

BRIC-À-BRAC.

AN ARTIST'S LETTERS FROM JAPAN.



INSCRIPTION FROM HO-RIU-JI.

NIKKO, August 12.—I need not tell you that the pervading manner of spending time and money is always within our reach. We do not go after the owner and seller of bric-à-brac; he comes to us.

Coming from afar,—from Tokio, a hundred miles away, and from Ozaka, four times that distance,—bales of merchandise are unloaded at our

door, or at our friends' for us. Patient pack-horses stand in the inclosure of the yards; big parcels, and piles of boxes and bundles, encumber the verandas. Weary hours, beginning with excitement and ending with gentle disappointment, are spent in indecision of judgment and uncertainty of purchase. But there remains always at the bottom of the boxes a delusive hope, and some treasure may perhaps reward our patience.

And then, besides occasional beauties in color or design, there is something in looking over all these debris of civilization in their own home; and odds and ends, having not much more excuse for themselves than that they remain, help to explain either the art or the habits of the country, or its history, or the nature we see about us. We have found almost nothing among the things brought us which can rank as work of high art, and I am afraid that we must be looked down upon by our friends for purchases which have no excuse in any lofty esthetic code. But they have the charm of being there, and of explaining, and in another way of teaching, even when they are bad, and often because they are bad. Because their very poverty helps to a classification and to an analysis of the means through which the artist worked, and to a knowledge of the prevalent subjects and arrangements which he found ready to his hand, bequeathed to him by an earlier and nobler choice.

From all this poor stuff exhales the faded scent of a greater art and refinement, which is now invisible, or destroyed, or subsisting only in fragments, difficult of access, or which are far away. And there is a peculiar unity in the arts of the extreme East. We must remember that this very sensitive Japanese race has developed in its art, as in everything, without being subjected to the many direct and contradictory influences which have made our Western art and civilization. There have been here, within historic times, no vast invasions of alien races, bringing other ways for everything in thought and in life, and obliging an already complex civilization to be begun over and over again on readjusted bases; no higher living and advanced thought obliged to yield for times and half times, until the grosser flames of energy could be purified; no dethronement, within society tried by every other calamity, of the old primeval faith. Instead of a tempest of tastes and manners of feeling blowing from



INSCRIPTION ON OLD LACQUER.

every quarter, and in which the cruder dislikes have held for centuries the balance against cultured likings and devotion, Japan has been carried on in one current, in which have mingled, so as to blend, the steady influences of the two most conservative civilizations of India and of China.

All here to-day, and for far back, is interwoven with Chinese thought, breaks through it, returns to it, runs alongside of it. And through Buddhism, its fervor, its capacity for taking up in its course boulders of other creeds or habits, a something different, higher in aspiration and in form, has lived with everything else and affected all.

This impressionable race found, contrasting with and supporting its nature, secure, steady, undeviating guides, so that these foreign ideals have persisted here with a transplanted life. In fact, it is possible to look to Japan to find something of what ancient China was. So much of what has here been done, as their language does to-day, saves for us a hint or a reflection of the great Chinese ages, when China had not yet been conquered by the foreigner, and when energies apparently unknown to the China of to-day flourished with the strength of youth. The art and literature of Japan, therefore, represent in great part the Chinese prototype—an original which for us has practically disappeared. We cannot easily know what arrangements and compositions, what free interpretations of the world, or severe imitations of nature, the old Chinese adopted, but they are reflected or continued in the styles and subjects and treatments of what we call Japanese. The limits and definitions of each may be clear to the Japanese critic, but to our casual Western eye they merge or derive one from the other, like some little-known streams which make one river.

Almost all the arrangements that we know so well on Japanese drawings, screens, bronzes, lacquers, ivories, etc., have Chinese prototypes. And all this is over and above the constant use of Chinese legend, and story, and philosophy, which are to Japan what Greece and Rome used to be to us—a storehouse of associated meanings and examples.

Would it amuse you if I made out some of the types that you see?

Here are the pine-tree and the stork, emblems of long life; or the bamboo and the sparrow, which typify the mildness and gentleness of nature.

The willow waves in the wind to and fro, and the swallows swing forth and back again.

The names of Color and of Love are joined by a similarity of sound, and probably by a mystic association: and so you will see upon



PAINTING BY CHIN-NAN-PIN.

the screens that the leaves of the maple turn red in autumn, when the stag calls the doe. The cherry-blossom's splendor is for show, like the pheasant's plumage.

Long centuries ago the plum became the poet's tree, because of an early poet's verses; and the nightingale, also a singer and a poet, is associated with the tree.

The tiger hiding in the jungle has a background of bamboo, as the oxen have the

peach-tree, from an old Chinese sentence: "Turn the horse loose on the flower-covered mountain, and the ox into the orchard of peaches."

The cock stands on the unused war-drum, which is a Chinese symbol of good government, the aim of which is peace.

Or, again, legends and stories are referred to.

The cuckoo flies across the crescent of the moon, and the story of Yorimasa is called up, who slew with bow and arrow the mysterious monster that had tormented the life of the Mikado Narihito. I despair of telling the story without great waste of words, and I half regret having chosen the example; but perhaps it is all the more Japanese for its complication.

You must know that the Mikado — this was about the year 1153 — had been ill night after night with terrible nightmares, to the confusion of his numerous doctors; and that his many feminine attendants had done all they could to soothe him, to no avail. Every night, at the hour of the Bull (two A. M., an hour when evil power is great), the dovecote was fluttered by this fearful visitation. But, at length, either these gentle dames or other watchers noticed that before each access a cloud had drifted over the palace, and that, resting just above the sleeping-apartments, two lights shone out from the dark mass. Then the bells of the city temples sounded the hour of the Bull. The gentlemen of the palace and the imperial guards were set on watch, the priests prayed to ward off the evil influence; but uselessly. Then Yorimasa — a brave warrior, a famous archer, one of the guards — was allowed or ordered to try to destroy the evil thing, whatever it might be. He, with a follower, watched nightly until the dark cloud and the shining orbs were near, when the great bow of Yorimasa was discharged, and a strange and wonderful beast fell blinded to the ground.

The sword of Yorimasa despatched it in nine separate blows, and the thing, said to have had something of the monkey, the tiger, and the serpent, was burned to ashes. For this Yorimasa was given the girl he loved, the Lady Iris-flower (who therefore had not watched in vain), and with her the celebrated sword called Shishino-o (King of Wild Boars). Now the imperial deputy, as he presented this sword to Yorimasa, tried him with a punning verse, while a cuckoo sang. This is what the verse said:

"The cuckoo above the clouds, how does it mount?" But it meant, "Like the cuckoo to soar so high, how is it so?" To which Yorimasa answered, filling in the necessary couplet, "The waning moon sets not at will," which might also mean, in modest disclaimer of am-

bitious effort, "Only my bow I bent; that alone sent the shaft." And so this moon stands in the picture, as in the verses, for the bent bow of Yorimasa.

It is a shorter story, that which makes the allusion in the type of the chrysanthemum and the fox. It is a variation of the perpetual story. The prince royal of India had a lovely mistress, who had bewitched him, and who fell asleep one day in a bed of chrysanthemums, where her lover shot at and wounded a fox in the forehead. The bleeding temple of the girl discovered the evil animal she really was. For the fox, as in China, is in Japan a wicked animal, capable of everything in the way of transformation and suggestion.

There are endless stories about him, and the belief or superstition is still very strong. O—— was talking to us lately about the sorcerers and spiritual mediums and fortune-tellers, and, as an explanation of the power of some medium, told us that he claimed to have in his service tame foxes. Only, when I asked where they might be lodged in the little city house, he explained that they were not living in the body, and therefore cumbersome, but were the spirits of foxes, thus subservient, and able to penetrate everywhere and report.

The badger also is a misleading creature, and the cat is considered uncertain.

Or take the way in which Hokusai refers to ancient story when, at the end of one of his books, he makes a picture of the devoted knight Kojima Takanori clad in armor, covered with the peasant's rain-cloak; and he is writing on the trunk of the cherry-tree the message of warning for his master, the Emperor Go-Daigo Tenno. But instead of the old verse, Hokusai has put: "In the sixth year of the era Tempo, in the month of April, my seventy-sixth year, this is written by me, formerly by name Hokusai, but now more correctly known as 'The Old Man gone Mad for Painting.'"

Here I have been wandering into Japan, while my theme was rather the persistence of Chinese subjects, or of subjects connected with China, the list of which would be endless, from Shoki, the devil-killer, hunting his prey of imps over sword-guards and round the corners of boxes, to pictures of aphorisms, such as this saying of Confucius, of which I found a drawing yesterday: "Avoid even the appearance of evil; do not stop to tie your shoes in the melon-patch of an enemy." And so these innumerable subjects are common property, and serve as a field for the artist to try to be himself, to bring out the story or part of it, or his way of looking at it, or its decorative capacity, or any way of anchoring the Japanese imagination. I cannot say that for many of the ordinary arrangements, the most simple and conven-

tional, one does not often suffer the boredom of repetition, as we do at home, with the eagle and the stars, and armorial bearings, and the stereotyped symbolism of churches. But it suffices to see the thing well done again, to start once more into some new enjoyment of the choice of subject.

So there can exist with regard to these subjects, apparently mere motives of form, and partly because they are conventional, a deeper convention or meaning, more or less visible to the artist when at work, according to his temperament or his school, as in our poetry, where an idea may or may not be overlaid with realistic or esthetic decoration.

I reach out for the first design that my hand can find, which turns out to be a drawing by Chin-nan-pin. I have chosen at haphazard, but the choice is perhaps all the better. We shall have no example of a great man to deal with, but merely the work of a remarkable Chinaman who, somewhere in the early eighteenth century, happened to come to Japan, or to be born there, so as to fit into a certain Chinomania then prevalent. The photograph that I send you is a poor one. You can merely discern the pattern, or what might be called the masses, of the design. A horse is tied to a tree,—a horse of Japan,—and a monkey slides down the trunk and clutches at the halter that prevents escape. I need not ask you to admire the stealthy and yet confident step of the ape, and the motions and repugnance and fright of the horse. I don't think that they could be better given. Withal, there is a gravity of general outline and appearances, and a pleasantly managed balance of the full and empty spaces. But these decorative points are not those I wish to refer to just now. What I wish to indicate now is that this subject, which might have suited a Dutchman for realism and for its choice of the accidental, will mean, if you wish to see it, the natural resistance and struggle of the inferior nature against a superior mastery which it does not understand, and which at first appears capricious and unreasonable. Without being quite certain of the accuracy of my definition, I know that the design is based upon a like convention.

This may not be spirituality, but how far it is from what we call realism, and how wise the acceptance by the artist of a convention which allows him to give all his energies to a new interpretation, through his own study of nature! As with those who have chosen distinctly religious subjects, and whose vitality and personality can triumph and coexist with the absence of novelty in the theme, so the artist in more ordinary subjects may be wise in keeping to themes which are known to those whom he addresses, and in which they can fully grasp

and enjoy his success. These general themes allow a stricter individuality in the artist who uses them, when he is capable, and make his want of individuality tolerable, and even laudable and pleasant, when, like most of us, he has little of his own. Then he can never be so offensive if we do not like him. Those that we do not like are often offensive because their personal vanity appears upon a solid ground of their own stupidity. Perhaps this is why the Japanese *objet d'art* never offends, at least in the older work done under the general influences that have obtained with the race.

Hence, also, their astonishing variety. A thousand times, many thousand times, you will have seen the same subject, but never the same rendering, never the same *object*, twice repeated. That is to say, that whenever it is worth while we can get at the most valuable and costly part of the work of art, the humanity that made it, the love of something that went with the work. It is this that makes the mystery of the charm of innumerable little pieces of older work, like the metal-work that belongs to the old swords, any one of which is superior to anything that we do, unless in the rare cases when we bring in the expensive life of a great master to rival it—some part of the work left by a Barye, a Cellini, a Pisano.

All that our great men have done is exactly opposite to the tendency of our modern work, and is based on the same ground that the Japanese has lived and worked on—*i. e.*, the reality and not the appearance, the execution and not the proposition of a theme. The whole principle is involved in the analysis of, say, a successful study from nature—a beautiful painting, for instance, of a beautiful sky. In such a case the subject is all provided; the importance of the result depends upon the artist's sensitiveness to the facts supplied to him, upon his use of his hereditary and acquired methods of recording them, and upon his personal variation of those methods. No one dreams of praising the art of the sky itself, that is to say, the fact that the facts existed; to praise the artist for the thing having occurred from which he worked. It is this apparent want of comprehension of the first principles of the plastic arts in our poor work, and in a vast proportion of our best, that makes any reasonable man a pessimist as to our near future. Every poor element of our civilization is against it, and our influences are now deteriorating the art of Japan. We value material or the body instead of workmanship or the right use of the body; and instead of style and design, the intellect and the heart. To us a gold object seems spiritually precious, and we hesitate at working in other than costly materials. To the Japanese workman wood

and gold have been nothing but the means to an end. We had rather not do anything than do anything not enduring, so that when our materials are difficult, the life has flown that was to animate them; the Japanese is willing to build a temporary architecture, and make a temporary lacquer, which holds more beauty and art than we to-day manage to get in granite or in metal.

And when the Oriental workman takes the hardest surfaces of steel or of jade, he has had the preparations for using it with mastery; it is again plastic and yielding for him, as the less abiding materials have been before. Nor would the Japanese artist understand the point of view of many of our men, who do their best to put an end to all art, so lost are they in our vanity of "advertisement." The Japanese would never have invented the idea of doing poorly the work one is forced to do to live, so as to reserve vast energy for more important or influential work that might draw attention to him. The greater part of our "decoration" is carried out just the contrary way to his. Our artists accept as a momentary curse the fact that to live they may have to draw patterns, or work in glass, or paint or model subsidiary ornamentation. They look forward to the glorious time when they may wreak their lofty souls in the dignity of paint mixed with the sacred linseed oil, or in the statue done in bronze or carved in marble by other hands than theirs. And yet if their nature be not too far removed from ours, the habit of doing less than their best, the habit of doing poorly, the scorn of anything but the fine clothes of a fine material, will never be gotten over, and throughout this little cheapness of soul, this essential snobbishness, will be felt to puzzle and disconcert those who wish to admire.

That is to say that they too often do not look to the end, but to the means, while to the artist the means are a mere path—as with the Greeks, their work will live, even if its very physical existence is obliterated, because it is built in the mind, in the eternity of thought. So Greek art existed, and has lived, and lives, the most flourishing and richest that we know of—with less to represent it than we turn out daily. So it lived, when it had no longer anything of its own body to represent it, in everything that was done in every country which kept its lessons; and lives still, without examples to refer to, even into the very painting of today. It is the principle of the proper place of means that makes the little piece of Japanese metal-work—for instance, the sword-guard or the knife-handle—an epitome of art, certainly a greater work of art than any modern cathedral. And as certainly we shall never even produce good ordinary ornamental work until we feel the truth that I have lamely indicated.

"I might perhaps do as well as this," said an intelligent architect, as we looked at some excellent but not noblest details of French Renaissance, "but how could I spend the time on it? And not only that, but how could I have spent the time previous to this, in doing other similar work to train me? I can only make a project, have it carried out by the best commercial firm, not anxious to change the course of trade, and shut my eyes to the result. I should never be criticized, because I did not give more than my bargain." And yet to give more than your bargain is merely to give art.

Look at this little *netsuke*¹ or *inro*² or sword-guard, and follow the workman as you admire each detail of the execution. He has chosen some subject or some design which may have an associated meaning, or may be of good omen, and bear good wishes, or he may have chosen out of the entire world of observation, of fancy, or of tradition; and may have chosen just as much because it fits well the space which he has to cover.

He will take as well a design that has been used a hundred times as a newer one. For he has to *reinvent* it in execution, even as the Greek sculptor who recut again the "egg and dart," or the orator who is to expound and carry out to success some argument all ready in his mind—as the old architect who rebuilt a glorious Greek temple upon the rules and canons of proportion that others had used before him. But he has to see that this design in his mind—or nearer yet, perhaps, on paper—shall fit the spaces of the material and of the object which he is to make, so that it shall be made, as it were, for that place only. He will then go again to nature,—perhaps working directly from it, perhaps only to his memory of sight,—for remember, that in what we call working from nature—we painters. We merely use a shorter strain of memory than when we carry back to our studios the vision that we wish to note. And more than that, the very way in which we draw our lines, and mix our pigments, in the hurry of instant record, in the certainty of successful handling, implies that our mind is filled with innumerable memories of continuous trials.

The workman goes to nature, and finds in it the reality and the details of his design, even, let us say, to the very markings of a tree trunk that he has chosen: they are all there, since they exist in the design, and the design is good. But they exist only in so far as they exist also in the ivory that he cuts—in the veining of the tortoise-shell or malachite that is to render

¹ Carved button used for suspending the tobacco-pouch to the belt.

² A nest of small boxes carried suspended from the belt.

it. Now with patient pleasure he can hunt out these associations; he can use gold, or silver, or vulgar lead, or lacquer, or the cutting and filing of steel, or the iridescence of mother-of-pearl for his leaves, or his stems, or the water, or the birds,—for the clouds or the moonlight,—for the sunshine and the shadow,—for the light and dark,—for the “male and female” of his little manufactured world.

These he will model, chisel, sink, or emboss as the story needs, and do it coarsely, or loosely, or minutely, or delicately, as the unity of his little world requires. And he will work in a hurry, or work slowly, he will varnish it and rub it down, and polish it again, and bake it many times, and let it weather out of doors, or shut it up carefully from the smallest track of dust, or bathe it in acids or salts, and all this for days and months in the year. And when he has finished,—because to do more or less would not be to finish it,—he has given me, besides the excellency of what we call workmanship, which he must give me because that is the bargain between us—he has given me his desires, his memories, his pleasures, his dreams, all the little occurrences of so much life. As you see, he is following the law of *Tao*, so that however humble his little world, it has a life of its own which cannot be separated from its materials; no picture of it, no reproduction, will give its full charm, any more than a photograph gives that of a human being. Take out the word Japanese wherever I have put it, take out the actual materials that I have mentioned, and the description and the reasoning will apply. That is all there is to any work of art. It does not exist in a fine abstract of intention—nor again in the application of some method of toil—to define “technic,” as so many young idiots most excusably try to persuade themselves. It exists in an individual result with origins so powerful and deep that they are lost in shade.

To go on, I wish to put it that the same reasons will cause the artist, then, to elaborate profusely, to work in long patience, to use precious materials, to work slightly or carelessly, to finish his work with minute details, or to sketch rapidly with the end of a brush filled with the single color of India ink.

There is no difference in reality; there is only the question of the kind of interest he wishes to evoke, the sort of relation he wishes to establish between himself and his work, and incidentally to me, the looker-on.

I am afraid that this hazy weather is affecting the sequence of my dreaming, or what I am pleased to call my thought, so that you may not clearly understand me.

Again I wish you to remark that in all fullness of work other things are suggested than those

directly represented, upon the same principle, for the same reasons, that the successful sketch, as I said before, is richer than it looks. Hence the suggestion of color when there is really but black and white; hence the suggestion of modeled light and shadow when there is really but flat color and outlines. Hence the success of all great periods in what we call decorative work, because there was no separation; there was merely art to be used to fill certain spaces, and to recall the fact that it was so used.

Many years ago I used to read Mr. Ruskin, when “my sight was bad, and I lived within the points of the compass,” and also the works of other men, who laid down the exact geography and the due distances, north and south, of a certain department or land of art which they called “Decoration.” Some of them are not yet dead. The light of *Tao* fell upon the subject from the words of a child who had been listening to a talk in which I and others wiser than myself were trying to follow out these boundaries that outlined “true” methods of decorative art, and kept to the received instructions of abstention from this and that, of refraining from such and such a reality, of stiffening the flow of outline, of flattening the fullness of modeling, of turning our backs on light and shade, of almost hating the surface of nature; and we wondered that when our European exemplars of to-day had fulfilled every condition of conventionality, had carefully avoided the use of the full methods of art, in the great specialties of painting and sculpture, their glorious work had less stuff to it than a Gothic floral ornament or a Japanese painted fan. “Father,” said the child, “are you not all making believe? Is the Japanese richness in their very flat work so different from what you can see in this sketch by my little brother? See how his tree looks as if it had light and shadow, and yet he has used no modeling. He has used only the markings of the tree and their variation of color to do for both. He has left out nothing, and yet it is flat painting.”

Nor have the Japanese *left out* things. They have not been forced to overstudy any part, so as to lose the look of free choice, to make the work assume the appearance of task-work—the work of a workman bored, nobly bored perhaps, but still bored, a feeling that is reflected in the mind of the beholder. The Japanese artist makes his little world,—often nothing but an India-ink world,—but its occupants live within it. They are always obedient to all the laws of nature that they know of.

However piercing the observation of actual fact, its record is always a synthesis. I remember many years ago looking over some Japanese drawings of hawking with two other youngsters, one of them now a celebrated artist, the other

a well-known teacher of science. What struck us then was the freedom of record, the acute vision of facts, the motions and actions of the birds, their flight, their attention, and their resting, the alertness and anxiety of their hunters, and the suggestions of the entire landscapes (made with a few brush-marks). One saw the heat, and the damp, and the dark meandering of water in the swamps; marked the dry paths which led over sounding wooden bridges, and the tangle of weeds and brush, and the stiff swaying of high trees. All was to us realism, but affected by an unknown charm.

Now this is what the artist who did this realism has said, as well as I can make it out: "The ancient mode must be maintained. Though a picture must be made like the natural growth of all things, yet it lacks taste and feeling if it simulates the real things."

Evidently the painter had not learned our modern distinctions of the realist and the idealist.

If you wished to know what I admire most in these forms of art, I might say to you, keeping, I hope, within the drift of what I have been writing, that it is their obedience to early rules which were once based on the first primeval needs of the artist. And if you pushed me further, and wished to make me confess what I thought that these necessities might be, and to make me give you a definition of them, and thereby force me into a definition of art itself, I should hesitatingly state that I do not like to define in matters so far down as causes. But if you would not tell, or take advantage of my having been drawn into such a position of doctrine, I might acknowledge that I have far within me a belief that art is the love of certain balanced proportions and relations which the mind likes to discover and to bring out in what it deals with, be it thought, or the actions of men, or the influences of nature, or the material things in which necessity makes it to work. I should then expand this idea until it stretched from the patterns of earliest pottery to the harmony of the lines of Homer. Then I should say that in our plastic arts the relations of lines and spaces are, in my belief, the first and earliest desires. And again I should have to say that, in my unexpressed faith, these needs are as needs of the soul, and echoes of the laws of the universe, seen and unseen, reflections of the universal mathematics, cadences of the ancient music of the spheres.

For I am forced to believe that there are laws for our eyes as well as for our ears, and that when, if ever, these shall have been deciphered, as has been the good fortune with music, then shall we find that all best artists have carefully preserved their instinctive obedi-

ence to these, and have all cared together for this before all.

For the arrangements of line and balances of spaces which meet these underlying needs are indeed the points through which we recognize the answer to our natural love and sensitiveness for order, and through this answer we feel, clearly or obscurely, the difference between what we call great men and what we call the average, whatever the personal charm may be.

This is why we remember so easily the arrangement and composition of such a one whom we call a master—that is why the "silhouette" of a Millet against the sky, why his placing of outlines within the rectangle of his picture, makes a different, a final and decisive result, impressed strongly upon the memory which classifies it, when you compare it with the record of the same story, say by Jules Breton. It is not the difference of the fact in nature, it is not that the latter artist is not in love with his subject, that he has not a poetic nature, that he is not simple, that he has not dignity, that he is not exquisite; it is that he has not found in nature of his own instinct the eternal mathematics which accompany facts of sight. For indeed, to use other words, in what does one differ from the other? The arrangement of the idea or subject may be the same, the costume, the landscape, the time of day, nay, the very person represented. But the Millet, if we take this instance, is framed within a larger line, its spaces are of greater or more subtle ponderation, its building together more architectural. That is to say, all its spaces are more surely related to *one another*, and not only to the *story told*, nor only to the *accidental occurrence* of the same. The eternal has been brought in to sustain the transient.

For fashions change as to feelings and sentiments and ways of looking at the world. The tasks of the days of Angelico, or of Rubens, or of Millet, are not the same; religions live and disappear; nations come and go in and out of the pages of history: but I can see nothing from the earliest art that does not mean living in a like desire for law and order in expression. It is therefore because we consciously or unconsciously recognize this love of the unwritten harmonies of our arts, the power of recalling them to us, in some painter or in some architect, that we say that such a man is great. He is great because he is the same as man has been, and will be; and we recognize, without knowing them by name, our ancestral primordial predilections.

Yes, the mere direction or distance of a line by the variation of some fraction of an inch establishes this enormous superiority—a little more curve or less, a mere black or white or

colored space of a certain proportion, a few darks or reds or blues. And now you will ask, Do you intend to state that decoration— To which I should say, I do not mean to leave my main path of principles to-day, and that when I return we shall have time to discuss objections. Besides, "I am not arguing; I am telling you."

THIS is the unity, this is the reality, which disengages itself from the art of Japan, even as we know it in common, through what we usually call "bric-à-brac." Our introduction to it is rather curious when one comes to think of it. Suddenly, owing to enormous social changes in Japan, involving vast fluctuations in fortunes, most of all that was portable was for sale, and flooded our markets. Ignorant dealers held in masses small treasures of temples, adornments of the wealthy, all the odds and ends of real art, along with the usual furniture, along with all the poor stuff that would naturally be made for us barbarians, and had been made for us for centuries through the trade of Holland. It was as if Paris or London had suddenly been unloaded of everything portable, from works of art to household furniture. Naturally the mainspring of it all,—the works of great draftsmen, for instance,—being more debatable, more inexplicable, more useless, in a word, or detained by stronger bands, just as it would be with us, have somewhat escaped the drain. Our perceptions have been confused in all this mixture by repetitions, imitations, which in every form of art, as we know so well in literature, degrade the perception and enjoyment of what is good. I can only wonder that the world has not been tired out and disgusted with Japanese bric-à-brac. And had we not been in such bad straits of taste ourselves, such

here, even though words are a poor rendering of sight. And what pleasure it might be to try to describe the greatest of all bric-à-brac, the greatest remains of the higher arts—sculpture and painting.

I have begun some such letter for you, but I fear that it may never be finished. Nor do I see any way of giving an account of the history of painting in Japan, which would have to stand for a still further explanation. Should I study it further, can I do more than to increase my own knowledge,—and all knowledge is a burden,—and to give you cursory proof, by names and a few examples, that the art of painting and the art of sculpture are very old here? I should have to begin to ask myself for you if the earliest remains do not already prove still earlier schools and accepted or debated tradition, and I should then have still one thousand years of design to account for.

I shall probably leave my letter to you unfinished. It has already become unwieldy, and I could give you only my own impressions. And then in the history of art everything is needed.

It would not be merely reproduction in words, however beautiful, of the surfaces of works that have survived time, nor of the men who made them, of their characters, the accidents of their lives, and their technical beliefs. It would be simply a history of humanity at a given place. It could not be solved by a mere account of the place and the race, according to some of our later scientific fads. I was writing to you but yesterday, and trying to make out that the work of art is often a contradiction of the period, or a step in advance; that the moods of feeling of the future are as often reflected by art as the habits of the present. But whatever personal sense of solitariness or of antagonism has



SIGNATURE OF HOKUSAI.

would have been the case. I have always considered that the artist needed to be forgiven for his turn toward bric-à-brac; not for his liking to have odds and ends for help and refreshment; but for having too many; because his life is to make, not to collect. To others, that can be forgiven easily; for the pieces of the past are a consolation of the present, and one would like to feel that a man's likings are his important self, and are betrayed by his choices. "Dis-moi ce que tu aimes—je te dirai ce que tu es."

If one had time and did not do, what pleasure it might be to describe forever the innumerable objects and things that might be found

inspired or oppressed the artist, he must have had partners since he has had admirers, even when he antagonizes his time. However transient certain of his forms, however much to us who come afterward they indicate the *period*, he has expressed not his time, but the needs of others who have been looking in the same ways, and yet have had no voice. And even if they have not quite sympathized, the accumulations of like tendencies has become stronger and clearer in their descendants. To reflect fully, then, in words, the face of the work of art, one would have to melt into it in some way the gaze of those who have looked at it; to keep upon it still the gentle looks of the pitiful and

the loving, the rapt contemplation of the saints, the tender or mocking smile of women, the hard or contemptuous appreciation of rulers, the toleration of the wise, all of which have been in reality a part of the very work. Their negations or sympathies have fallen on the work, and these ineffable delicacies of impression are transmitted in it to successive generations, even as the shadowing of innumerable years of incense-burning has browned the gold and blackened the azure, as concealment in the shade has sometimes paled, sometimes preserved, the edges of the outlines and the modeling of the colors, or exposure and heat and damp have cracked and channeled and dusted all surfaces. You see what I should consider a true carrying out of such a task, and how unsatisfied I should be with anything that I could accomplish, unless it were to stand to you as something fragmentary and evanescent. One thing I should like to do,—should I remain long enough, and be able to get it from the few acquaintances who may know,—and that is to save some part of the artists themselves out of that obscurity by which the lives of great workers are almost always clouded.

To me Rembrandt, and Balzac, and Delacroix, each contradictory to his surroundings, have become more intelligible through the record of their every-day struggle, the exactness of measurement which one can place upon the personal circumstances in which they carried out their work, the limitations of its exact meaning and importance in their own eyes, as we follow them in the daylight of favor, or in the gloomy endings that so often close the lives of great artists.

I hear occasionally of the wanderings of Kano Motonobu, the founder of the great school and family of artists who have lasted through four centuries to the present day, and have filled Japan, or the temples here, with works better or poorer, until the family name becomes a burden. I hear about Okio, the charmer, the painter of everything and of animals, who began as a little child by sketching on the earth with bamboo sticks when he followed his parents into the fields to work. One might perhaps learn about Hokusai, who is tabooed here, and about whom I dare not inquire, but whose charming last letter, as given by Mr. Morse, comes back to my memory, it is so gay and so sad, so triumphant over circumstances, so expressive of the view of the world which explains his woodcuts. I quote from memory: "King Ema" (he writes to a friend)—"King Ema" (the ruler of the under world) "has become very old, and is thinking of retiring from business; so that he has ordered a little country house to be built, and he asks of me to come to him that I may paint

him a 'kakemono'; so that in a few days I must be ready to travel and to take my sketches with me. I shall take up my residence at the corner of the Street of the Under World, where it will give me much pleasure to receive thee, when thou hast the opportunity to come over there."

Or this mocking challenge to old age, at the end of one of the volumes of his pictures of Fuji.

"Since my sixth year I have felt the impulse to represent the form of things; by the age of fifty I had published numberless drawings; but I am displeased with all I have produced before the age of seventy. It is at seventy-three that I have begun to understand the form and the true nature of birds, of fishes, of plants, and so forth. Consequently, by the time I get to eighty, I shall have made much progress; at ninety, I shall get to the essence of things; at a hundred, I shall have most certainly come to a superior, undefinable position; and at the age of a hundred and ten, every point, every line, shall be alive. And I leave it to those who shall live as long as I have myself, to see if I have not kept my word. Written, at the age of seventy-five, by me, formerly known as Hokusai, but now known as Gakyo Rojin (The Old Man gone Mad for Painting)."

. . . I had been intending to add, when I interrupted myself some way back, that I enjoyed in this art of Japan—at least in this drawing which they call painting—the strange nearness I seem to be in to the feelings of the men who did the work. There is between us only a thin veil of consummate skill. The habit and the methods resulting from it, of an old obedience to an unwritten law common to all art, have asked for the directest ways of marking an intention or an observation.

This reference to a previous tradition of meaning, of ideal arrangement by rule, this wish for synopsis, this feeling for manners of expressing one's self in the thing seen, will naturally make art out of anything. And it is not wonderful that what we call handwriting may then give full play to art, in a written language of which ideography is the key. Given the Chinese characters, their original intentions, the associations, historical and literary, connected with them, is it anything strange in reality, however strange to our habits, to find writing a form of art in Japan? It may have all I have just referred to, and be full of the meaning of ideas, and be literature, and then it can be made conformable to the laws of beauty of form and spacing; and above all, to give character of style, and character of personality, to look more or less grave, or elegant, or weighty, according to circumstances, be elegiac, or lyric, or epic, and reflect on its face

the intentions of the text. And again it will be the mark or *sign* of the person; so that my Japanese friends can object to Hokusai's bad writing, as betraying something not refined, for a weighty argument against his other works done with a similar implement, the brush, which is the pen of the far East.

It will then be in what we call drawing—which is an abstraction, the synopsis of the outlines of things meeting together, of their relative intensities, of their own colors, of their relations to the place they are in, that is to say, the picture—that this art of Japan, the daughter of the art of China, will attain its highest form; so that in reality those of us who think of it as appearing at its best only in color, in external charm, have not understood it. An etching of Rembrandt could fairly be said to represent, not so much in itself, but in its essence, what a great Chinaman would have liked to do in India ink—the material of all others which, even to us, is his especially. The line, the abstract line of Rembrandt, its elegance, its beautiful patterning of the surface, is concealed to us by the extraordinary richness of some of his modeling and the extreme gradations of what we call light and shade. But it is there all the same, as a geologic foundation, in the same way that inside of the Titian's splendor of surface there is a decorative substructure as well balanced and fixed as a Venetian brocade—just as the works of other great colorists, as we call them (to designate more complex men), imply, in their constitution and the mechanism of their technic, powers of design and drawing sufficient to furnish out armies of such draftsmen as flourish, for instance, in the Paris of to-day. It is this surplus of richness that conceals the identity. Our arts have undertaken an enormous accession of truths and ambitions upon which the arts of the extreme East have never ventured. They have attained their end, the end of all art, at an earlier mental period. They are younger, perhaps even more like children, and their work cannot involve the greater complications of greater age; but it has also all that grasp of the future that belongs to youth, and that has to be accompanied by deficiencies of knowledge; that is to say, of later acquirement and the practice of good and evil. And it is impossible to look at the expression of nature, or of any intention made by the child in full sincerity, without realizing that the aim of the artist, be he even Michael Angelo, is to return to a similar directness and unity of rendering. Not that the Eastern artist, any more than the child, could be conscious of deficiencies of which he had not thought. He has been satisfied, as we have been satisfied, but for a longer time and under a greater prestige. As the fruit painted by the

Greek deceived the birds, and the curtain painted by the Greek painter deceived his fellow-artist, so the horses of Kanaoka have escaped from their kakemonos, and the tigers sculptured in the lattices of temples have been known to descend at night and rend one another in the courtyards. O— tells me the Chinese story of the painter forced to let go his painting of the moon for a nominal sum to repay an oppressive money-lender, and how, when the banker happened to unroll it, the whole room was illumined, and he grew into a habit of spending evenings in the mild effulgence of the painted rays. But when, after an absence, he looked at it again, the moon was gone,—where old moons go,—and he was enraged at the painter, though he might well have noticed that for many days the moon had not been so bright, and indeed had seemed to be ill drawn. O— tells me that the artist got it back for little, and waited the necessary number of days to have its crescent reappear again; and A— says that, though the picture is lost to-day, he hopes to find it again in China in following years.

These stories serve as a way of stating to you that as long as new wants were not felt, newer accuracies did not begin to exist, and these limitations are naturally seen to be more easily put up with in a civilization of uninterrupted tradition. To acquire something when one's hands are full, something has to be dropped. In the stations of our own progress in art, the advance has at every stage involved some deficiency, or failure, or weakening on another side. This is the only explanation I can make for painting in the extreme East not having taken up portraiture—that is to say, not having triumphed in it, while sculpture has reached out toward it in a splendid way. We have seen the same thing in the transition from the middle ages, when sculpture outreaches painting in the direction of reality. But then sculpture is to a certain extent easier and in a certain way inferior, because it gives a sort of duplicate of the object, not a relation of it to other things; so that the Japanese have not come to the work from the "model" which has at so many periods and so long been ours. Theirs are types of types; they are not, as with us, persons, and the pursuit of beauty in the individual has not been followed apparently by the art of the far East. The personal love and preference of the artist embodied in another person their art does not show; nor have their artists given a nameless immortality to certain human beings, so that for ages their types, their images, their moods, their characters, their most transitory variations of beauty, have been proposed to us as an example. Have you ever reflected how the name-

less model reigns in the memory of man with a personal fame more intimate than that of Cheops, or Helen, or Cæsar, because the artist has been obliged to build upon this person his own dream of the world — as with the Roman girl who is the Madonna of San Sisto?

. . . So, again, the Eastern artists have suggested, and implied, and used light and shade, and perspective, and anatomy, and the relations of light to color, and of color to light, only so much as they could take into their previous scheme.

In many cases their success is still an astonishment to us. Certainly their records of motion, their construction of plants and flowers and birds, we have all appreciated; and their scientific, easy noting of colored light in landscape made even Rousseau dream of absorbing its teaching into his pictures, which certainly represent the full Western contradictory idea, in the most complicated acceptance of every difficulty.

The artist here, then, has not made separate analytical studies of all the points that trouble us, that have cost at times some acquirement of the past, in the anxiety for working out a new direction; as to-day, for instance, in learned France, where the very art of painting, as a mirror of the full-colored appearance of things, has for a quarter of a century been in peril, under the influence of the academy drawing-school, the model in studio light, and the vain attempt to rival the photograph. And perhaps it is needless to repeat again how we have lost the sense of natural decoration and expression of meaning by general arrangement of lines and spaces, so that again in France we are astonished at M. Puvis de Chavannes, who uses powers that have once been common to almost all our race.

Here the artist does not walk attired in all the heavy armor which we have gradually accumulated upon us. His learning in side

issues is not unnecessarily obtruded upon me, so as to conceal the sensitiveness of his impressions or the refinement of his mind. As for us, we have marched on in a track parallel to science, striving now for centuries to subdue the material world — to get it into the microcosm of our paintings. Each successive great generation has taken up the task, heavier and heavier as time goes on, halting and resting when some new "find" has been made, working out a new discovery often with the risk of the loss of a greater one.

But how often the processes have covered up what is most important, — to me at least, — the value of the individual, his aspirations, and indeed the notions or beliefs that are common between us.

Sometimes this covering has been sordid and mean, pedantic or unesthetic, sometimes most splendid. But how difficult it has been always for the many to read, for instance, in our great Rubens, the evidences of a lofty nature, the devout intentions of a healthy mind!

Not that we can turn back to-day and desert. From the time when the Greek first asserted in art the value of personal manhood, to the date of the "impressionist" of to-day, the career has been one. And certainly in the art of painting a vaster future lies before us, whenever we are ready to carry the past. But remember that whatever has been really great once will always remain great.

Even if I were competent to make more than approaches to reflections, this place of dreams is not well chosen for effort. I feel rather as if, tired, I wished to take off my modern armor, and lie at rest, and look at these pictures of the simplicity of attitude in which we were once children. For indeed the meaning of our struggle is to regain that time, through toil and the fullness of learning, and to live again in the oneness of mind and feeling which is to open to us the doors of the kingdom.

John La Farge.

DAWN.

OUT of the scabbard of the night,
By God's hand drawn,
Flashes his shining sword of light,
And lo,—the dawn!

Frank Dempster Sherman.



AN ARTIST'S LETTERS FROM JAPAN.

YOKOHAMA—KAMAKURA.

YOKOHAMA, September 1, 1886.

. . . NATURALLY we have again been wandering in Tokio; I don't know that we have seen anything more, as we should certainly do if we had any energy in the heat. It is more natural to fritter away time in little things. Besides, there is a general feeling of discouragement accompanying the continuance of cholera; and this is an unseasonable moment. Theaters are closed; people are away. If I had to give an account of my time, I could not make it up. I know that I went to see an engraver on wood; that he showed me his work, or his way of working, of which I knew a little; that he made me drink some cherry-blossom tea, pretty to look at and of unseizable flavor; that he took me to see some of his work printed; that I climbed up a ladder, somewhere into a hot room, where a man, naked but for his loin-cloth, sat slapping pieces of paper with a big brush upon the block previously touched with color; and that the dexterity with which he fitted the paper in proper place, so that the colors should not overlap, was as simple and primitive as his dress.

Then I went to see the painter whose drawings had been engraved. I can't explain just why the arrangement of his courtyard seemed what I might have expected, and yet I still keep that impression without having noticed anything but the heat — the heat and the sun — the heat accumulated in this big dreary city of innumerable little houses.

We explained at the door our request, and after a few moments we were told that the painter, though he was ill, would see us. We entered, and sat awhile, during which interval a boy pupil, occupied in copying sketches of the master, looked at us surreptitiously through

a circular opening in the partition that made him a room.

Our artist came in and sat down, evidently an ill man, and offered us the inevitable tea, and showed us his methods of preparation for the colored wood blocks, and got down examples from the great pile of rolls and bundles of papers and drawings that filled one side of the room, among which I noticed many fragments of illustrated English or American newspapers. And we dared not intrude any further, and departed — just as the conversation had turned toward European art — with gifts of drawings from him and promise of exchange.

No; what we have really done is again to call at shops and begin over again the pursuit of bric-à-brac. It is so impossible to believe that we can find nothing in all the accumulation of all these shops. But even if it be so, the manner of hunting is an amusement, as is the mere seeing of all this stuff in its own home; and the little attentions of the dealer, the being in a house with the privileges of tea and smoking, and a lazy war of attack and defense; and the slow drawing out of pieces from bags and boxes, so that time, the great enemy, is put in the wrong. And then, what one is not expected to buy or look at is quite as good. I know of one place to which I have returned to look out of the *shoji* screens into the garden, where there is a big pottery statue of Kwannon. I don't intend to get it or to bargain about it, but I intend to buy other things under its influence: perhaps the *daimio* seats that we use in our visit, or the lanterns that light us when we stay late, whose oil will have to be emptied if they are sold. And there are places where things are for sale to people versed in Chinese ways



FROM A WATER-COLOR BY JOHN LA FARGE.

THE GREAT STATUE OF BUDDHA AT KAMAKURA.

of thinking, but where amateurs on the wing like ourselves are not encouraged, and that is certainly seductive. Still, I am afraid that we shall miss a great deal that we wish to see, because of this dawdling in shops.

And yet there is no sadness following these visits, such as has come upon us when we have gone to see some of the modern workers. From them we depart with no more hope. It is like some puzzles, like the having listened to an argument which you know is based on some inaccuracy that you cannot at the moment detect. This about the better, the new perfect work, if I can call it perfect, means only high finish and equal care. But the individual pieces are less and less individual; there is no more *surprise*. The means or methods are being carried further and *beyond*, so that one asks one's self, "Then why these methods at all?" The *style* of this finer modern work is poorer, no longer connected with the greater design, as if ambition was going into method and value of material. Just how far this is owing to us I cannot tell, but the market is largely European, and what is done has a vague appearance of looking less and less out of place among our works, and has, as I said before, less and less suggestion of individuality. None of it would ever give one the slight shock of an exception, none of it would have the appearance which we know of our own best work, the *feeling* that we are not going to see more of it. This statement applies to the best work; the more common work is merely a degradation, the using of some part of the methods: just enough to sell it, and to meet some easily defined immediate commercial needs. I saw the beginnings years ago, and I can remember one of our great New York dealers marking on his samples the colors that pleased most of his buyers, who themselves again were to place the goods in Oshkosh or Third Avenue. All other colors or patterns were tabooed in his instructions to the makers in Japan. This was the rude mechanism of the change, the coming down to the worst public taste, which must be that of the greatest number at any given time; for commerce in such matters is of the moment: the sale of the wooden nutmeg, good enough until used. Have I not seen through the enormous West any amount of the worst stained glass, all derived from what I made myself, some years ago, as a step toward a development of greater richness and delicacy in the "art of glass"? And my rivalry of precious stones had come to this ignoble end and caricature. The commercial man, or the semi-professional man whom we call the architect, must continually ask for something poorer, something to meet the advancing flood of clients and purchasers, something more easily placed anywhere, at random, without

trouble or responsibility, and reflecting the public—as it is more easy to fit in a common tile than the most beautiful Persian one—in the average of buildings made themselves to meet the same common demand. And so with all applied beauty; the degradation is always liable to occur.

Japan is an exceptional place for studying these changes; we can see them gradually evolved—all as if by vivisection of some morbid anatomy. The study of these diseases and infections of art at home is attended with moral distress and intellectual disgust, because we are all in part responsible; but here we can see it disinterestedly, and speculate dispassionately upon the degradation of good things resulting from the demands of business.

Were it quite in the line of what you expect to-day from me, I might make out for you the lines of the old scheme of civilization under which former work was done. The feudal organization of Japan divided the country into provinces of distinct habits and modes of work—more or less isolated, partly by want of easy or general communication, partly by the political interests of their rulers and of the main government, partly by the permanence of the provincial feeling which prevented the inhabitant of one place moving to another to find occupation and employment. The rule of the idea of the family, which is still great in Japan, kept things in the same order, preserved all traditions, and at the same time offered opportunities, by adoption, to individuals who might increase or keep up the family reputation or influence. Here, too, I suppose, is the basis of a certain dignity and personal independence in the manners of the people which runs in with their courtesy. Every one must have known what was expected of him, and have felt quite free after that duty paid. Within this courtesy that I see all about me, I feel something of what we might call democratic, for want of a better name. I recognize it in the manner of the subordinate, who takes an apparently personal interest in things, after his duty of politeness and obedience is paid. And though there was no absolute caste as we understand it, except in such a case as that of the Eta, the lines of life were strictly laid out, until the new laws which have made things open more or less to all. With these changes, with disturbances of fortune, with the loss of power and of income on the part of the small rulers, with a country all laid out now in "prefectures," with the necessarily increasing power of "bureaucracy," the whole tone of individual life must change, must become less independent in any one thing, more independent apparently in general—must flatten out, if I may so express it. And the artisan will have to follow

the course of trade and its fluctuations until some general level has been established—some general level of manufactures, I mean, for there is no general level possible in art. Something will happen which will resemble the ways of France, where art still exists, but where things have been so managed that any artist out of the general level has had a very bad time of it—the whole live forces of the nation, in trade and “bureaucracy,” being against his living easily any life of his own. When the forces of traditional taste and skill and habits of industry now existing in Japan shall have been organized anew, Japan, like France, will have undoubtedly a great part to play in industrial trade.

Art may live or may not in the future here; nothing of what has been done elsewhere to grow it or foster it has made it stronger. It has always come by the grace of God, to be helped when it is here, or choked out; but no gardener has ever seen its seed. Some of my friends in Japan are plunged in a movement to save what there is of the past in art, to keep its traditions, to keep teaching in the old ways, without direct opposition to what may be good in the new. They see around them the breaking up of what has been fine, and the new influences producing nothing, not even bad imitations of Europe. I know too little upon what their hopes are based, but O——, who is in the “tendency,” sails with us for America and Europe, and I may find out more through him. Meanwhile he is to inquire with Professor F—— into the education of the artist and artisan with us, and to see “how we do it.” I am deeply interested in their undertaking, perhaps the most remarkable of all similar inquiries—if honestly conducted. But I see vague visions of distorted values, of commercial authorities looked upon as artistic, of the same difficulties for instance that I might meet if I wished now to make an official report, not to the public or to government,—that is always easy,—but to myself, who have no special interest in being misled, of the methods of art and industry that have been and exist in the East.

. . . Three days are wasted. I do scarcely any work, and there comes to me, as a punishment, a feeling of the littleness of a great deal here, coming, I think, from the actual smallness of many details—of the sizes of the little houses, of the little gardens, of the frail materials, of the set manners.

. . . To-morrow we shall go to something great, to the great statue, the “Daibutsū,” at Kamakura, and perhaps we may even push as far as Enoshima, but I doubt it. It will be our last day, as we shall sail the following morning for Kobe. As I run along the streets of Tokio in the afternoon, with the feeling that I have tried to set down, of things having narrowed

as they become familiar, comes the excited melancholy of departure, and this same ugliness and prettiness has a new value as I look upon it for the last time. I sit in the little tea-house near the station, waiting for A——, and drink the “powdered tea,” which tastes better than ever, as a stirrup-cup. And I do not resent the familiarity of a big Chinaman, proud of his English, and of national superiority here in size and commercial value, who addresses me and seeks to find out whether I too have a commercial value. My answers puzzle him, and he leaves me uncertain as to quantities, and walks off with the impudent majesty of his fellows among this smaller and less commercial race.

. . . At dinner I see at the table near me a Japanese gentleman, not very young, dining with his wife and another lady, who, I am told, is a well-known *geisha*. This information I receive from my more or less trusty courier, who also gives me some confused intimation that this gentleman had participated in the murder of Richardson, the Englishman, many years ago, under the old régime, for which murder somebody else was decapitated. The wife is correct and immovable, the *geisha* animated, with a great deal of color and charm. A German or Russian sits at another table, heavy, diplomatic, thick-bearded; the *geisha* recognizes him, rises, goes over to his table, and bends very low before him, almost kneeling, then speaks courteously and animatedly, as if in compliment, to which the diplomat without turning his head says a word or two distantly. Then the *geisha* bends again down to the table, and walks respectfully backward, and then swings back into her seat. I am amused by this complete inversion of our own habits, and am reminded of the manners and assiduous attentions of our men at the theaters when they call on the indifferent fair. I see, too, that the points of attack and defense must be different.

The heat was still intense even in the night, within fifty yards of the sea; we went down to the quay and hired a boat with man and boy to drift out into the hazy moonlight. The boy did the main part of the work; we lay in the boat, seeing nothing but this little body, and the flapping of its garments, and everything else a vague space of lightened shadow. We rowed or sculled far away, came near to a shore where there was a tea-house, for women opened its closed sides and, revealed by their lanterns, came down and called to us. But we pulled off, and later, in a far-off ocean with no shore nor sky, came across a little summer-house built on piles, through which the volume of the sea pressed and recoiled. Nothing could be more abandoned, more improbable. There was nothing in sight. Had we entered the little pavilion, and moored our boat or let it float away,

we might have felt as if out in the distant sea. We were the center of a globe of pearl; no edges nor outlines of anything visible, except a faint circular light above, from which the pearly color flowed tremulously, and a few wrinkles of silver and dark below; no sound but a gentle sway of water. And we came home, having had the sense of the possibility of intense isolation in a fairyland of twilight.

At Sea, off Idsu, September 3.—We sailed this morning on the French steamer. It is now quite late in the afternoon. The Pacific keeps its blue under us, and a blue sea haze separates us from the violets and greens of the mountains of the shore, behind which the light is slowly sinking. All is gentle and soothing; but our captain says that he is not sure, and that "*hors d'Idzu nous aurons la houle du Pacifique.*" While waiting for this long angry roll, I shall tell you about yesterday, of which there was little—for we had undertaken too much.

We left rather too late, and drove a good way in the foggy morning, passing much culture, and under many trees, of all which I remember little. It was late when we stopped to breakfast at the little inn from which we were to be taken by kuruma, first to the big statue of Buddha, then wherever we might have time to go. We left the place, and reached the hollow between hills where the statue dwells, after passing through a curious deep cutting right through the rocks, which marks some old approach to the former city: for these hollows and fields were once covered by a great city, the city of Kamakura, the city of Yoritomo, and the great statue now out of doors was once in a temple of that city. Places are shown you in the dells: this was where was once the mansion of such a hero, here was that of the administrators of the military rule in the fifteenth century, here stood the palace where, with his two hundred and eighty last followers, such a one retired to perform harakiri, and perish in the flames, when overwhelming forces had captured the great city which was once the other capital of Japan. Trees and ordinary culture cover these spaces now.

And here was the temple. Sixty-three pillars supported its roof, and many of their bases are still there. But a great inundation from the sea, now some miles distant, destroyed the temple and its adjacent buildings. This happened as far back as the end of the fifteenth century, and the temple has not been rebuilt. The desire of Yoritomo to see the great statue made during his lifetime was not granted; but one of his waiting-ladies, after his death, collected the necessary funds, and it appears to have been cast in 1252 by Ono Go-rō-ye-mon. I know nothing about him, but if he be the

artist, it is pleasant to record his name. The image is made of bronze cast in pieces brazed together and finished with the chisel. It is nearly fifty feet high as it sits; and if these parts help you to its size, learn that its eyes, for instance, are four feet long, the length across its lap from knee to knee is thirty-five feet, and the circumference of the thumb is fully three feet. But these measures, though they show a large scale and great size, do not indicate a proportion, as we should understand it. The whole modeling is for effect, and the means and methods of the modeling are simple and elementary. Like all work done on archaic principles, the main accentuations are overstated, and saved in their relations by great subtleties in the large surfaces. It is emphatically modeled for a colossus; it is *not a little thing made big*, like our modern colossal statues; it *has always been big*, and would be so if reduced to life-size.

We saw it first from the side through trees, as we ran rapidly to the front, where are a temple gate, and a long courtyard still in order, that leads up to the statue. From the side one can see how it bends over, and rough as it is from behind, the impression of something real was strong as its gray form moved through the openings of the trees. The photographs must long have made you know it, and they also show the great base and the immense temple ornaments that stand upon it at the feet of the statue. They show also the little lodge at the side, where the priest in attendance lives, and gives information, and sells photographs and takes them, and generally acts as showman. We took many photographs from new points of view, and we even removed the thatch of a penthouse so as to get nearer and under the statue to the side; and I painted also, more to get the curious gray and violet tone of the bronze than to make a faithful drawing, for that seemed impossible in the approaching afternoon. We did not know how long a time we had spent lingering about it. The clouds had begun to open, and a faint autumnal light filled the little hollow, which has only small trees, and no imposing monuments like the great *Cryptomeria*, which alone might seem fit to grow about here. All, on the contrary, was gentle and small—the lines of the hills, the trees, the garden plants about us: we might have been anywhere. Perhaps it is just as well; the whole impression comes from the statue, with the only objection or detraction that we can get near enough to it to see the mechanism, the means and details of its expression. An accident, the breaking of its prison temple by a great cataclysm of nature, a great wave of the sea coming far inland and destroying the great building, has given to the statue something that it

could never have had to the physical eye — in the degree it has now. Now, freed from its shrine, the figure sits in contemplation of entire nature, the whole open world that we feel about us, or its symbols — the landscape, the hills, the trees and fields, the sky and its depths, the sunshine playing before the eyes of the seated figure, the air in which dance all the things that live in air, from the birds that fly, to the atoms of dust, and the drifting leaves and blossoms, the confusion or the peace of the elements, the snow in crystals, and the rain in drops. All this world of ours, which to the contemplative mind is but a figurative fragment of the universe, lies before the mental gaze of the Buddha. Unwinking, without change of direction, he looks forever; his will is forever subdued and held beneath him, as his fingers pressed together indicate his freedom from all the disturbances of that past of being which is subject to time and change, and his cognition, undisturbed, envelops and images the universe in final contemplation.

Astounding success of the artist in what he has really done, for there is no trace of means: the sum of realism is so slight, the conventional has so great a part; each detail is almost more of an ornament than of a representation. One almost believes that the result may be partly accidental: that, as one cannot fathom the reason of the expressiveness of a countenance, or of the influence of a few musical notes, even though one knows the mechanism, so it seems difficult to grant that there was once a choice in the other mind that caused it, that there were once many paths opened before it.

And still more do I believe that the accident of the great temple has given a yet more patent and subtle meaning to the entire figure. Once upon a time its details, indeed, if not its entirety, must have looked more delicate in the reflected light of the temple building, when the upper part of the figure was bathed in mysterious gloomy light, while the lower glittered in answer to the openings of the doors. But could anything ever have rivaled the undecidedness of this background of veiled sky and shifting blue, which makes one believe at times that the figure soon must move? As one looks longer and longer at it, with everything around it gently changing, and the shadows shifting upon its surface, the tension of expectation rises to anxiety. The trees rustle and wave behind it, and the light dances up and down the green boughs with the wind; it must move—but there is no change, and it shall sit forever.

As we left, and I walked down the long pavement in front of the statue, in the early autumn

sunshine and the rising freshness of the wind, I turned again and again, each time with the realization that the statue was still sitting, until we turned out of sight, a vague unreasonable sense of having left it alone accompanying me until other, different, light and gay impressions broke the influence and allowed me to think of what I had seen as a work of art, such as I could understand and decompose—and, if I wished, make also.

And we lunched at Hase, near by, and from the comfortable inn could see on the gray hill above the temple of Kwannon, and its red buildings and balustrades. After a very long lunch, we walked up to the temple, and from the platform in front looked toward the afternoon sea right before us, and the plain of Kamakura. Then we entered, and were taken in behind the great screen doors to a narrow but high place—lighted only from the little entrance—wherein stood right by us and over us, a standing figure of the divinity, all golden in the dark. It is over thirty feet high, and whether it be great art or not,—for the darkness was too great to judge of form,—the glitter of a smile of gold far up above our heads, in the obscurity of the roof, was an impression that, even so near to the great statue out of doors, remains distinct. It was late afternoon; we dared look at no more statues, nor at relics of warriors of Kamakura, and started for the beach, partly with the hope of seeing Fuji behind us. But all was veiled in the sky; we walked along the beach, our kurumas dragging with us, and crossed a little stream, and while A—— bathed in and thereby took possession of the Pacific, I walked up the sand-hills toward the little village at the end of the strand. As I came near it, an unfortunate distorted being, scarred with some leprous disease, plunged toward me in the twilight from some vague opening in the hills, and begged piteously, following me afterward with a thankful wail of "O Danna San! Danna San! Danna San," that I hear yet. We reëntered our kurumas and drove in triumph to the inn of the little village. I say in triumph: I drove in triumph, observed of all observers—I had my usual costume and was clothed. A——, rather than wait to get dry, rode along with only a partial covering of *yukatta*, and attracted no attention. Had he had nothing on at all, he would have been still more in keeping with many of our neighbors. Night was falling, nothing more could be done, and we got back to our carriage and horses, and drove back in the warm darkness to Yokohama. And I close as we begin to feel the roll, "*la houle du Pacifique.*"

John La Farge.