hundred years.

Again, if I have not put it clearly enough in this story of the far East, let me add another, which includes the meaning of the first. You will forgive it in honor of the *genius loci*, for these writings of the Chinese philosophers form a staple of conversation and discussion in social gatherings of cultivated people here. The story is of the greatest of Chinese rulers, the "Yellow Emperor" of some forty-seven centuries ago. He was in pursuit of that law

of things, that sufficient ideal which is called "Tao" ("the Way"), and he sought it in the wilds beyond the world known of China, in the fabulous mountains of Chu-tzu. He was accompanied by Ch'ang Yu and Chang Jo, and others of whom I know nothing; and Fang Ming, of whom I know nothing also, was their charioteer. When they had reached the outside wilderness these seven sages lost their way. By and by they fell in with a boy who was tending horses, and they asked him if he knew the Chu-tzu Mountains. "I do," said the boy. "And can you tell us," said the sages, "where Tao, the law, abides?" "I can," replied the boy. "This is strange," said the Yellow Emperor. "Pray tell me how would you govern the empire?"

"I should govern the empire," replied the boy, "in the same way that I tend my horses. What else should I do? When I was a little boy and lived within the points of the compass my eyes grew dim. An old man advised me to visit the wilderness outside of the world. My sight is now better, and I continue to dwell outside of the points of the compass. I should govern the empire in the same way. What else should I do?"

Said the Yellow Emperor, "Government is not your trade, but I should be glad to learn what you would do." The boy refused to answer, but being urged again, said: "What difference is there between governing the empire and looking after horses? See that no harm comes to the horses; that is all."

Thereupon the emperor prostrated himself before the boy; and calling him divine teacher, took his leave.

I am writing these vagaries by the sound of the waterfall in our garden; half of the *amados* are closed; the paper screens near me I have left open, and the moths and insects of the night flutter around my lamp in orbits as uncertain as the direction of my thoughts. I have given up my drawing; it is too hot to work. And I have already tired myself with looking over prints and designs. Among them there is a sketch by Hokusai which reminds me of the way in which my mind bestrides stray fancies that float past. The picture is that of Tekkai (the beggar), the Sennin exhaling his spiritual essence in a shadowy form, which shadow itself often rides away upon the spirit horse that Chokwaro or Tsuga evokes occasionally from his traveling-gourd.

To-day we talked of the legends of these

Rishi or Sennin, whose pictures so often come up in the works of Japanese artists.

Rishi or Sennin are beings who enjoy rest,—that is to say, are exempt from transmigration,—often in the solitude of mountains for thousands of years, after which delay they again enter the circle of change. If they are merely human, as many of them are, they have obtained this charm of immortality, which forms an important point in the superstitious beliefs and practices of modern Taoism. These appear to have no hold in Japan, as they have in China, but these personages, evolutions of Taoist thought, live here at least in legend and in art.

The original mysticism from which they sprung is full of beauty and of power. General Tchong-ki-tong has recently stated it well, when he says that Lao Tzŭ, its great antique propounder, speaks with something of the tone of a prophet. He neither preached nor discussed, yet those who went to him empty departed full. He taught the doctrine which does not find expression in words, the doctrine of Tao, or the Way—a doctrine that becomes untrue and unprofitable when placed in set forms and bound in by pedantry, but which allows teaching by parables and side glimpses and innuendos as long as they are illuminated by that light which exists in the natural heart of man. And I too am pleased to let myself be guided by this light. After many years of wilful energy, of forced battle that I have not shunned, I like to try the freshness of the springs, to see if new impressions come as they once did in childhood. With you I am safe in stating what has come to me from outside. It has come; hence it is true: I did not make it. I can say with the Shadow, personified by my expounder of the Way,¹ that when the light of the fire or the sun appears, then I come forth; when the night comes, I lie still: I wait indeed, even as they wait. They come and I come, they go and I go too. The shade waits for the body and for the light to appear, and all things which rise and wait wait upon the Lord, who alone waits for nothing, needs nothing, and without whom things can neither rise nor set. The radiance of the landscape illuminates my room; the landscape does not come within. I have become as a blank to be filled. I employ my mind as a mirror; it grasps nothing, it refuses nothing; it receives, but does not keep. And thus I can triumph over things without injury to myself—I am safe in Tao.

John La Farge.

¹ Prémare's "Notitia Linguae Sinicae," "4 um exemplum. Sic inducit Tchouang-tee umbram loquentem: Ego quidem existo, sed nescio qua ratione. Ego sum veluti cicadarum tunicae et Serpentis spolia," etc.

If what I have written is ever seen by H. B. M.'s consul at Tamsui, he will perceive my indebtedness to his most admirable translations.