GRAV. IMP. PAR GUILOT

ARTISTIC JAPAN.

ARTISTIC JAPAN:

Illustrations and Essays.

COLLECTED BY

S. BING.

VOLUME V.

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JAPANESE ENGRAVING.

It is but a few years ago that Japanese engraving was unknown to us. It was the last of a series of revelations. It has taken no less than two centuries for the country of the rising sun to disclose the last secrets of an antique civilisation which had grown in silence and isolation.

When, in the seventeenth century Portuguese navigators landed in the mysterious archipelago, in search of new territory for the exercise of their commercial activity, they were not in a position to judge of the artistic side of the country. Besides that these commercial men were little fitted to appreciate an art which does not catch the eye by a staring exterior, the astute inhabitants of Nippon were too wide awake to seek to undertake the education of their new visitors. After they had billeted the invaders in a district which was strictly limited, in a kind of antechamber of the

Summer evening, by Shunsholai.

empire, the Japanese delivered to them in heaps an everyday fabric, made up especially for Western consumption, glowing with colour, loaded with ornament, and yet after all, strong in decorative effect.

The rich middle classes of that day, and more than one court welcomed with joy for the decoration of their interiors, the lacquer panels, the richly shaped vases and handsome porcelain vessels of polished and hard enamel which cheerfully attracted the light. There was a ceaseless succession of orders. Shapes which were in accordance with the practical habits of Europe were prescribed, and amid the ample designs of the supple native brush, the haughty blazons of European nobility were made to shine out.

Every one was persuaded that the far East had given us all its art, the sum of all that might be expected from a people of primitive ways. They little thought that all the while, in this seemingly barbarous country, artists of the highest class, who were not under any care about earning their living, were lovingly perfecting, under the feudal roof of their lords—themselves enthusiastic amateurs—a host of little marvels, which were among the choicest expressions of taste which the art of ages has produced.

Much later, when diplomatic relations were established, some rare and select objects began to find their way to Europe, and even then to bring them, the omnipotent caprice of a Pompadour was needed, or the aristocratic tastes of a queen of France.* But these were only isolated apparitions, the flashes of an instant. All was clouded over again immediately, and remained so until the formidable political and social movement of 1868, which completely overturned the old organisation.

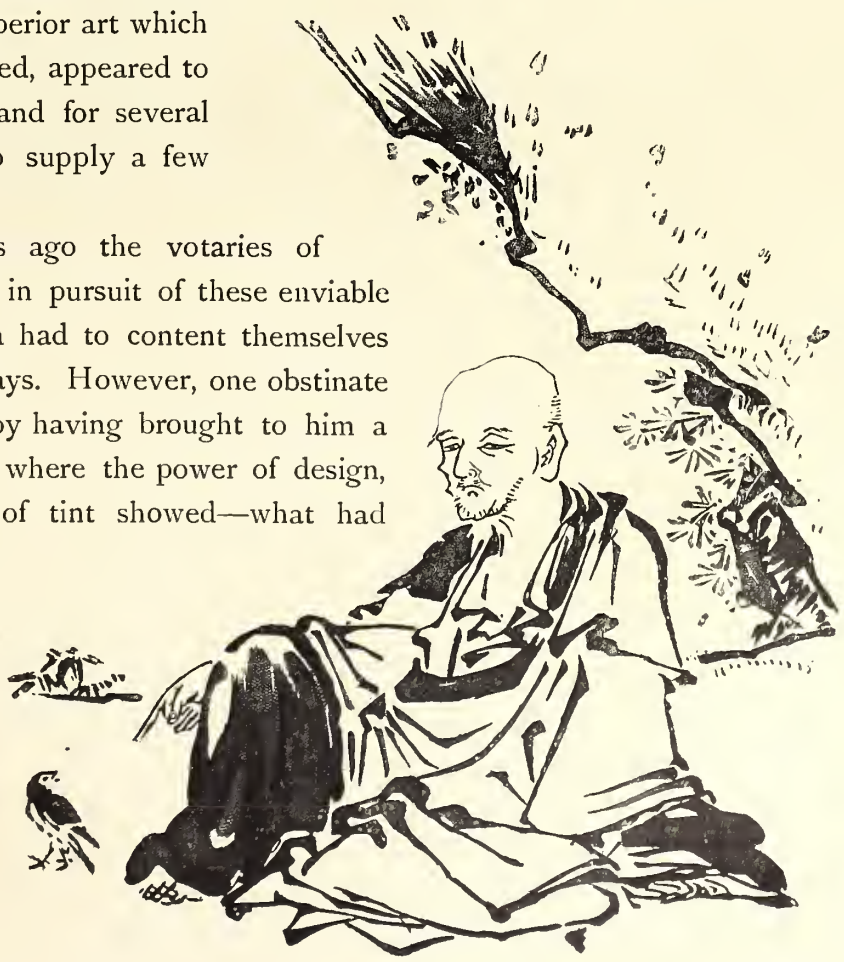
Since then a new edifice has sprung up on the ruins of the past. No one can predict what it will be like. But in the shock which broke up

* Marie Antoinette's collection of gold lacquer is still to be seen at the Louvre. It comprises a number of boxes and little cabinets of delicate work, but among it no work of very extraordinary merit can be pointed to.

millennial traditions in order to lay the foundation of a new era, there was one especial victim, the worship of the ideal. Not only have men's minds been diverted from the practice of art, but they have become indifferent to the precious treasures handed down. By a curious transition of things, it was they, the *poco curanti* of yesterday, who began to find us troubled by the aspect of matters.

Every one knows the names of one or two connoisseurs, artists or men of letters, who hailed the first harbingers of an unknown and charming art —miniatures worked in wood or ivory, bronzes from wax models, porcelain moulded with the fingers, embroideries of languishing tints. And the most sharp-sighted had discovered in their searches some images of a ravishing effect. They were collected in made-up albums representing fantastic scenes, in a new style of colouring which fascinated. We now know that the pages which caused so much astonishment and delight, only disclosed comparatively recent examples of Japanese engraving, and did but present the popular side of the art. But such as they were, these foretastes of a superior art which the Japanese still retained, appeared to be of extreme rarity, and for several years barely sufficed to supply a few collections.

Scarcely ten years ago the votaries of art who overran Japan in pursuit of these enviable specimens of expression had to content themselves with a few waifs or strays. However, one obstinate collector was rejoiced by having brought to him a small number of leaves where the power of design, and extreme delicacy of tint showed—what had been suspected—that behind the extravagance which had in the first instance been the attraction of the earlier specimens, lay hid a complete chain of art reaching far back in point of



Bronze, by Shunboku, after Tanyu.

time. This showed that there must be hidden treasure. There was no peace after this. Missions were set on foot to explore likely places and to discover the native collectors who had monopolised this kind. The old stocks of the publishers in Tokio, Nagoya, Kioto, and Osako were ransacked. Families were visited by persons promising high rewards to those who disinterred what had seemed to be buried. Movement once commenced, the result was abundant, unlooked for. The Japanese at first despoiled themselves of their least valuable collections, of the least ancient works, but after awhile came the names of great artists, creators, chiefs of schools, &c. According to directions, the researches were unceasingly pursued, in proportion as new clues were discovered. We should add that these efforts were powerfully backed by the more enthusiastic Parisian amateurs, in the first rank of whom were Messrs. Th. Duret and Louis Gonse, whose libraries at this moment contain matchless collections of books and engravings.

Maid removing the snow from her mistress's feet.

England, for her part, was not idle. Mr. Ernest Satow and Dr. Anderson energetically embarked in the same cause. Dr. Anderson had a brilliant exhibition of Japanese engravings in the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1888.

It was not enough, however, to have got together all this material. The threads of it had to be unravelled, to be arranged and classified. Now, if the Japanese are regarded by anthropologists as an assemblage of different races which exhibit undeniable physical divergences, in point of character one trait is common to them — a surprising poco-curantism as to the history of their arts. Our inquisitiveness in these matters seems to be unknown to the Japanese. Their artistic natures are readily absorbed in the enjoyment of beautiful things and ask nothing more. Europeans will not be surprised to hear that it took several years to get on the track of a foreign art so ancient in

origin, but for us so new. The main lines of it are fixed to-day, and the time appears to have arrived for making known this art, now that we can indicate the various phases of its development from its origin down to our own days.

Japanese engraving was practised on wood.* The design which was to be reproduced was fixed on a board of cherry or other hard wood cut lengthwise. The design was on paper with the right side turned to the block, but

Women engaged in dress-making, by Sukenobu.

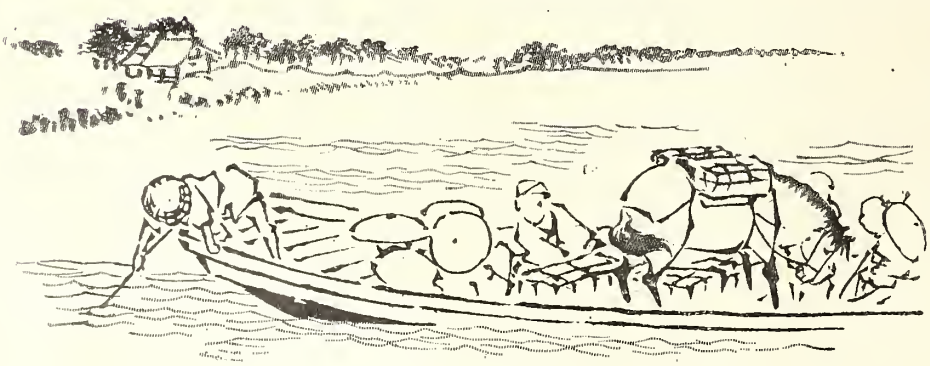
its transparence was such that they could trace the drawing on the wood through the paper. Afterwards the intermediate spaces were hollowed out with a chisel so as to leave only the lines of the picture. The printer then inked the projecting parts, applied the paper with his hand by the aid of a disc of bamboo filaments. He did not, however, as we might suppose, spread the ink uniformly over the engraving. In order to bring out unlooked-for aspects, forms, blank intervals or atmospheric depths, the pigment was manipulated in numberless ways, heaped up on this side, fined down on that, shaded off in others, so that tones of great variety were produced in a single impression. If several colours were to be printed, a separate block was

* We need only speak in passing of the isolated attempts which were made from the eighteenth century onwards to imitate our methods of engraving on stone and copper. It is curious that the Japanese, being such fine workers in the metals, engravers of such delicate ornaments in bronze and iron, should not have brought this talent to bear on engraving metal plates in imitation of our copper plates.

needed for each of them. The register was always exact, for the engraver marked points for that purpose which in the first operation impressed themselves on the paper.

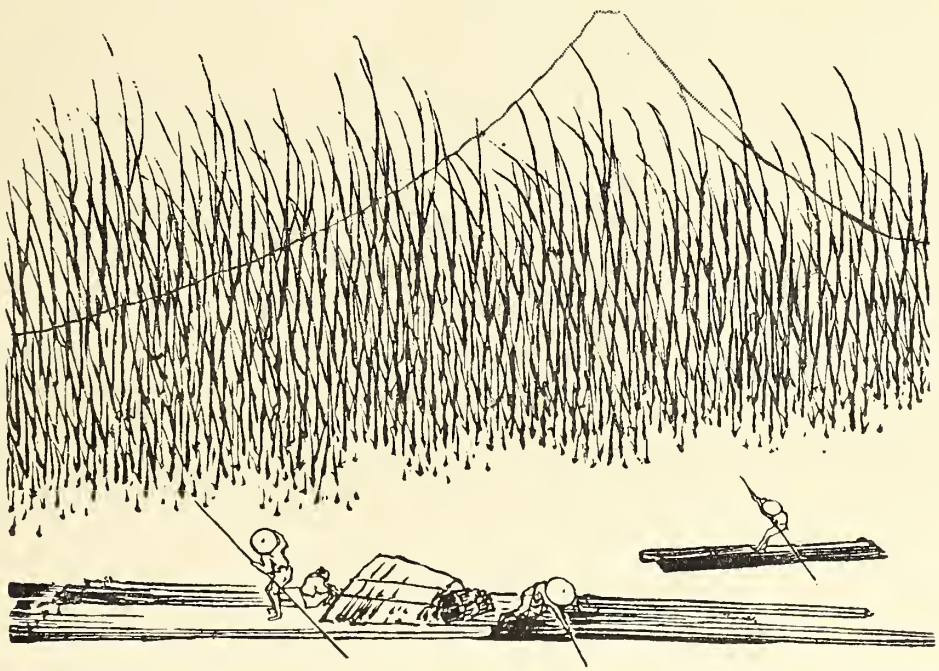
From this we see what an important part manual skill had in the production of a Japanese print, how it gave value to the work of the draughtsman. And yet, if we are to keep within the bounds of a short essay, it is not the names of engravers which must have prominence, and for these reasons.

In Europe there have been illustrious artists who engraved upon wood, worked on a plate, or placed upon stone the inspirations of their genius. At other times our engravers interpreted other persons' works, but this was only to attach their own name to the new production and make it their own. In Japan there is nothing of the kind. No painter-engraver is known there, and in the association of their labours the engraver effaces himself in favour of the designer, not always claiming the right of inscribing his name at the foot of the work which his graver has just finished. It is however not impossible to trace the names of these modest auxiliaries, but here we must imitate the majority of Japanese amateurs in according the honours of the printed pages, even the finest, to the authors of the originals. Moreover, if they did not personally engrave, the designers directed the execution of the work, and presided over the minutest details. Thus we recognise the hand of a great master, not only in the character of a composition, but in the style of the engraving and the tone of the colouring. Engraving acquired a position only when there were painters who worked specially with a view to it. They it is who awoke the enthusiasm of the engraver, and developed the ability of that other artist, the Japanese printer. They are the true initiators of artistic engraving in their country. To write the history of this branch of the art, is in a great measure to relate that of painting, to follow the manifestations of particular schools known as the "Oukioyé," imperfectly rendered as the "popular school," which, trampling on the old classical formulas, revolutionised painting.



There have at all times in Japan been rival schools. Religious painting, imported from China along with Buddhism about the middle

of the seventh century, has preserved through ages its primitive character, first derived from India, thanks to the sacredness of its rites. Secular painting, on the other hand, taught by China at a more remote period, became, in Japan, the point of departure for several distinct branches. From the ninth century, a national art had sprung up which took the name of *Yamato*, and, two centuries later, that of Tôsa. All this time, pure Chinese doctrine still survived. Lying dormant until about 1350, they were then vigorously re-adopted, until, during the sixteenth century, they resulted in the creation of a strong school—that of



Fuji seen through reed, by Hokusai.

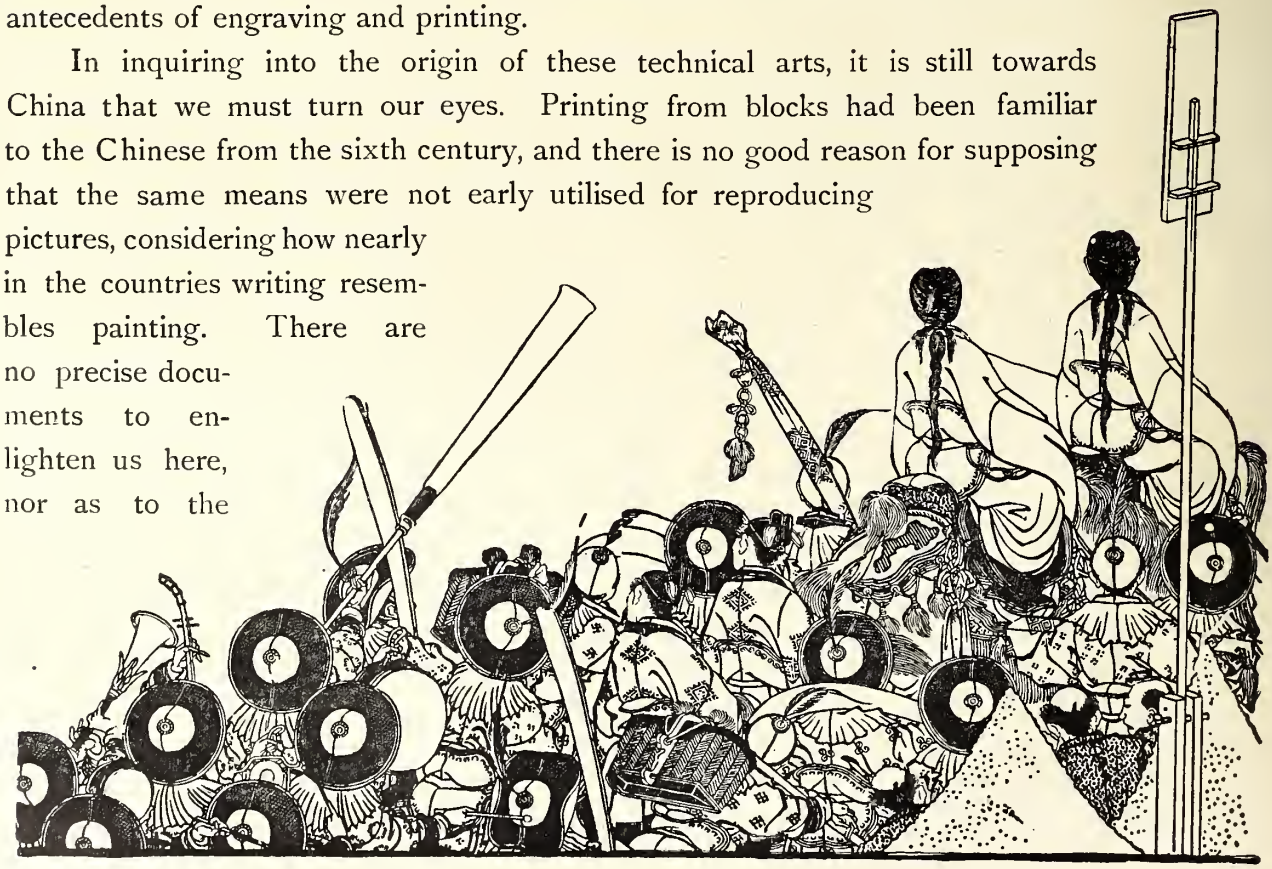
the Kano. The first displayed great depth of feeling, the manifestation of ardent faith through the purity of an ethereal style. The Academy of Tôsa reflected the tone of aristocratic life. In a highly aristocratic style, representing the proud tourneys of the epoch, bloody frays, and likewise a side of nature replete with languishing, almost affected, poetry. Yet Tôsa's pencil did not disdain the most popular scenes, the swarming crowds of the streets, but there was no subject so common that he did not raise it by the delicacy of the execution. And then the Kanos and their adherents, direct heirs of the old Chinese, distinguished themselves by an especially free handling, an incomparable dexterity of bold touches, relieved often by any exceeding tenderness. But however dissimilar the different schools, their art was always that of the aristocracy. The artists and their public belonged to the *élite*.

However, time went on. Artistic sentiment and intuitive taste are not in Japan the privilege of the few. Painting was perhaps the only art which was not common to the people at large. Its immaterial character kept it out of their reach. Whilst the refined mind of the aristocrat lent itself readily to the dreams induced by exceptional works, the multitude had not time for losing itself in such contemplations. Thenceforth, in lieu of the misty paintings of the Kano, which required for their completion the aid of a poetic imagination; instead of the Tôsa's conventional elegances where popular subjects appeared like our pastorals on satin, the humour of the day demanded something more realistic, a reflection of its own way of seeing and feeling.

If, however, we refer to the comparative rareness and high commercial value of the classical works, we shall comprehend a double requirement—an art answering to the new aspirations and a practical means of bringing the productions of this art within the reach of all. These two needs were at the same moment met by the sudden advent of the popular school and its association with wood engraving, which had arrived at the *nec plus ultra* of perfection.

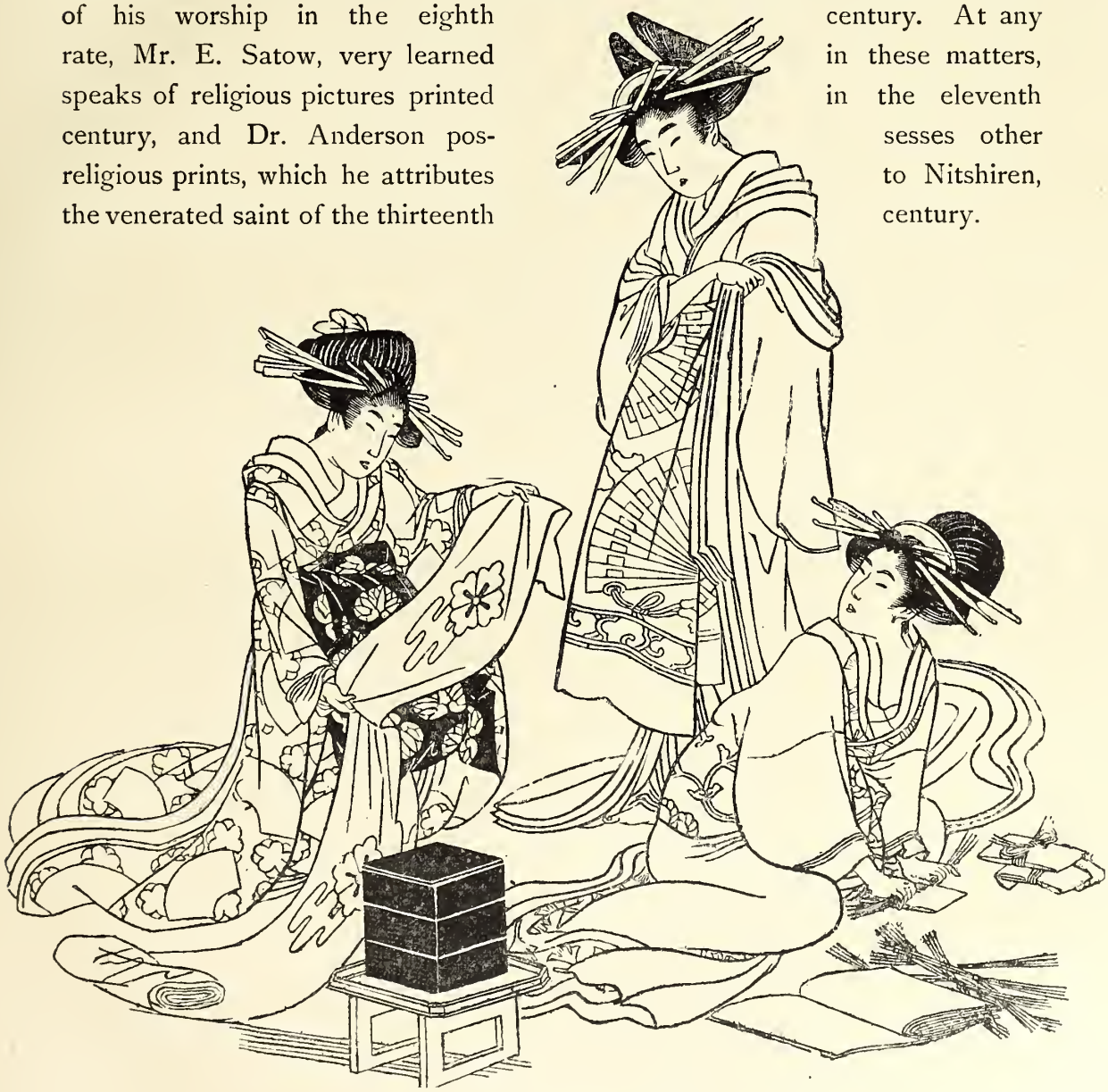
We have seen what was the position of painting at this decisive moment and the phases through which it had passed. Let us now glance at the antecedents of engraving and printing.

In inquiring into the origin of these technical arts, it is still towards China that we must turn our eyes. Printing from blocks had been familiar to the Chinese from the sixth century, and there is no good reason for supposing that the same means were not early utilised for reproducing pictures, considering how nearly in the countries writing resembles painting. There are no precise documents to enlighten us here, nor as to the



Procession in the mountains, by Hokusai.

date of the introduction of wood engraving into Japan. This probably is due to the Coreans, those unwearied middlemen between the two neighbouring countries. The celebrated savant, Kôbo Daishi, the great apostle of Buddhism in Japan, has the credit of having printed the sacred figures of his worship in the eighth century. At any rate, Mr. E. Satow, very learned in these matters, speaks of religious pictures printed in the eleventh century, and Dr. Anderson possesses other religious prints, which he attributes to Nitshiren, the venerated saint of the thirteenth century.



Interior of a Yoshivara house, by Outamaro.

We have no account of the first illustrated Japanese books. The oldest work which has reached Europe is the *Icé Monogatari*, 2 vols., published in 1608 without an author's name. It is a romance of love and chivalry composed by the poet Narihira in the tenth century, say some, and, according

to others, by the poetess Icé, whence its name. The designs of the 1608 edition are purest Tôsa, and the engraving of them tolerably clever. Other works of the same kind followed, but the level of execution remained as it was. The illustrations dragged along in the eternal monotony of epics belonging to a past age, animated by no breath of interest.

Things were so, when about 1675 appeared Hishikawa Moronobu, the great genius who knew how to translate latent aspirations into palpitating and personal works. He it was who cleared the way for artists of merit, supported by ever increasing success. The new formula which was to break down the ancient barriers had been discovered. The people were about to revive in art the external world as it was seen ; an art which was to assimilate "all creation" and even the fantastic domain of that which had never been ; which was going to bring all to its own likeness, bringing down the gods and the most venerated saints from heaven, and to make all things subserve its abounding fancy.

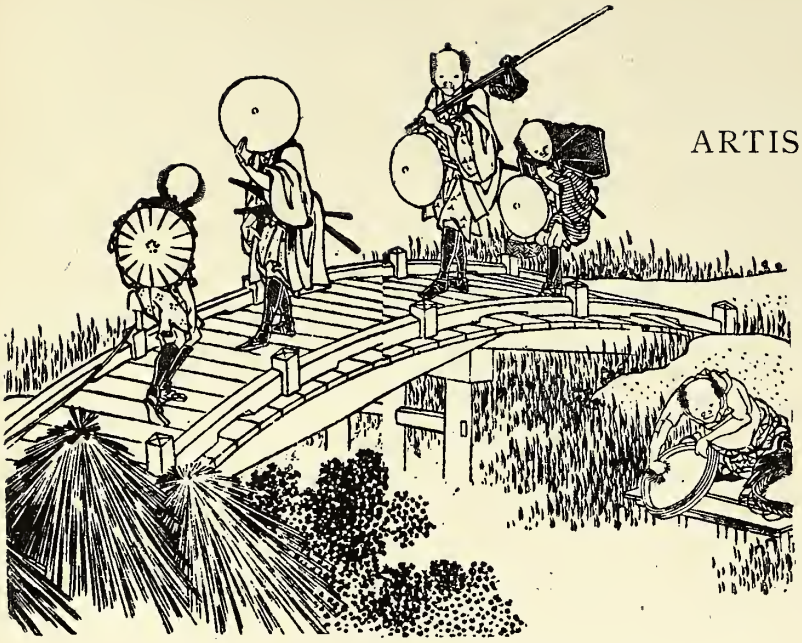
Not that the classical doctrines, the glory of ancestors, were altogether set aside, but they became a mere fraction in the vast ensemble of the new art. Moronobu himself, an offshoot of Tôsa, blended these reminiscences with his boldest conceptions, in which his successors found the germ of the vast repertory of their subjects. Each made it his duty at least once in his life to illustrate the traditional collections of the thirty-six or the hundred poets, and some marked their attachment to the old masters by reproduction in engraving of celebrated works. But that was not the dominant note ; it lay in the faithful painting of all classes in their daily life, from the labour of the poor to the poetical or luxurious pastimes of the rich ; it was the familiar picture of the interior, the fêtes of all seasons, water-parties, travelling on the great roads, saunterings by moonlight, picnics ; there were manuals for artisans, full of patterns for lacquerers, metal-workers, or other craftsmen, books of pictures of youthful sports adapted to girls' schools, the tender attachments of youth. Artists lent their pencil to the illustration of moral precepts, as well as to the depicting of "easy virtue" in a society where that was the rule. Heroic personages of history or legend had also a considerable place. Only they were made to appear more frightful than nature, with formid-

able gestures and contortions of face exaggerated like scene-painting. It is indeed in the features of renowned actors that henceforth heroes of doughty deeds were to be preserved in the memory of the people. The theatre was its temple, the actors were its deities, and with few exceptions the artists of the new school have painted this fabulous world, called to excite the actual world by appeals to past ages. The importance attached to theatrical scenes and portraits of actors in favourite parts, is only equalled by the sway of woman in popular art. Her beauty and grace, which each artist has portrayed according to his own ideal, are celebrated in a thousand ways, and if the expression of the face is often lacking in individuality, one cannot help admiring the expressive character and naturalness of the attitudes, and especially the harmony and rhythm of the lines of the contour.

I have thought it essential to make clear that we must not expect from Japanese engraving a complete representation of the pictorial arts of the country, but rather a special and clearly defined section of it. I have thought it would be useful to explain its nature, what needs its creation was intended to satisfy and what kind of subjects it may be expected to represent. I have only in a few short words to complete the technical history of engraving from the day when the painters made it an instrument for the popularisation of their works.

Moronobu at the first stroke was able to form engravings of the first rank. At no succeeding epoch was a touch more large, nervous and firm to be found. His engraved compositions have the plasticity of bas-reliefs. The stroke, only, tells, but it tells everything; it alone gives the shape better than the most cunningly arranged shadows. All his impressions are in black, but in some of his finest books we shall find them thrown up by touches of colour with the brush, probably by his own hand.

The print properly so called, the detached image, was not known till after Moronobu's time, that is, in the later years of the seventeenth century. The merit of the innovation belongs



By Hokusai.

to Kiyonobu, founder of the celebrated press of the Tori-i, which for an entire century was devoted to the illustration of the theatre. Then it was not accidentally, nor in timid fashion, that colour and ink became associated. The richest illuminations, with warm and powerful tones, animate the figures. The largest surfaces of the costume are heightened by a ground of black lacquer, cut with off-hand incisions, and layers of gold leaf, attached by varnish, enriched certain parts of the design. These curious methods were a stage on the way towards colour printing. Not long afterwards Kiyonobu added to his title of creator of the print that of inventor of chromo-xylography.

For the first twenty or thirty years, these printings in colour were limited to pale green and tender rose colour, an association which is attractive. We cannot help forming a high idea of the artistic taste of a people which requires works of such exquisite distinction, rather than the coarse and brutal style of picture which, as a rule, alone hits the taste of the masses.

Presently tint added itself to tint, until about 1760 all the technical refinements reached their highest point of perfection. The system of goffering for ornaments in relief became in vogue. Later, about 1800, there were added impressions in gold and silver, chiefly in the fine engravings called surimono, which were produced for the new year, and for certain festivities for the benefit of a select circle of artists, poets and amateurs. In one word, all that the most subtle invention could conceive of was put in action.

This has gone on for about a third of the present century. From that time, ever memorable because of the immortal Hokusai and the prolific landscapist Hiroshigé, the taste for such refinements in prints appears to have gone off. To-day in this department of Japanese art, as in all others, tradition still survives, but it does not escape the common lot. The irruption of commercial ideas has put an end to the happy time when the least thing from the hand of an artist unmistakably testified to the tender care which had watched over its birth.

S. BING.

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES.

Plate BEB is from a series of Hokusai landscapes, "The Bridges," a kind of continuation of the celebrated series Thirty-six Views of the Fuji, but we only know of eleven subjects in the "Bridges." There is another series by the same artist called "The Ancient Poems," from which we propose to draw later on.

Our plate represents a bridge of boats in a landscape well covered with snow. This bridge is curiously built of two parts, joining at an acute angle to resist the violence of the current. Travellers are scarce because of the cold. They make their way under the shelter of broad hats and straw overalls. There is a house at each extremity of the bridge, probably the keeper's. The background is hid by streaks of mist, which magnify and deepen the perspective.

Plate AAB reproduces two pages of birds derived from a collection to which we are already indebted. Two ducks (*Fuligula cristata*) fly towards a pond, of which we can only see the vegetation. The Japanese, in their profound admiration of nature, have ceaselessly studied the winged and aquatic tribes, too much neglected by us. The web-footed birds, whose gait on land is to us so ungraceful, have found favour with Japanese artists, whose idyllic temperaments have, so to say, personified in the representation of various kinds of birds. The idea of autumn is brought to the mind of a Japanese by this picture of a duck descending upon a pond, or by this flock of geese whose migratory silhouette stands out on the clouded sky.

The other bird is probably a fly-catcher (*Cyanoptila cyanomelæna*).

Plate BJC is a portrait of an actor in a woman's part, by Torii Kiyomitsu, (1730). In the prints of theatres by the predecessors of Kiyomitsu, the dominant note is strong expression, sometimes pushed to the extreme. Kiyomitsu especially laid himself out for the representation of graceful attitudes and suitable movements. The female character represented in this plate has a sweetness of expression combined with a grand simplicity, such as we find in the religious paintings of the middle ages. The very hair, close about the head, only disclosing the face and falling about the shoulders, awakens a kind of gothic reminiscence.

The cock which this woman carries is a familiar bird, possibly a game cock, accessory to the part.

Plate BFA shows a festive procession, a *Matsuri*, one of the numerous buddhist feasts which according to the season are celebrated in one town or another, always of a popular and joyous

character. On a simple car of quite an ephemeral structure is raised, admirable in decorative effect, loaded with ornaments, symbols, even to the turn of the roof, which is in the shape of a temple. A tall lance, itself decked with festal attributes, crowns the edifice whose terrace is occupied by musicians in mythic costume, drawn with difficulty by a number of young men uniformly dressed. The artist, not to overload the picture, and with a view to let the car stand out properly, has disguised the distance by bands of clouds such as the Japanese constantly employ to break the monotony of lines.

Plate BGJ is a study of chrysanthemums. One is never weary of following Japanese artists in the closeness of their researches after the characteristic aspect of a subject, the master-line which appeals to the eye, followed by the simple masterly rendering, unburdened by superfluity.

Plate BGA is a fragment of silk material decorated by two flights of birds, regularly disposed in two alternate rows. For fear of monotony, the birds are made to fly in two opposite directions, contrasted by the mode of treatment, one in detail, the other only indicated in the mass. Korin the celebrated lacquer painter of the sixteenth century, was the first who ventured to depict the flight of birds in this summary manner.

The teapot on plate BGI is by Kinkosai, a celebrated potter at Kioto, about 1650. This piece has arabesques which recall the Persian style of ornament. They are of vitrified enamel, in which the dominant tone is ultramarine, and according to the fine formula invented by this great ceramist, the colour is vigorously relieved by the dull ground of the biscuit. The shape of the teapot is well balanced, uncommon, firm in its lines, and well in harmony with the principles of decoration. The handle, in filaments of bamboo worked together, completes an ensemble alike robust and healthy.

Plate BFD is a bouquet-holder in pottery. The flesh tints do not hide the material, a tawny stoneware, and the dress is covered with greyish enamel with floral adornments. This piece is of the school of the celebrated potter Ninsei, of Kioto (1630). The flowers are in the hod which this man of the people carries on his back. The insignificance of the figure as contrasted with the beauty of the flowers of which he is the bearer, doubtless amused the Japanese eye. The good-natured expression of the man is cleverly given; we picture to ourselves the labourer seated by the roadside, occupying his leisure in slyly taking note of the passers-by.

The decorative model of Plate BEG represents shells cast up on the sand by the sea. Plate BGD shows leaves dotted over a sort of mosaic composed of stars in regular order.

Contents of Number 25.

SEPARATE PLATES.

BEB. **Landscape.** By Hokusai.

BGI. **Teapot.** By Kinkosai.

AAB. **Anonymous Study of Birds.**

BEG. **Decorative Subject.** Shells on the Sand.

BJC. **Actor dressed as a Woman.** By Kiyomitsu.

BFA. **Popular Fête.**

BGJ. **Anonymous Study of Chrysanthemums.**

BFD. **Bouquet-Holder in Kioto Stoneware.** A Stooping Figure.

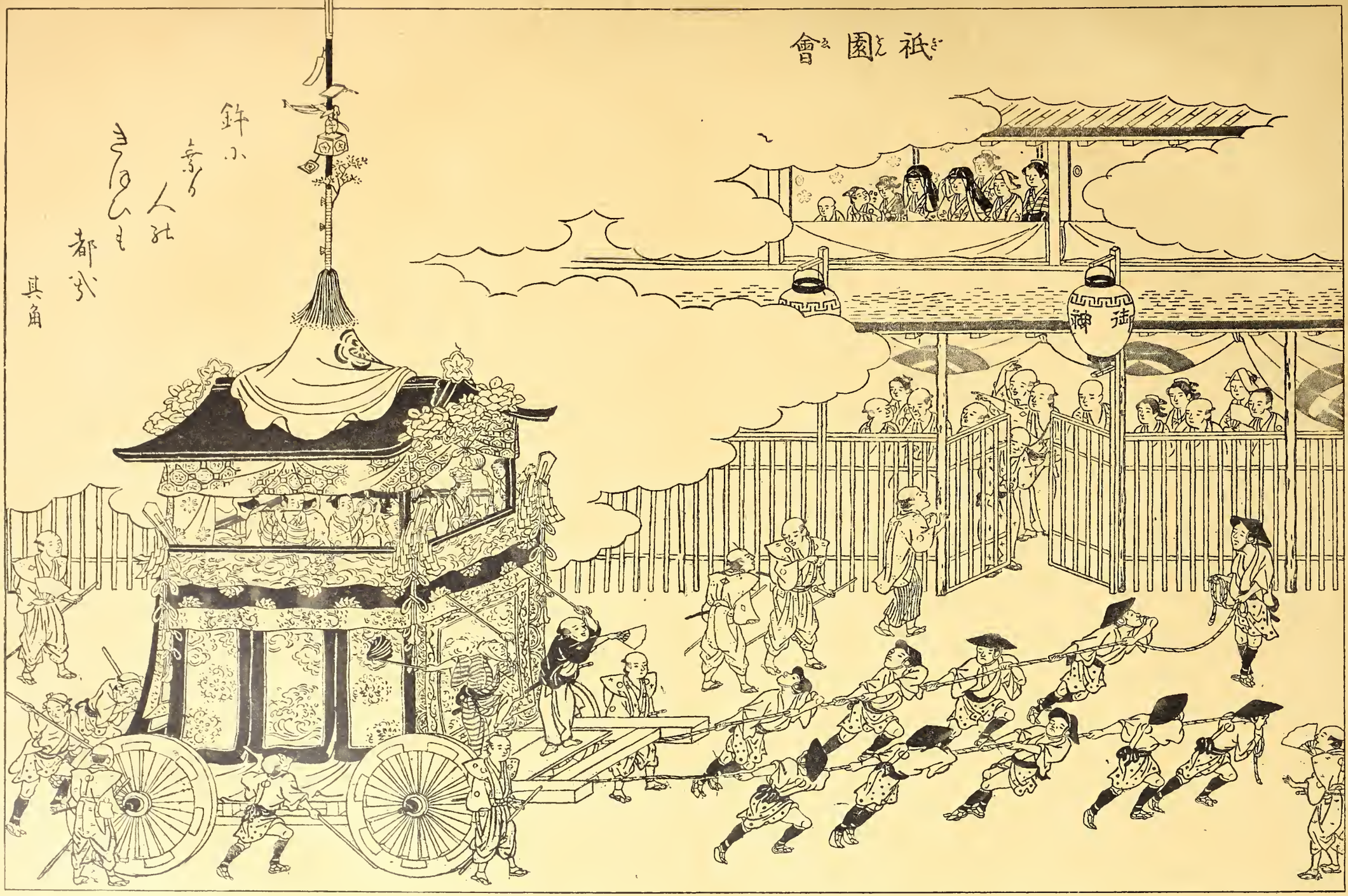
BGA. **Samples of Fabric.**

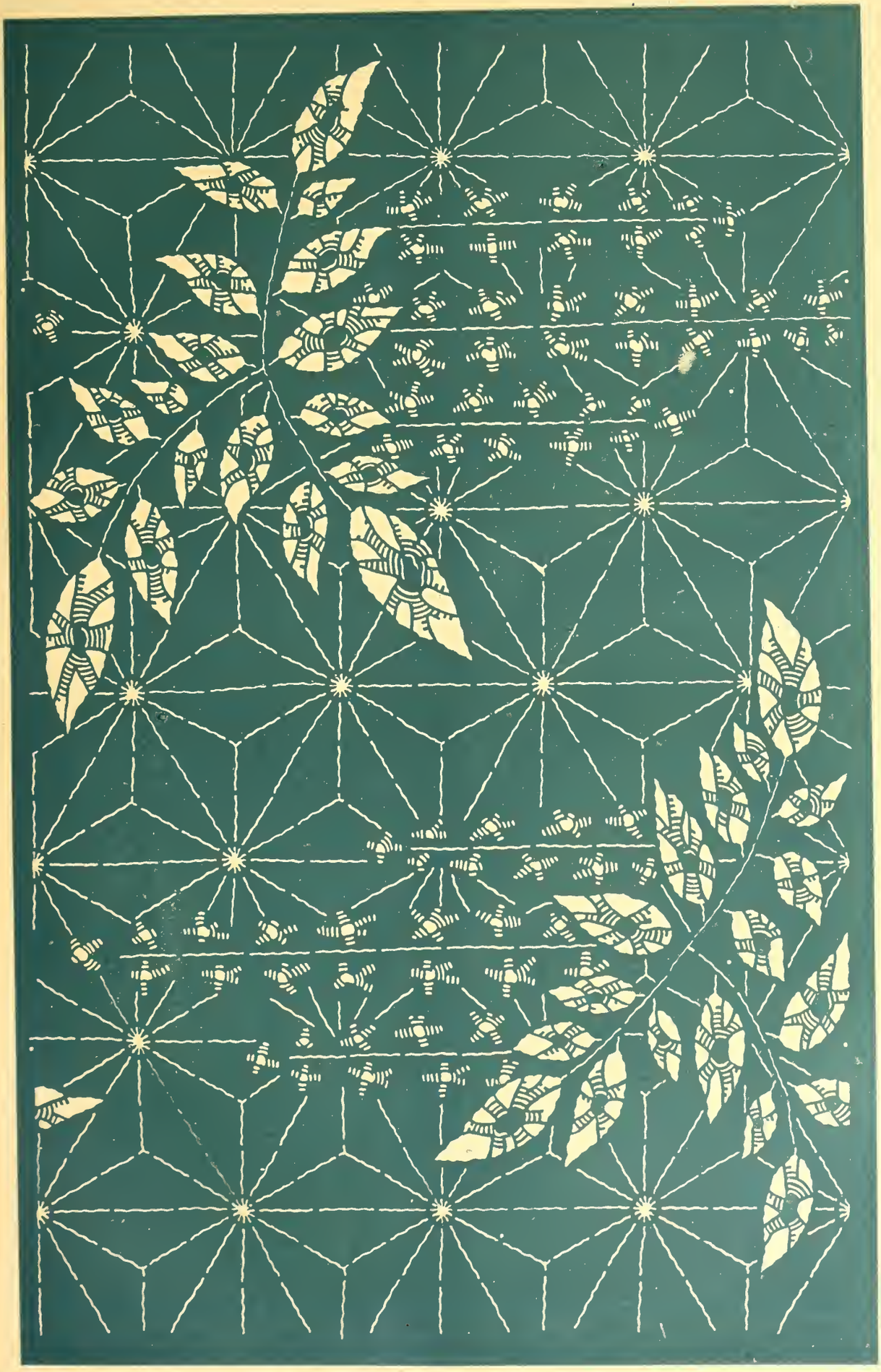
BGD. **Industrial Model.** Foliage.

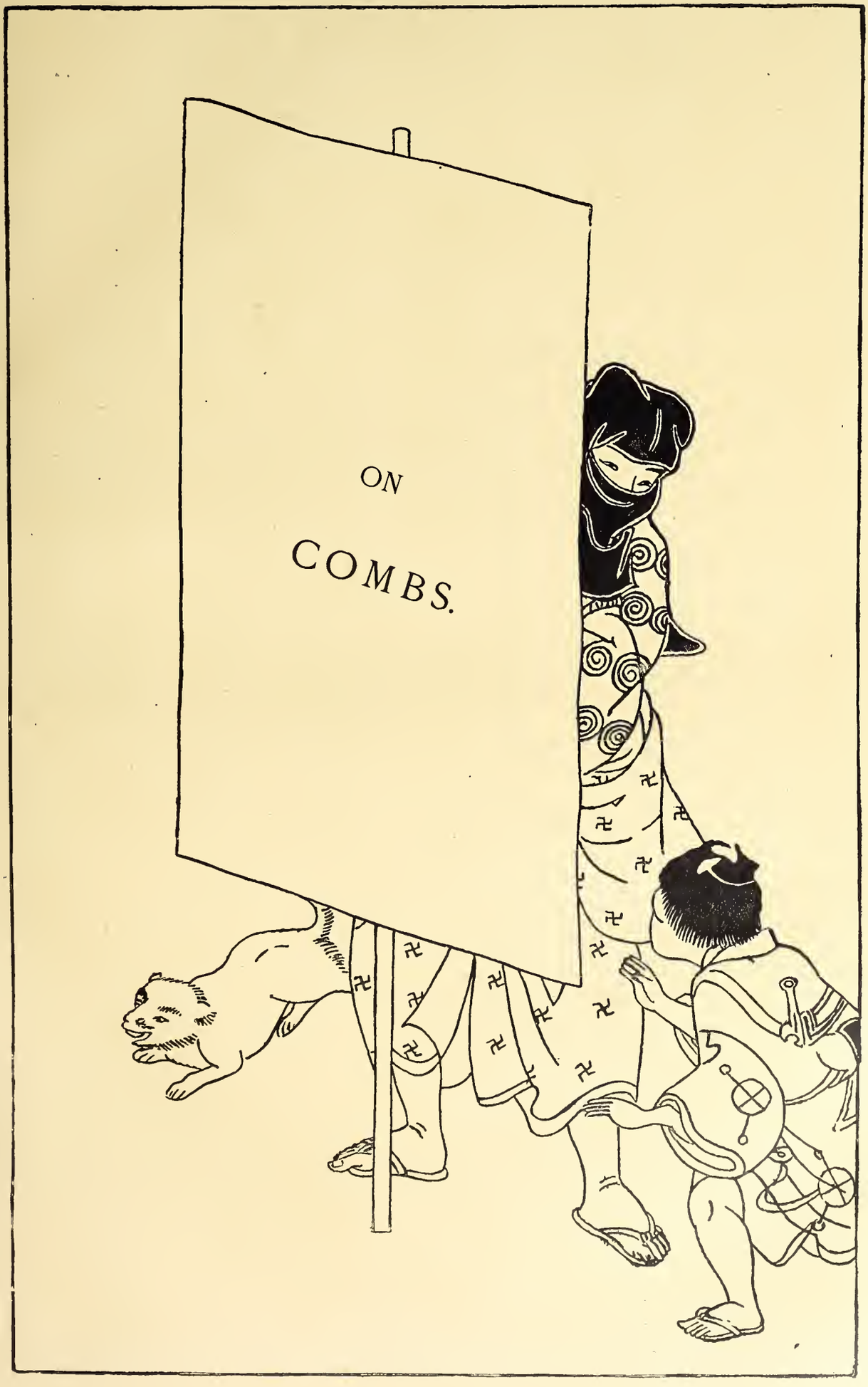
Number XXVI. will contain an Article on "Combs," by Mr. Th. Duret.

GRAV. IMP. PAR GILLOT.

祇園會



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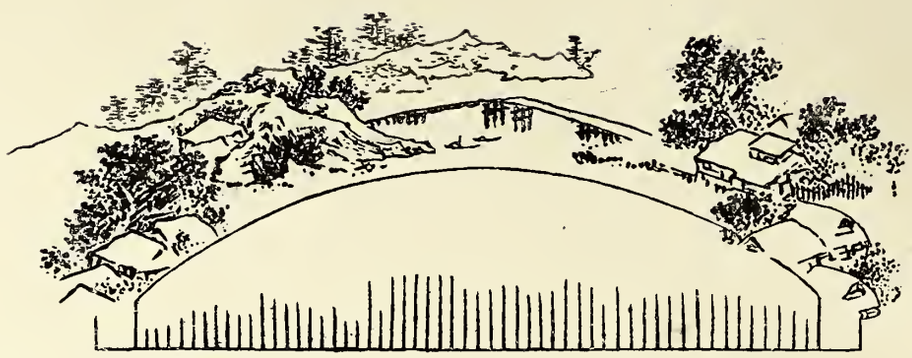


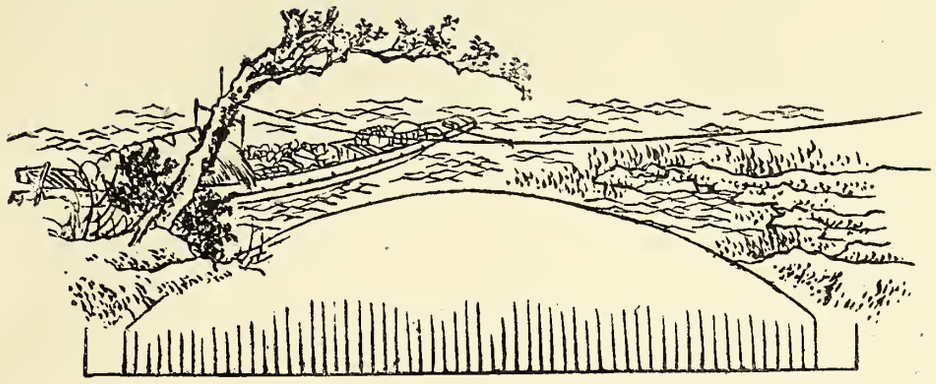
ON COMBS.

Combs must have been invented with the beginning of the world, about the time of Adam and Eve. We know that among nations of the most remote antiquity, such as the Egyptians and the Assyrians, combs had arrived at the artistic stage, the only aspect of them that we propose to consider.

Combs of every age, down to the present, have been made with two faces, two rows of teeth with a space in the middle. This has been the field on which artists have exercised their abilities. The Assyrians have carved lions in open-work, the Egyptians figures and ornaments.

Afterwards, during the Christian epoch, under the Carlovingians, came ivory combs, called liturgical because they were made use of in the ceremonies of the Church. Such are preserved among the curiosities in cathedrals. The most beautiful ivory combs date from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They were adorned with actual bas-reliefs, unfolding a series of persons or complicated scenes, most artistically executed. They

N.B.—All the models of comb ornamentation in this part are taken from the *Imayo sekkin hinagata* (New models of combs and pipes) by Hokusai, 1822.

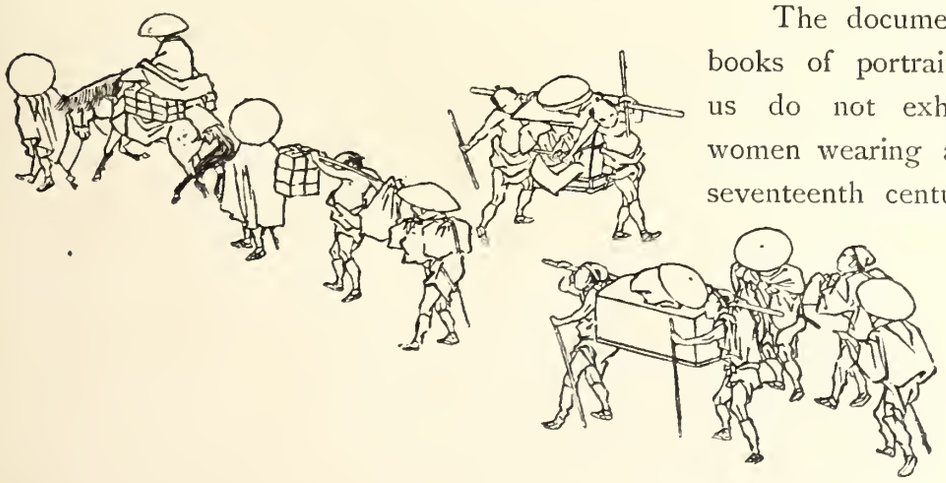


rank, in museums, with the best examples of sculpture towards the end of the middle ages.

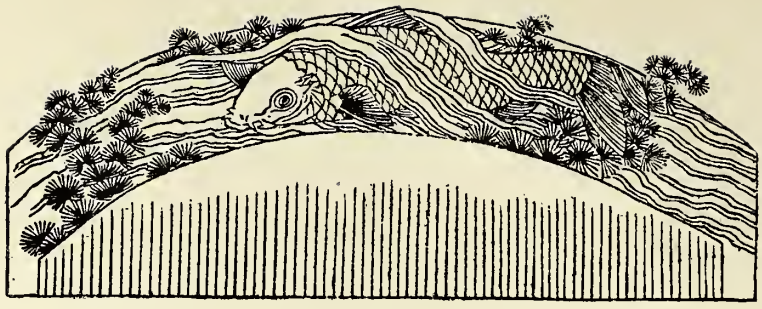
Box-wood combs came into fashion in France with the Renaissance. They were generally of open-work ingeniously cut. It was customary to make wedding presents of them. So, many of them bore affectionate inscriptions, such as "memento," "for good luck," or else suitable emblems—a heart pierced with an arrow, &c. Some have belonged to Queens of England and France, bearing the fleur de lys or the unicorn.

In the seventeenth century tortoise-shell combs came into vogue. In Spain they were decorated with flowers and arabesques, engraved on the flat surface.

Combs have, from the most remote times, been made as ornamental objects, but they have always been intended for use. But until the eighteenth century a woman never thought of wearing a comb to adorn herself with, making it all the while serve to keep her hair in place. The women of antiquity used pins, fibulæ, and bands; those of the middle ages retained their hair under caps and coifs. At this epoch, a prudish custom enjoined on respectable women to hide the hair, for to wear it loose, or to show it artistically disposed, would have been considered almost a breach of the moral code. Among women, the Japanese were the earliest to transform the comb into an ornamental object and fix it on the head. No one has recognised this fact. It is nowhere mentioned. I made the discovery, and although it may not have quite the importance of the discovery of America or of the invention of steam power, I am anxious to record the fact.



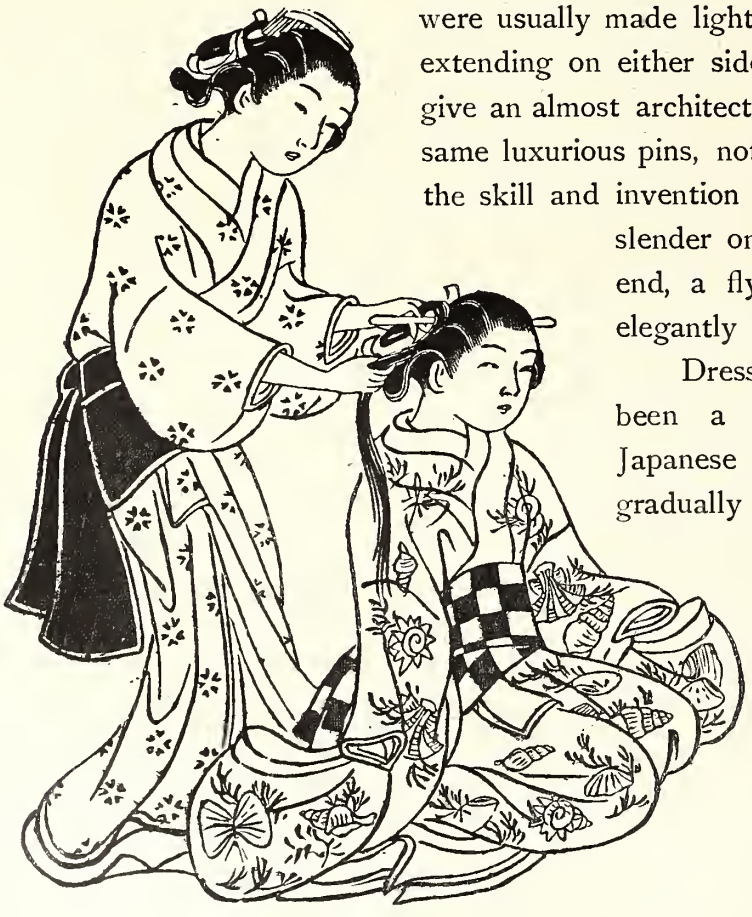
The documents which Japanese books of portraits or prints afford us do not exhibit any Japanese women wearing a comb before the seventeenth century. None of the



feminine figures of which Moronobu's works are full, are seen to wear it. The comb appeared all at once about 1700. It soon became fashionable, and in court costume became imperative for the Japanese woman. But how the ornamental use of the comb passed from Japan to Europe is more than I can say, but probably through the Dutch settled at Decima.

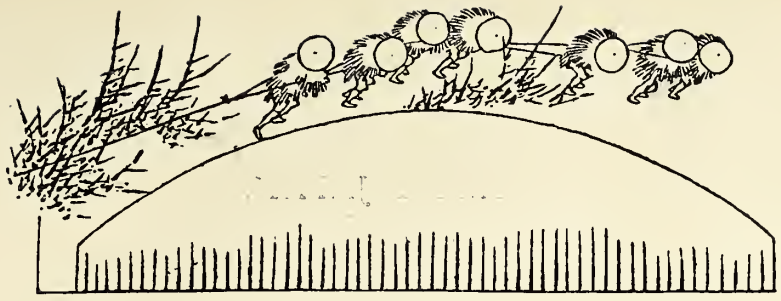
The ornamental comb at once lent itself to artistic work. It was made of wood, tortoise-shell, or ivory; it was covered with every tone of lacquer, incrusted with mother-of-pearl, coral, rock crystal. It has run through the whole gamut of Japanese decorative design; on its surface we have seen the world of plants, of birds, of fishes, and of insects. Fujiyama and all manner of land or water scenes have appeared on it. The Japanese comb has thus become an object of most varied aspect, charming to the eye, with all the delicacy and refinement of touch which we regard as especially feminine.

At first, that is for the first half of the century, one comb at a time was enough for a Japanese woman. But by degrees she got as far as three. Then came hair-pins as an additional device. They were usually made light, of lacquered wood, double, extending on either side of the head, so long as to give an almost architectural air to the coiffure. The same luxurious pins, not so common, have exercised the skill and invention of artists. There exist quite slender ones with a metal flower at the end, a fly or some insect or subject elegantly turned.



From a book on the toilet (1743).

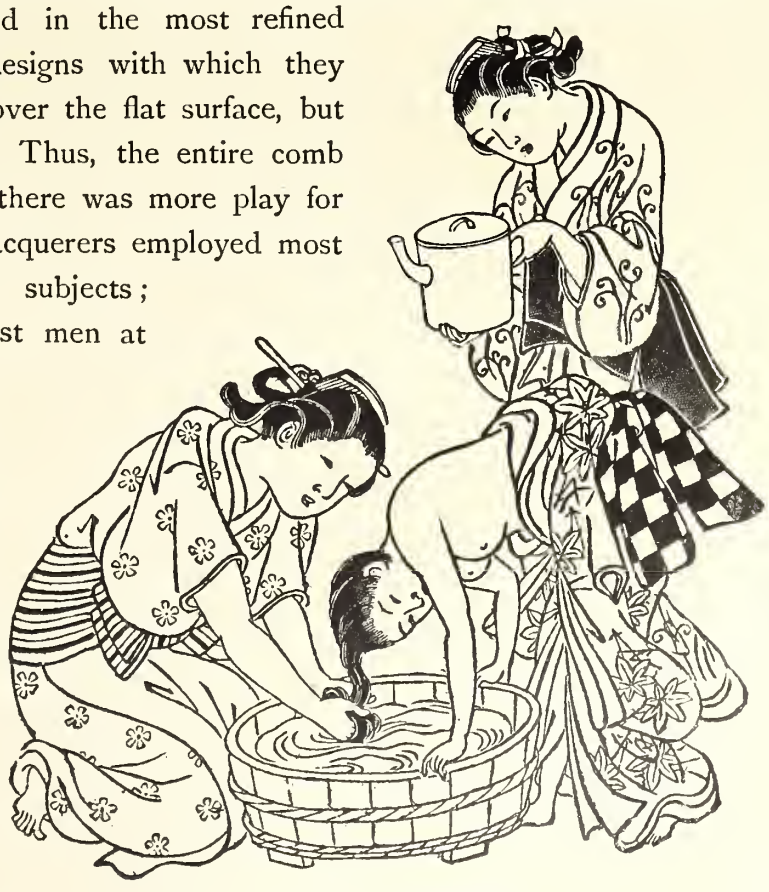
Dressing the hair has at all times been a paramount care with the Japanese woman. It has become gradually modified since the eighteenth century, more and more complicated. There exist special works of directions for adornment and dressing the hair. In one of them, *Myako fuzoku keiwaiden*



(1813), the different ways of arranging a beautiful head of hair are duly set forth by the aid of the designs. The author even goes so far as to indicate how a woman, desirous of making her attractions felt, should tie the kerchief about her head when going out. What with their combs, and their pins, and their art of head-dress and adorning the person, we see that Japanese women have been familiar with the various means employed by feminine perversity to bewitch the opposite sex, and, it may be, to ruin them, if we may judge by an engraving wherein Hokusai shows a coquette bathing herself in gold which is poured continuously over her.

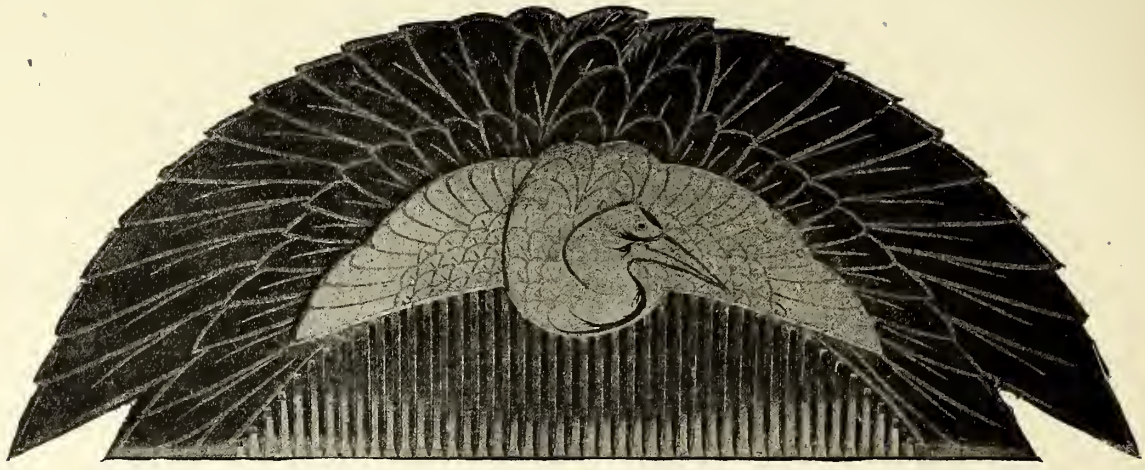
Combs from the hands of the best artists have, in Japan, always been regarded as precious objects. They occupy an important place in the *Makiye daizen* published in 1759, a work in six volumes on the various objects on which lacquer can be used; boxes of all kinds, saki cups, scabbards for sabres, handles of fans, &c.

Half of the third volume is taken up by combs. Those which are represented are ornamented in the most refined manner. The ornamental designs with which they are laden not only spread over the flat surface, but extend to the very teeth. Thus, the entire comb being a field for operation, there was more play for the compositions. So the lacquerers employed most complicated and surprising subjects; great flights of birds, harvest men at work, horse races, or entire landscapes with fields and houses. Later on the lacquerers drew in a little and contented themselves with ornamenting the frieze and the front of their combs.

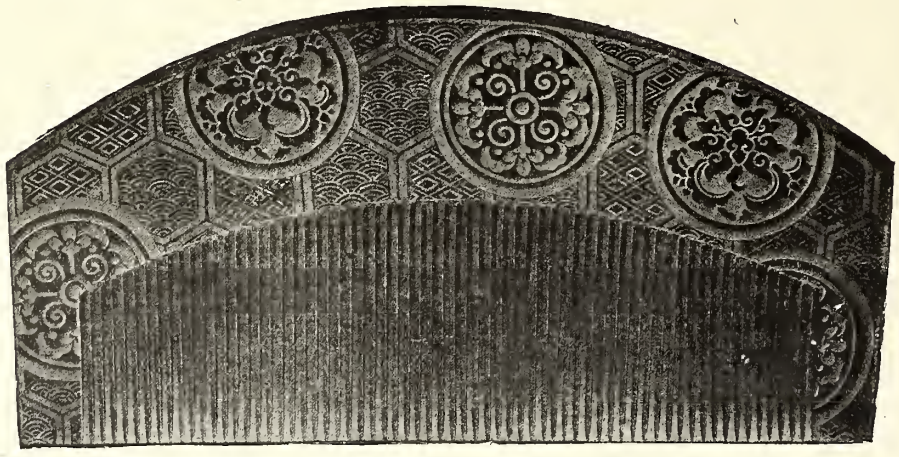


From a work on the toilet (1748).

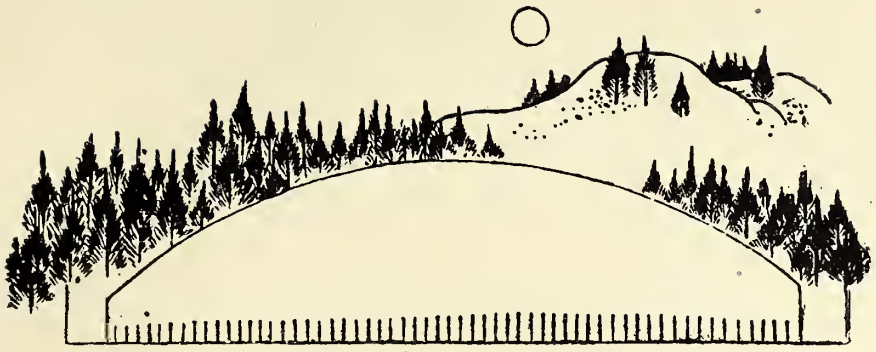
Hokusai, who saw and reproduced everything that is in the world, gave



Comb. The bird is in ivory, the feathers and the teeth of the comb in carved wood. The design of the edge of the feathers and of the bird is in gold lacquer.



Comb of brown lacquer. The designs are executed in gold lacquer and relief.



special attention to combs. He devoted to them two little volumes which bear on their cover Fujiyama stamped in relief. The subject of the work is the decoration of combs, treated with variations and prodigiously elaborated. At the beginning of each volume, and here and there in the course of the pages, we have indeed combs such as are actually worn. But the imagination and the hand of the artist continually break forth into fantasy. All possible subjects then become heaped about the combs, first plants, then trees and birds, and then the sea. Thus the comb is transformed into one vast pedestal, about which breaks the wave, or on which rears itself, in its vast loneliness, the giant Fujiyama.

THEODORE DURET.

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES.

The double plate BEF is a print by Hokusai. Its form is that of the great surimonos (see part XVIII. page 234), which were produced for representations for the benefit of a musician, a danseuse, or an actor. They were got up by subscription among artists allied by the closest friendship. Among the subscribers' names on the back of the leaf we often recognise the names of great painters which are familiar to us. No more were printed of these leaves than the number of the organisers of the fête, and the execution was of the most careful description.

This represents the bay in which is the island of Yenoshima. On the borders of this bay once existed the capital city Kamakura, now altogether extinct. Its most important monument, the immense Buddha in bronze, universally celebrated as *Dai-Butsu*, has been preserved. Yenoshima is a celebrated place for pilgrimage. Its steep and wooded slopes are crowned by temples which are approached by long series of steps. At low water, a tongue of sand like that at Mont St. Michel, unites Yenoshima with the land. Frequent excursions are made thither from Yokohama and Tokio.

Plate BGB brings together several small sketches of Keisai Yeisen—a bird with a long tail perched on a branch; a little bird venturing on the ice at the edge of a pond; a boat making for the distant coast above which Fuji shines out; a nocturnal effect with branches of cryptomeria black against the sky—in fine, a design for a little round box, where on one side a little bird leans over a vase to drink, and on the other extends a branch in flower.

Plate BCF is a leaf of studies by Hokusai. Here is the head of a cock, where the painter, with Indian ink alone, gives the relative effects of the plumage, the feathers standing up on the head, the less prominent ones which are about the neck and shoulders, and the dark and closer ones of the breast.

The flying goose is a curious example of the obedience of the pencil of which we have given many examples. The artist, full of his subject, seeing it already on his paper, knowing beforehand the effect of a particular stroke, with one line traces the bird's neck, dashing in the brush for the expansion of the shoulders. Even the small vacancy at the bottom of the neck is proof of this off-hand execution. The breast is thrown into relief by a ray of light; a simple drop of water, a dilution of the ink, does the work. So, one stroke of the brush serves for each great feather of the wings, and the bird appears with neck outstretched in flight. This study is one of those where the hand and the prodigious skill of the master are seen to the full.

Plate BIB reproduces two pages of a collection of three volumes of *Outa*,* composed by various poets, illustrated. This work has neither date nor author's name. It certainly belongs to the time of Sukenobu (1725–1760), if indeed it is not his work, so completely is it in his manner.

On the left-hand page is one of the tender and poetic subjects, loved of painters of primitive schools. A young man gives back to a young girl her shuttlecock, which has gone over the wall into the next garden. It is a pretty composition, with the cherry in blossom, one which has charms for both poet and painter.

The right-hand page gives a familiar scene at the door of a house. A boatman who is passing on foot, to amuse the children, executes the "horse's head" dance, whose tradition is very ancient in Japan.

Plate BID reproduces two pages of a book by Hokusai. To the left a fish of the dory species, remarkable for its show of power, as well as the suppleness of movement seen in the posterior part of the body.

To the left a marine crustacean, standing in fighting attitude. Hokusai has made curious use of the reserves to model the crab, throwing it into brilliant light.

Plate BGC shows a bottle of Kutani pottery—province of Kaga. Kutani ware dates back to the year 1620. A Prince of Kaga, stirred by the great renown acquired by the porcelain of the province of Hizen, succeeded in discovering, on his own territory, material for a like manufacture. Furnaces were established near the quarries, and it is said that the name *Kutani*, which signifies nine valleys, was in allusion to the number of valleys which had been vainly searched before making the precious discovery. A potter, named Goto-Saijiro, was commissioned by the prince to get at the trade secrets of the manufacture at Hizen. He found that the best way was to marry the daughter of Kakiyemon, the able and learned manager of Arita, the most important furnace at Hizen. One day the new disciple disappeared, carrying with him the information to his master, the prince of Kutani.

We cannot wonder, then, that certain productions of the Kutani works bear a close similarity to some of the porcelains of Hizen. Still, the original Kutani porcelain still more closely resembles true China porcelain, by which Kutani must certainly have been greatly inspired, so much so that on the reverse of some Kutani pieces we find Chinese marks of the Ming dynasty.

Later on, whether it was that the quarries ceased to yield, or that they were not worked with the same care, the porcelain covered with dull enamel, which has distinguished the early periods, came to be replaced by a substance in which stone-ware was more prominent than porcelain. And at the same time the primitive sobriety of the ornamentation and the surfaces of the objects disappeared under an array of shot colours. The enamels were of dazzling vigour, giving great value to the manufacture, but we miss the solid qualities which characterised the *Kutani* of the earlier periods. At length, about the second half of the eighteenth century, came up a principle of ornamentation which we might call the "red family" of Kutani. Brick-red subjects, often

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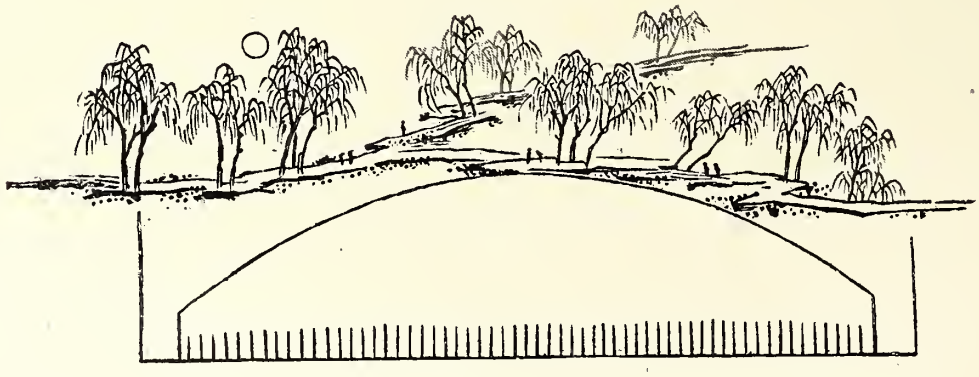
* *Outa*, short poems. See, on this head, part XX. page 257.

relieved by gold, are traced in fine and close lines, like pen-and-ink drawings as we see on this plate. Dealers are accustomed to call this last kind *Kaga*, as opposed to *Kutani*, which is used for polychrome decoration. We need scarcely point to the absurdity of such a distinction, seeing that both sorts come from Kutani, which is in the province of Kaga.

Plate BFG represents a bouquet-holder in Kioto pottery of the commencement of the eighteenth century. It is a rock which shelters a pious hermit. The article is of brown biscuit, very compact. The robe alone, tawny in colour, and the green are covered with enamel. In the plate may be seen the places where the flowers springing from the rock were pricked in to give an idea of wild nature, and, at the same time, the artistic contrast between the dull and harsh rock and the gentle tint of the flower.

The subject of Plate BHG is a blind of bamboo threads, behind which butterflies are flying ; that of Plate ADC is peonies in full flower.



Contents of Number 26.

SEPARATE PLATES.

BEF. **Walk by the Sea.** Double Plate. By Hokusai.

BHG. **Industrial Model.** Blind, with Butterflies.

BCF. **Goose and Cock's Head.** Studies by Hokusai.

BGC. **Bottle of Kutani Ware.**

BGB. **Small Sketches.** By Keisai Yeisen.

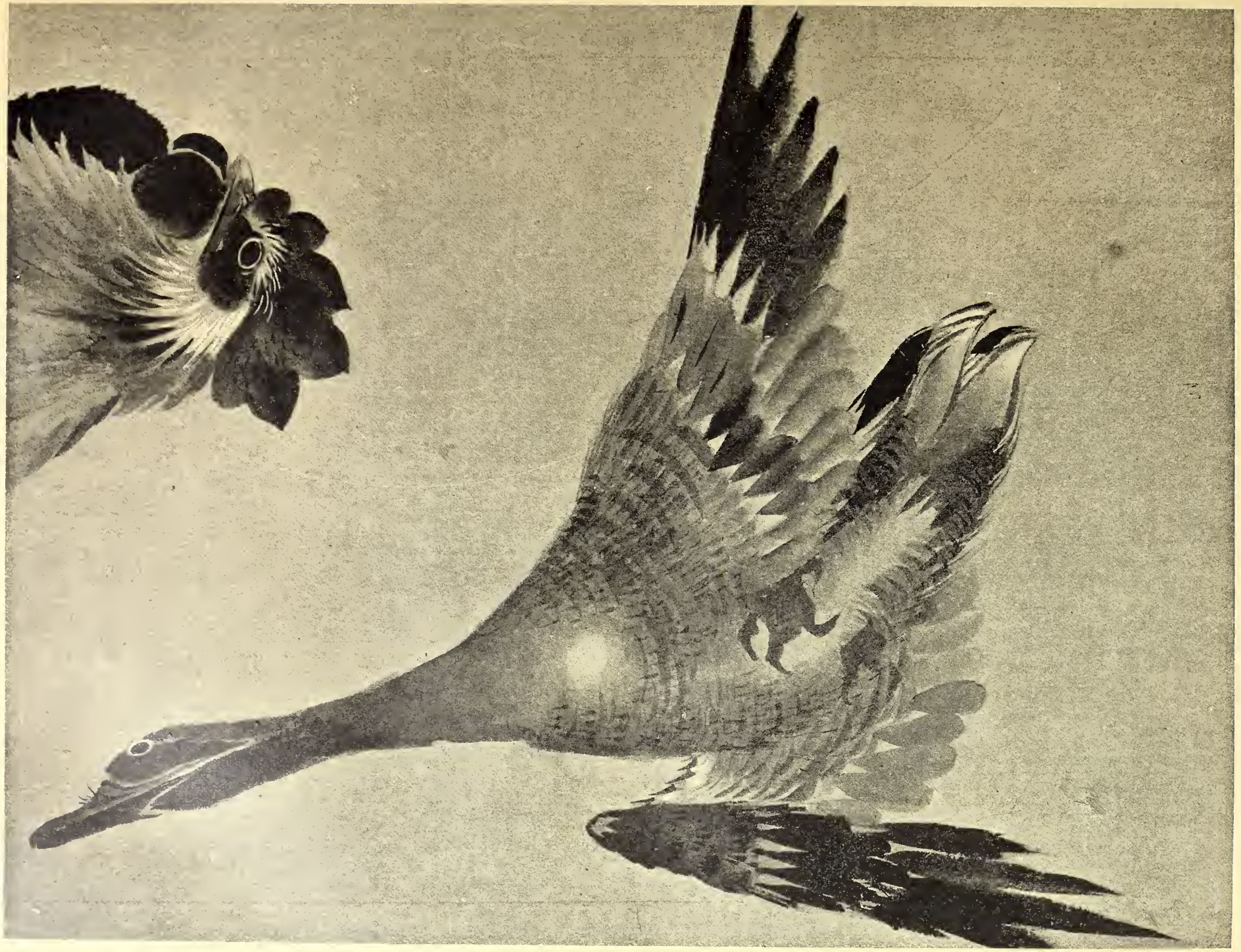
BIB. **Two Familiar Scenes.** School of Sukenobu.

BFG. **Bouquet-Holder of Kioto Ware.**

ADC. **Industrial Model.** Peonies.

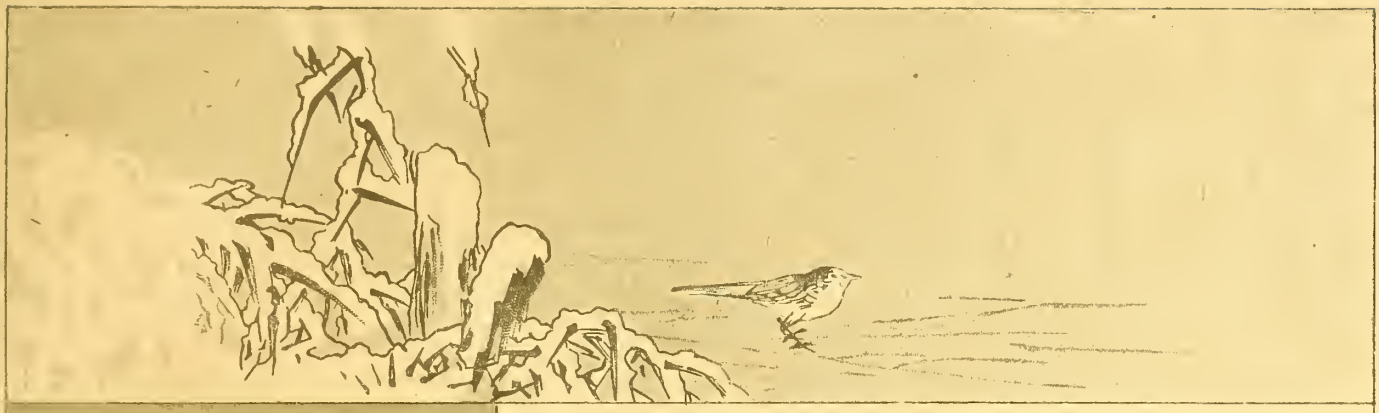
BID. **Fish and Crab.** By Hokusai.

No. 27 will contain an "Essay on the Netsuké," by Mr. H. Seymour Trower.



BCF

The Corcoran Gallery of Art,
Washington, D. C.



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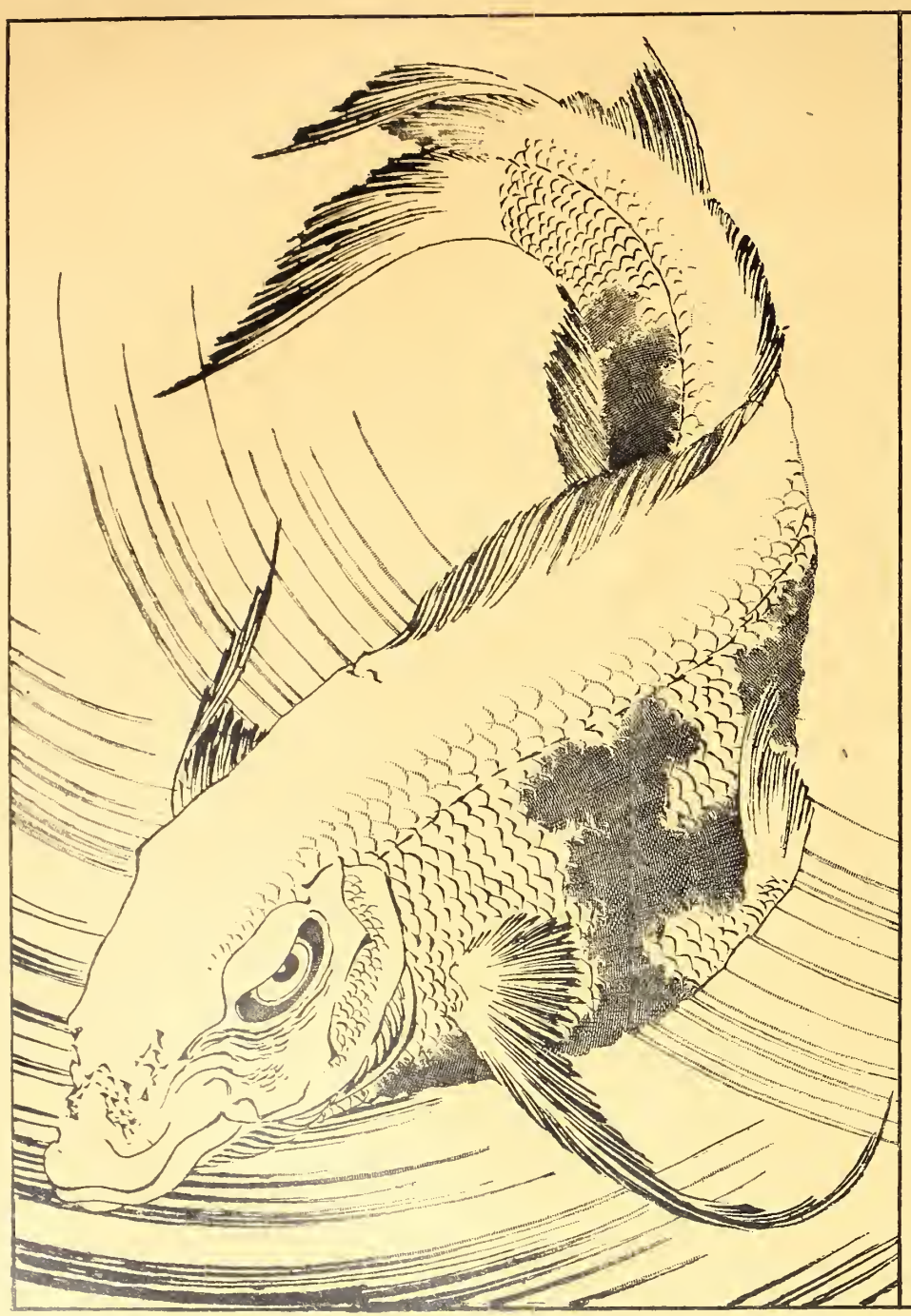
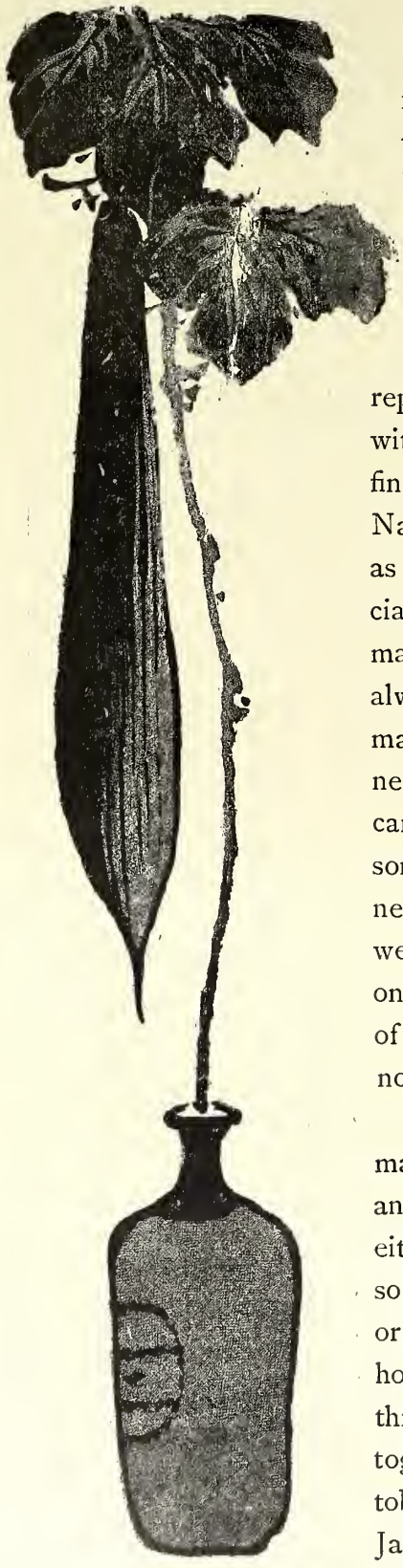


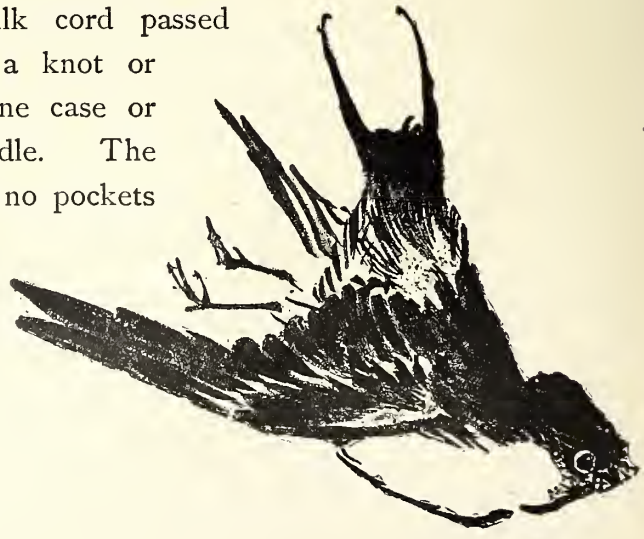
NETSUKÉS AND OKIMONOS.

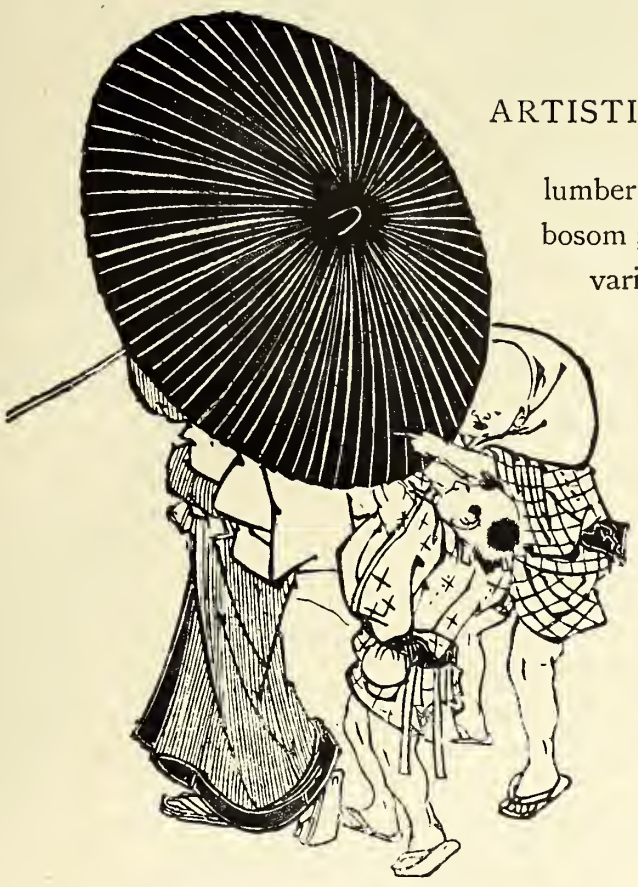
The first netsukés imported into Europe were choice and correspondingly costly, but no sooner was a market created than we were inundated with specimens of very inferior quality, including much utterly worthless rubbish. In daily wear for generations by every man, woman, and child in the country, their number is infinite; and they are of all conceivable grades of merit,



from the roughest whittling of a jack-knife to masterpieces which would do credit to Fiamingo or Benvenuto Cellini. Naturally the rude toggles of the poorer classes vastly outnumber the *chefs-d'œuvre* which graced the girdles of aristocratic dandies, but all have been lumped together in dealers' shops, and I have often handled hundreds to discover a dozen worth preserving. You are more than repaid, however, when you do secure a prize. A fine netsuké with its extraordinary polish, its grotesqueness, its unparalleled finish, its humour, and occasionally its startling fidelity to Nature, is simply the ideal bibelot, as delightful to the touch as to the eye; for it must be fondled to be properly appreciated. It appeals as directly to the lover of perfect workmanship as to artists or bric-à-brac hunters. Ladies, not always tolerant of curios, spread them about on cabinets and mantelpieces. This, of course, is a pity, for although the netsuké is a tough object, it may easily get swept away by a careless visitor or more careless housemaid, and I have known some real art-treasures thus to disappear for ever. And the netsuké has, at present, the advantage of relatively small cost; we cannot all possess Henri II. or Limoges enamel, but any one with the means to collect at all, can by the expenditure of a little time and judgment get together carvings such as no country but Japan has ever produced.

It is important to distinguish between netsukés, articles made for a special purpose and admirably adapted to it, and okimonos—*objets d'art*—mere ornaments never intended either for use or wear. The netsuké is small as a rule, so designed as to avoid excrescences which might break off or catch in the dress, and pierced with two holes. By means of a silk cord passed through these it served as a knot or toggle to retain the medicine case or tobacco pouch at the girdle. The Japanese native costume has no pockets in the European sense, although much small





Children teasing a Woman, by Hokusai.

lumber is stowed away in the sleeves and bosom; heavier and harder articles are invariably suspended. It is probable that the use of netsuké is very ancient, and that the earliest were queer-shaped bits of wood, metal, or stone, which by their peculiarity attracted the finder. It was not till the eighteenth century that they began to be generally elaborated, and although earlier carvers are cited, I doubt whether any netsukés now existing are of greater antiquity. Most of them, I fancy, were sculptured during the hundred years or so immediately preceding the opening of Japan to European commerce—a period remarkable for an efflorescence of exquisite decoration coupled with extreme perfection of detail in every branch of art.

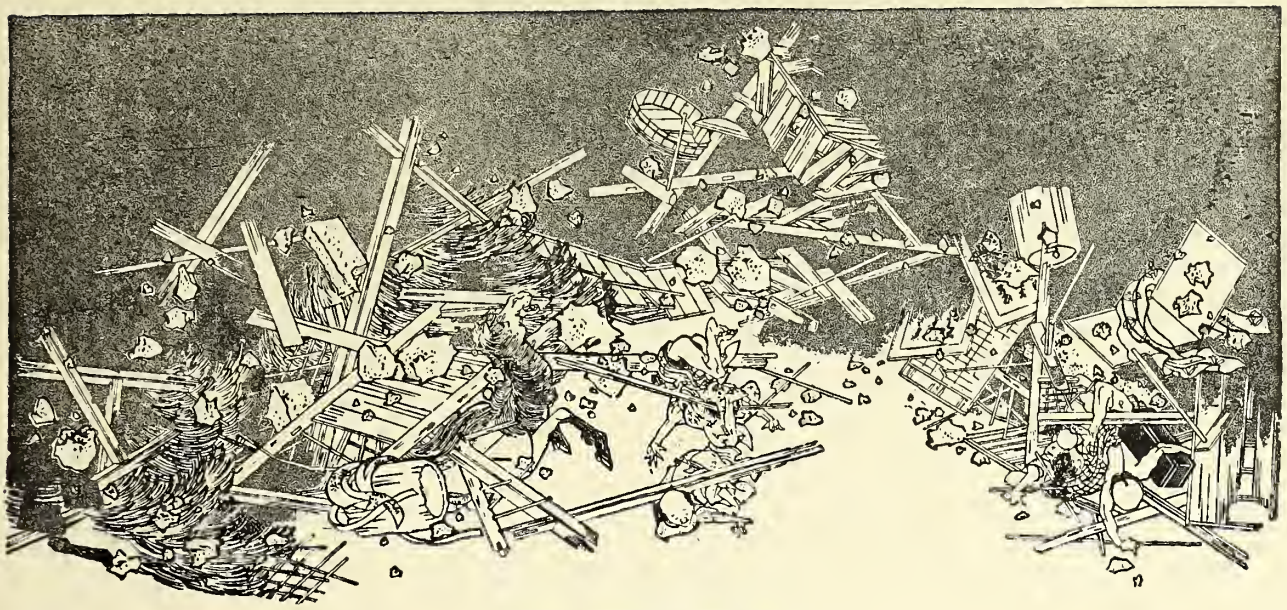
A list of the materials employed would include lacquer, pottery, metal, and nearly every substance under the sun. Wood and ivory are, however, the most usual; and of the two I incline to think that the former has been more successfully and spiritedly treated. Sundry details about the manufacture may be gathered from the introduction to Murray's handbook, Mr. Ernest Hart's catalogue, *L'Art Japonais* of Mr. Gonse, an article on the subject in the *Magazine of Art*, March, 1889, another by Mr. Griffis in *Harper*, April, 1888, and *La Maison d'un Artiste* of M. E. de Goncourt. To possess such a collection as the last named is enviable indeed—how infinitely more so the talent, knowledge, and literary charm displayed in its description. Some of these treatises give lists of carvers' names with a few meagre dates, and mention the specialities of one or two better known masters, but they utterly fail to supply the real need of the collector for adequate information as to schools, styles,

Earthquake, by Keisai Yeisen.

and relative periods. We have collections, private ones,—for those in museums are simply contemptible—we can make observations and draw inferences, but authority is utterly lacking. That can probably only be obtained from native sources. Will some European resident in Japan, conversant with the language, and having access to the literature of the subject, kindly take note? What a chapter, for instance, might be devoted to the forgeries alone! They are only too numerous, and by no means exclusively modern, as we learn from the Soken Kisho published in the last century; but, made by Japanese for Japanese, they are immensely difficult to detect, and teach a lesson of their own, since the style as well as the signature of the original is copied with as much faithfulness as the imitator could compass. The book about netsukés has yet to be written. The expert who shall do for Japanese carvers and carvings what Mr. W. Anderson, F.R.C.S., has done for painters and painting* will deserve eternal gratitude. Collectors are few to-day, and regarded by the orthodox curio buyer and curio dealer as little better than amateurs of outlandish toys; but their numbers are likely to increase, as the quarry grows scarcer and more expensive. That it is developing that tendency I already find to my cost.

I shall make no attempt here to go into technicalities nor to propound theories. Netsukés attracted me originally by their grotesqueness and intrinsic charm, and that, I fancy, is ever likely to form their principal merit in European eyes. There is, however, another side—the insight, namely, which they give us into queer corners of custom and folk-lore. I do not know how I can better illustrate this than by selecting a few specimens from my own collection, and telling you what I have learned from and about them.

* *Pictorial Arts of Japan* (Sampson Low & Co.) *Descriptive Historical Catalogue of Japanese and Chinese Paintings in the British Museum* (Longmans).



Typhoon at Night, by Keisai Yeisen.

I begin with an okimono, not on account of its merit, but because it summarises so much of the native religion. The group, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, is signed *Kosensai* (his studio name) *Nagamitsu*. It has all the appearance of being carved out of one piece, but considering its size and intricacy, and the immense "dodginess" of the Japanese, I should never be surprised to learn that it is in reality a triumph of successfully deceptive joinery. It represents a jovial crew of seven who are fording a shallow stream, six males, mostly portly, and a lady, all with exaggerated lobes to their ears. There is nothing to European, or I should imagine to Japanese ideas, divine about them, and yet such as they are, they represent the seven gods of happiness of the Shinto mythology. In front strides a paunchy, bare-headed, bare-breasted fellow who might well pass for Friar Tuck; him they call Hotei, an embodiment of contentment in poverty. He is the children's friend, and usually carries a large coarse wallet; perched on his shoulders, with a lute, a fan, and a floating scarf, is the lady of the party, Benten, Goddess of Matrimony, of Music, of the Sea. Behind Hotei is a personage with enormous frontal development, his head above the eyebrows far longer than below them; this is Fukurokujiu, God of Longevity, usually accompanied by a stork and a tortoise, both absent on this occasion. The quantity of knowledge stored in his brainpan accounts for its abnormal size. Seated on the top of the remarkable occiput is a warmly clad, well-to-do-looking fellow with a flat cap and a mallet—this is Daikoku, the God of Wealth,

Yoshiwara Women, by Outamaro.

among whose attributes are thick shoes, rice bales, and rats. Side by side with Fukurokujiu, clad in full armour, a halberd over his shoulder, a model of a pagoda in his hand, is Bisjamon, speciously but erroneously supposed to be the God of War. Close behind, mounted on a stag, in university robes and holding a scroll, is Jiurojin, another manifestation of Fukurokujiu, distinguishable from him, if at all, by a more normal head. He is sometimes called the God of Learning. Last of all, with the curious Japanese cap, is Yebisu, "the smiling one," the fisherman's patron, and hence, since fish is the staple diet of the land, God of Daily Bread, hugging a huge carp as affectionately as did Mr. Briggs his first salmon. It is annoying when one has all the deities thus nicely ticketed with special functions in analogy with European notions, to know that in fact the expressions, God of Learning, Longevity, or Wealth, convey most imperfectly, if not quite incorrectly, the Japanese conceptions of the subject; but Mr. B. A. Chamberlain, a profound student of the language, literature, and religions of the country, significantly warns us of the impossibility of properly comprehending myths based upon ideas fundamentally opposed to those accepted in the West. I can only refer the reader who requires more accurate knowledge of the functions and peculiarities of these deities to the scholarly works of Mr. W. Anderson, F.R.C.S., already referred to. He will there find them fully set down amid a mass of information which is simply invaluable to any student of Japanese legend and folk-lore.

Here is another religious theme. An ascetic head peering from a cowl, the body a mere spherical appendage; the face, chased in bronze, is signed Somin. This is Daruma, the missionary, whose nine years' meditation upon the mysteries of Buddhism resulted in the remarkable apothegm, "Honrai mu ichi motsu,"

"From the beginning nothing at all has ever existed." The incidents and consequences of the anchorite's self-imposed penance afford an inexhaustible fund of amusement to the Japanese artist-humorist. His emaciated form and features are more often reproduced than almost any other subject, but whether as netsuké or child's toy always under a comic aspect.

H. SEYMOUR TROWER.

(To be continued.)

Daruma, the Anchorite.

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES.

Plate BHE is a print of Harunobu, who was, above all, the artist of young lovers. In his chaste and gracious conception we find no trace of the sceptical spirit which characterises many painters of the same school.

Japanese compositions of the most familiar kind are often inspired by an old legend, whether it be Japanese or Chinese, by a traditional subject transplanted into daily life and vivified by modern handling. The scene here represented, where the girl touches the chords of the shamisen, whilst her lover determines the sounds by the pressure of his fingers on the strings, recalls an old Chinese picture, with this difference, that in the classical picture the musical instrument is a flute.

In order to mark the idyllic character of his composition Harunobu places his lovers on the flowery bank of a stream which, calm and sinuous, meanders by.

Plate AAE reproduces a page from a collection of birds, engraved from the designs of an unknown artist. On the right we have the buzzard (*buteo lemilasius*) in the melancholy attitude of a predatory bird inactive on the denuded branch of a pine at the summit of a crest, which the artist has just indicated by silhouetting the forms of the rocks on his background. To the left is the Japanese lark (*alauda japonica*), which sings as it soars into the sky.

These studies are so faithful, both as to the bird of prey and the other, that a naturalist would instantly discern the species.

The landscape of Plate BBJ is by Keisai Kitao Massayoshi, of whose work Plate BAC (No. XVIII.) and Plate BBA (No. XXI.) are examples. What a master of the brush he was! This landscape, reproduced from an admirably engraved work, is more summary in its execution than the two already given. The foliage of the trees is of extraordinary simplicity, the loaded boat and the boatman and the rustic bridge are hit off with a stroke, the borders of this expanse of water are scarcely more than spots, and yet there is a depth about the whole, the surfaces are laid out, and the suggestion of the lake with shadowy banks comes out strongly from the few touches of an artist of genius.

Plate AIA is extracted from a series of Sugakudo (1850) consisting of 48 leaves, representing 48 kinds of birds, each accompanied by the trees, flowers, or leaves which it is chiefly associated with.

Plate BFH brings together two pages of an album of sketches by Keisai Yeisen. To the left a torrent, whose waters impetuously roll over the rocks, is in striking contrast with the opposite side of the page, where water-lilies of several different kinds emerge from the tranquil water. The characteristic aspect is, in each case, caught with accuracy and rendered with as much simplicity as of refinement and animation.

Plate BIC reproduces five ivories, four of which are netsukés and one an okimono. This last, of which our plate shows the two faces, is described at pages 351, 352. It represents the seven gods of happiness. At the bottom of the page Hotei is seen to the left. He carries the goddess Benten on his shoulders. Fuku-roku-jiu is in the middle, with Daikoku seated on his head. On the other face we see Bisjamon in complete armour, and Jiu-rojin on a stag.

The Japanese find a never-ceasing fund of amusement in comical representations of their seven household gods. No subject is so popular, none represented under so many aspects, and with the best grace in the world these "good fellows" of deities lend themselves to the thousand and one sallies, nearly all of them irreverent, of which the mocking spirit of Japanese art makes them the victims.

Of the four netsukés represented in the same plate, one is in the shape of a fruit round which twines a sprig which bears a flower and a bud. The second is an ape squatting on a shell and waiting for the occupant to open it. The third, depicting a bird of ferocious aspect, emerging from an egg, represents a Tengu, one of the Japanese demons, who is spoken of in the second part of Mr. Seymour Trower's essay, which will appear in our next number. The other monkey will be described in our next part.

The two pieces of pottery depicted in Plate BHA are found in the great work on pottery called *Kwan-ko-dzu setzu,* by Ninagawa Noritané, which we have spoken of in No. XVII., page 218. One is a bowl of which Ninagawa names the author Hozan, an artist of Awata, who flourished about 1840. He was a descendant of the great potter Kinkosan, the inventor of the make of yellow biscuit with enamels in relief where a ground of blue often prevails. The ornamentation, generally traced in arabesques, has unquestionable traces of Persian origin.

The other piece is one of the upper parts of a sweetmeat box in open work of similar substance to that just mentioned, and likewise a product of the Awata factory, but much earlier in date. Ninagawa in the text which accompanies his reproductions ascribes to it 150 years of existence.

Plate BFB represents four iron guards. The first by Myotskin is formed of moumé flowers, the Japanese plum-tree. Each petal is modelled as if in wax. Even the pistils have been evoked out of the mass of iron. The second guard has seven cherry blossoms, of which five are circumscribed in circles which do but touch the extremity of the petals. It is signed Shohakudo.

The two other guards are the work of Kinai (seventeenth century), of whom we have already given several specimens—Plate BBG, No. XX., and Plate BAI, No. XVIII. One of these guards is formed of two butterflies which touch only at the extremity of the wings—a new and curious

example of that ingenuity with which the Japanese have bent everything to the circular form of the sabre without doing violence to the shape of the subject.

These butterflies are no way distorted. The artist has even utilised their antennæ, which are made to separate in order to fill a void of their slight curve. On each of the faces of the guard, a butterfly is seen from above and from below. The play of colour in the wings is given by means of a curious turning of the metal.

The fourth guard brings together five masques from the traditional types of the mystic dance Nô. They are in bas-relief, united by their interlaced strings.

Plate BDE is a subject of decoration from flowering branches of chrysanthemum and a flight of doves in reserve. The butterflies' wings, by way of avoiding the hardness of white, are stippled in the manner of little flowers.

In the Plate BGE an expert eye will discern in the midst of splashes the curtailed forms of little birds with wings and tails spread out, seen from above, and traced according to a curious formula borrowed from the imagination of Korin.

Terrace of a Roadside Tea-house, by Outamaro.

Contents of Number 27.

SEPARATE PLATES.

BHE. **The Shamisen.** By Harunobu.

BIC. **Five Ivories.**

BDE. **Decorative Subject.** Butterflies and Flowers.

AAE. **Two Birds.** Anonymous Study.

BHA. **Two Pieces of Pottery.** Awata Ware.

BBJ. **Landscape.** By Massayoshi.

BGE. **Industrial Model.** Flight of Birds.

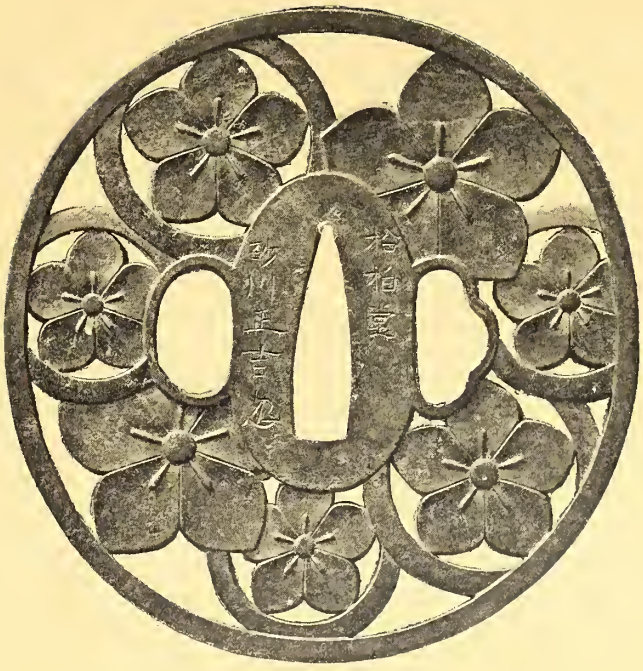
AIA. **Birds.** By Sugakudo.

BFB. **Four Sabre Guards.**

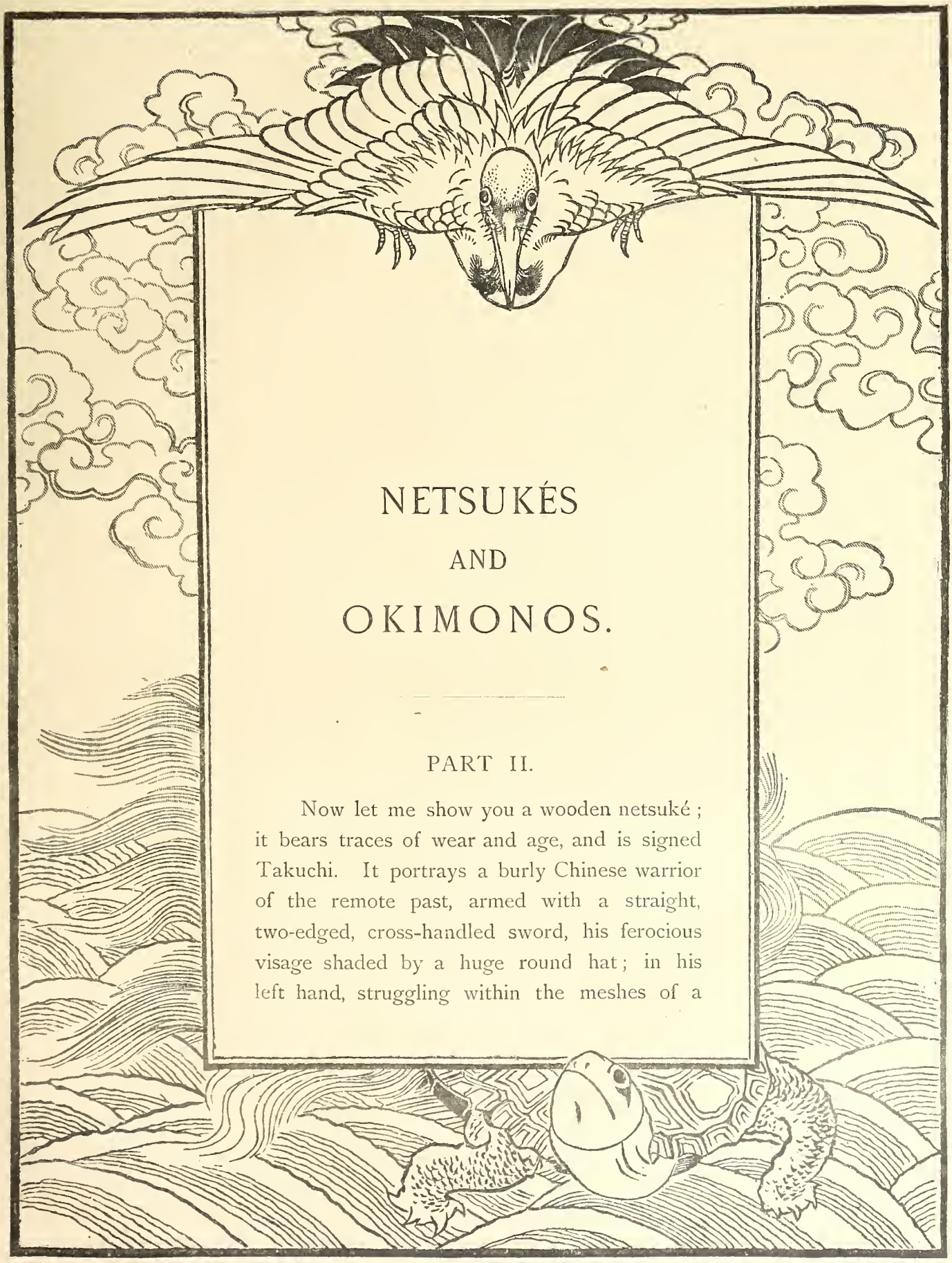
BFH. **Two Sketches.** By Keisai Yeisen.

No. 28 *will contain the conclusion of Mr. H. Seymour Trower's article on Netsukés and Okimonos.*


鈴木春信画



GRAV. IMP. EAR GILLOT.



NETSUKÉS AND OKIMONOS.

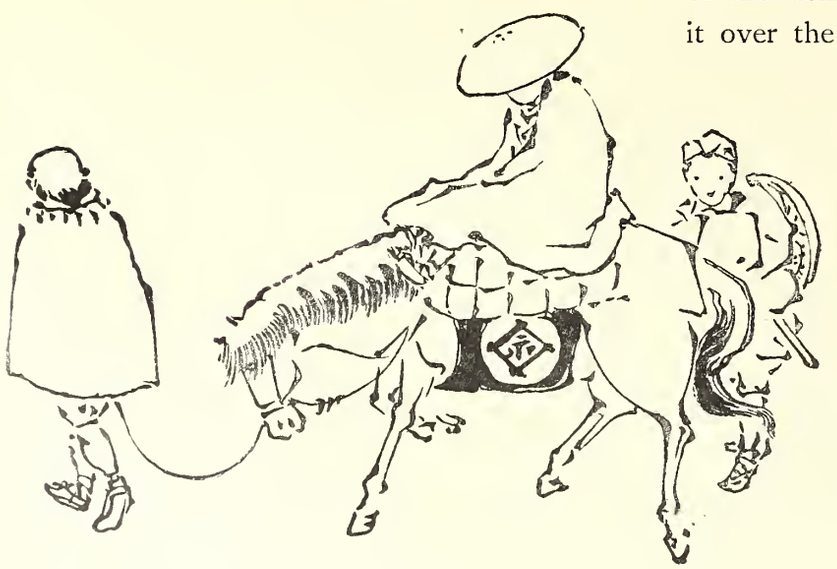
PART II.

Now let me show you a wooden netsuké; it bears traces of wear and age, and is signed Takuchi. It portrays a burly Chinese warrior of the remote past, armed with a straight, two-edged, cross-handled sword, his ferocious visage shaded by a huge round hat; in his left hand, struggling within the meshes of a

bag, the face distorted by terror of immediate annihilation, is a little imp with horns and claws. This is an oni, one of the malignant pests with which the lively Japanese imagination has peopled the land, and his relentless captor is the renowned demon-queller Shoki himself. Concerning this redoubtable personage I extract the following from Mr. Anderson's catalogue:

"Chung Kwei, the demon-queller, a favourite myth of the Chinese, was supposed to be a ghostly protector of the Emperor Ming Hwang (713–762 A.D.) from the evil spirits that haunted his palace. His story is thus told in the E-hon koji-dan:

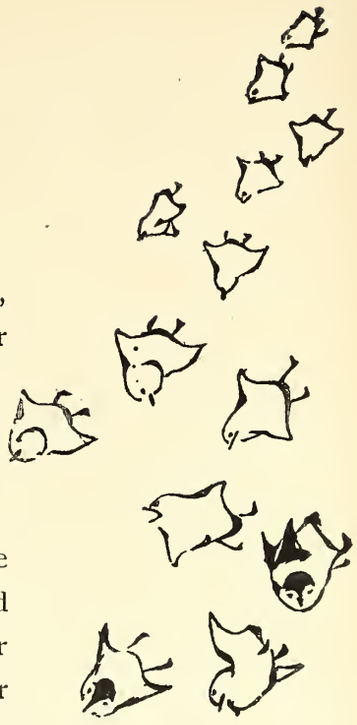
"The Emperor Genso was once attacked by ague, and in his sickness dreamed that he saw a small demon in the act of stealing the flute of his mistress, Yokihi (Yang-kwei-fei). At the same moment a stalwart spirit appeared and seized the demon and ate him. The Emperor asked the name of the being, who replied, 'I am Shiushi Shoki of the Shunan mountain. In the reign of the Emperor Koso (Koa-tsu) of the period Butoku (Wu-Têh, 618–627 A.D.) I failed to attain the position to which I aspired in the State examination, and, being ashamed, I slew myself; but at my burial I was honoured by Imperial command with posthumous rank, and now I desire to requite the favour conferred upon me. To this end I will expel all the devils under heaven.' Genso awoke and found that his sickness had disappeared. He then ordered Go Doshi to paint the portrait of the demon-queller, and distributed copies of it over the whole kingdom."*



Shoki, as we find him in netsukés, is rarely terrible, but rather a giant of pantomime, always engaged in pursuit of the nimble little demons of whom he is supposed to have freed the country, and usually outwitted by them.

Onis are not the only supernatural plague of Japan. There are water bogeys, web-footed, with

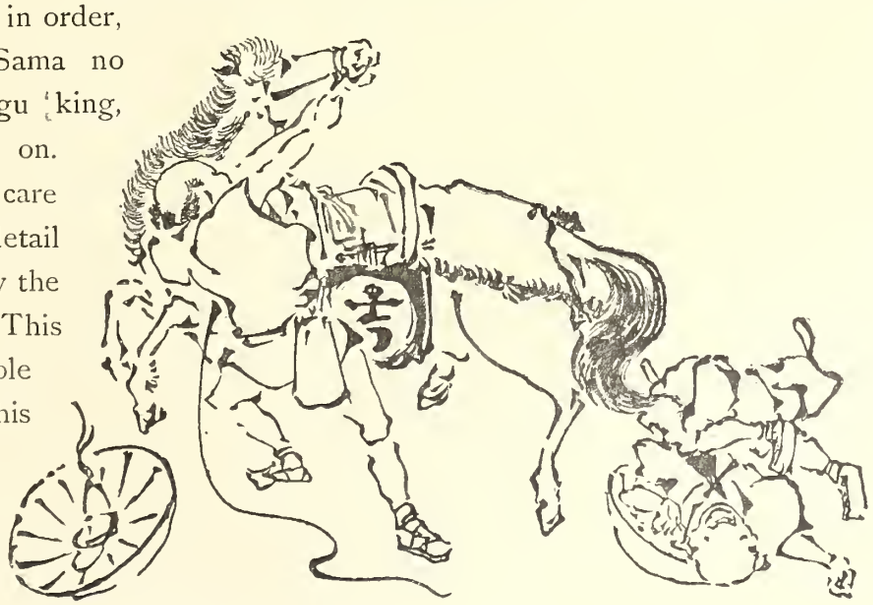
* From Mr. Anderson's *British Museum Catalogue*, p. 217.



frog-like bodies and shells of tortoises on their backs. Extremely amorous, they seek to capture washerwomen and unwary maidens walking on river banks. If they encounter a man they forthwith challenge him to single combat, and as the Kappa's strength is superhuman, the case of the unlucky mortal would seem desperate. Here, however, mother wit and chivalric ceremonial intervene. The Kappa's power is contained in a cuplike orifice at the top of his head. If therefore one should ever come your way it is well before crossing swords with him to make a profound reverence to the foe. As a gentleman, he can do no less than return your salutation. In the act the contents of the cup will be spilled and your victory assured. There's much virtue in politeness.

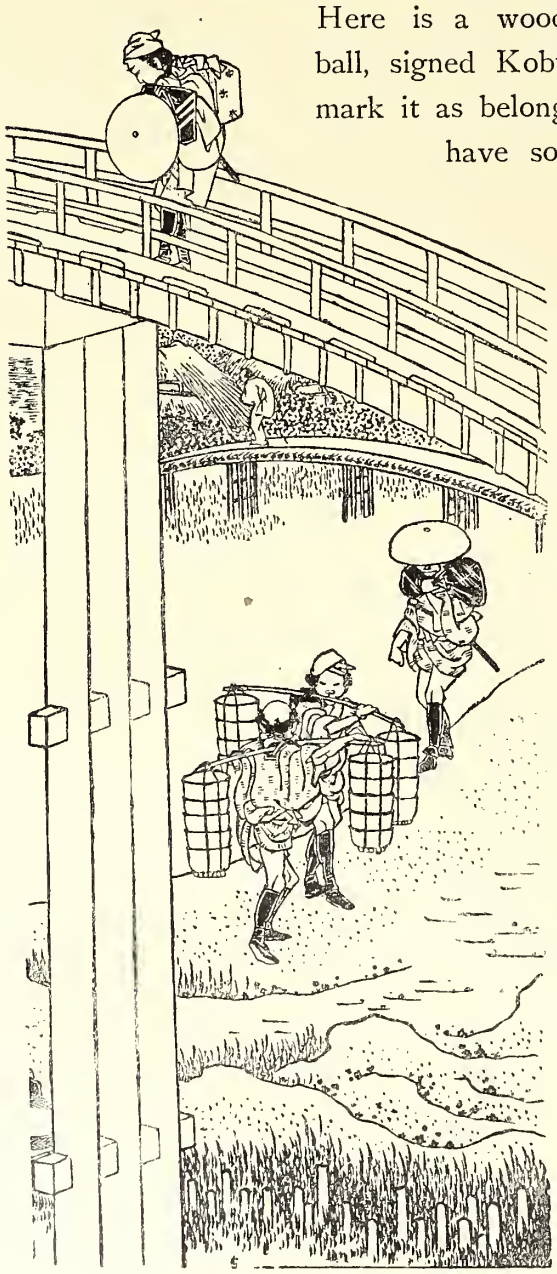
On a kagami-buta, a netsuké shaped like a flat round ivory button, with a chased and engraved metal centre, is the representation of one of these water-fiends leading an unsuspecting blind man into the stream, where he may devour him at his ease.

Here is an egg chipped and partly broken, an ivory netsuké, unsigned. From it emerges a most fearful wild fowl, its half-human countenance furnished with a ferocious beak, its whole expression disgust at the world of which it is taking its first glimpse. This is the tengu, the winged spirit, which is however less hostile and obnoxious to man than either of the two before named. In fact, Yoshitsune, the ideal Samurai, the famous brother of Yoritomo, to whose jealousy he fell a victim, was in his youth a playmate and a pet of the tengus, and learned from them the marvellous activity which distinguished him in fight. Here is another netsuké in which he is keeping three unruly chicks in order, while Kuraman Sama no Sajobo, the Tengu king, looks approvingly on. Observe the loving care with which every detail is carved, especially the feet and claws. This is always noticeable in the work of this master, Haku-un-sai. It is a trait in which



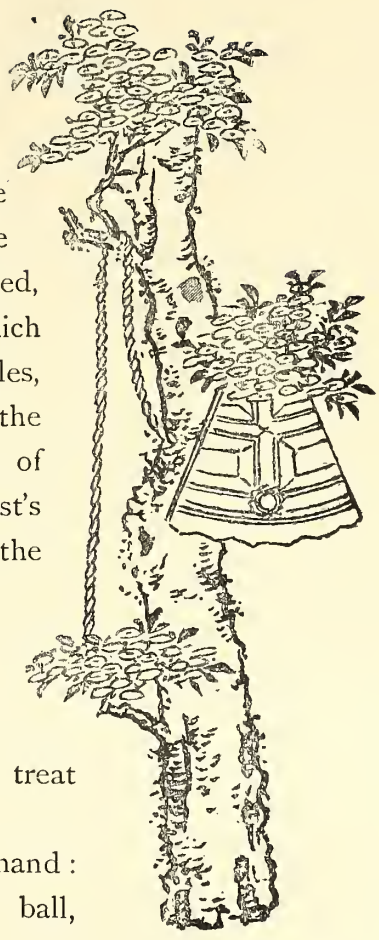
the carvers differ curiously. Most of the best of them elaborated the feet and all the lower part of the netsuké with extreme thoroughness, and I could show you specimens in which nervous tension is quite as fully portrayed in the twist of the toes, as in the compressed mouth or wrinkled brow; others again, fine carvers too, are content merely to indicate the lower limbs, treating them as flat instead of rounded objects. Ono Riumin, a later artist of great dexterity and finish, is a sad offender in this regard.

The mythical zoology of Japan is as remarkable as its demonology



Here is a wooden group of two cubs playing with a ball, signed Kobun. Its colour, and its splendid polish, mark it as belonging to the best period. The little brutes have some likeness to lions, but the mane and tufts upon the body and legs are of flame instead of hair. These are Amaino or Karashishi, dread custodians of the Sacred Gem, but, for the netsuké carver, mere kittens or puppies sporting among peonies, their attribute, and delighted to have so convenient a plaything as the gem they are supposed to guard. There is one infallible test of the legitimacy of an Amaino cub. The first care of the male parent is to carry it to the top of a high precipice and to drop it over; if the little one survives, its paternity is beyond suspicion. As one meets with so many of them in Japanese Art, it is to be presumed that they are none the worse for the drastic parental treatment, and that a high level of morality obtains amongst maternal Amaino.

The Japanese excel in the weird and the grotesque: witness this wooden mask of a devil, signed *Demc Dorioman*,



member of a justly celebrated family, which a mediæval European carver of gurgoyles would not have refused for a model. But quaint and interesting as are these freaks of fancy, they are less astonishing than the accurate observation and absolute reproduction of Nature displayed, for instance, in this windfall—a rotten pear, into which birds and insects have eaten to the core. The holes, absolutely accidental as they appear, of course serve for the insertion of strings. Note the extraordinary verisimilitude of the rind. Look into it well, and you will find the artist's signature, Kiuzan, but so ingeniously concealed in the design that it was some time before I discovered it.

Here is a snail in wood signed Masanao. It is slimy to the life, the horns lying back upon the body, which is so ingeniously coiled round the shell that it forms the perfect netsuké, round and polished, a real treat to handle.

Let me show you one more example by the same hand: the most fascinating of little field mice curled into a ball, holding its tail between its paws and nibbling it.

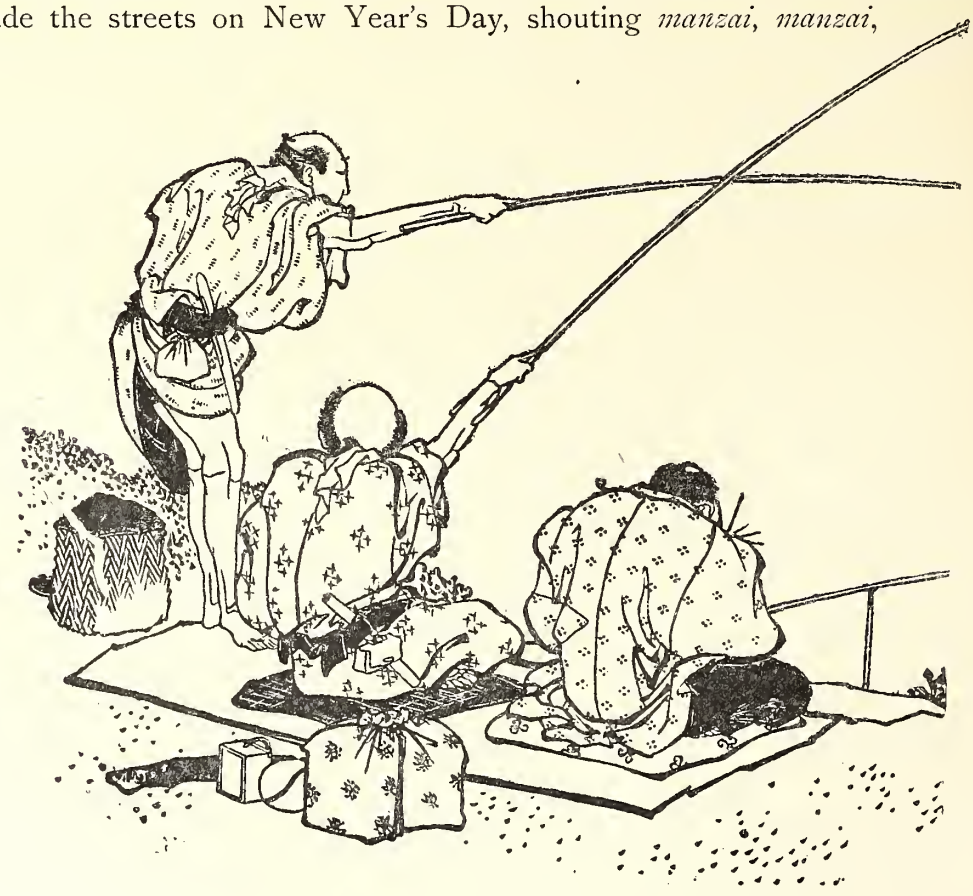
Monkeys appear very frequently in netsukés, and are often inimitably rendered. Let me give instances. An ivory baboon by Kiokusai with pendulous pouchy cheeks, trying to reach with its paw a gad-fly settled on its back. Another beauty, a life-like little fellow, carved in ivory by Rantei with the title Hogen, a distinction sometimes conferred upon eminent artists. He has been trying to extract a clam from its shell, his paw is caught by the closing bivalve, a favourite subject of Japanese illustration, and you can almost hear his pitiful squeals. Then in wood is a very humorous ape nursing a tortoise, with one paw uplifted to catch the head of the crustacean whenever

protruded. This is by Tomo-ichi, an excellent artist, with keen relish for a joke.

Here is a round netsuké entirely of metal, by Gioku-ko-sai. It represents the umbrella with which poor old Yo-ichi-bei tried to protect himself from the storm on that fatal night when he met the highwayman Sadakuro. The hapless victim lies dying, and his ruthless assassin brandishes over him the disgraced sword of a recreant samurai. This and all other incidents of the heroic romance of the forty-seven ronin is fully and graphically told in Mr. F. V. Dickins' masterly translation of the *Chiushingura*.

A peach-stone, a real one probably, inlaid with a pheasant, a dog, and a monkey, in coloured ivory and brilliant mother-of-pearl, epitomises the story of Momotaro. Open the stone and you will find within valiant little peach-ling, the foundling adopted by a childless couple, who vanquished the onis in their island stronghold, and carried off their treasure, as told in detail by Mr. Mitford and by Mr. Chamberlain. The netsuké is signed Shibayama, an artist who excelled in brilliant incrustation. No collection would be complete without a specimen of his singularly beautiful workmanship.

This merry fellow with mask and bells is one of the dancers who parade the streets on New Year's Day, shouting *manzai*, *manzai*,

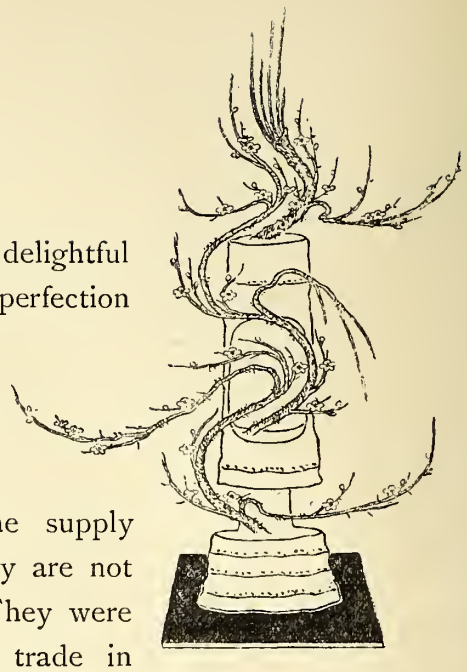


the wish that you may live a thousand years. Their dresses are embroidered with storks and pine branches, two emblems of that questionable blessing, longevity. Observe how the whole figure is balanced, so as to stand on one tiny foot, a refinement of equipoise upon which the carvers piqued themselves. The netsuké is of the beautiful alabaster-like narwhal horn. This material was supposed in Europe in the Middle Ages to be the horn of the unicorn, an absolute detector of and specific against poisons, and commanded far more than its weight in gold.

Behold in red and gold lacquer the mask of a very ferocious animal indeed. Peer well into the jaws, and you will perceive the laughing face of the boy wearer, seated and gripping between his toes a drum, the indispensable adjunct of the Kagura dance, an interesting survival which takes us back to the epoch when gods still walked the earth.

An ivory group of a coolie, a gourd, and a fish illustrates the proverb that you won't catch a sly eel with a gourd, which is tantamount to saying you must be a precious fool to try. Proverbs and puns are very frequent motives with the netsuké carver, and the meaning of these is one of the most difficult riddles for the European collector.

Want of space and some doubt as to the patience of my readers preclude me from launching into further dissertation. For many years I have been collecting and treasuring these dainty toys—I find the charm of them to-day as fresh and perhaps even keener than when I began. Whether as a treat to the sight and the touch, or as illustrations of the fancy, legends,



manners, and observation of a most quaint and delightful people, their interest is never flagging; and the perfection of execution, the consistent conscientiousness of the work, cannot fail to repay the observer who will devote a little time to their contemplation.

A few treasures are still to be discovered, though with more difficulty than formerly; the supply of really good ones must be exhausted soon; they are not made now-a-days, never can or will be again. They were the fruits of the pre-market era when export trade in art work with the *namban* (southern barbarians), the rare Portuguese and Dutch merchants, was mainly confined to the special sort of lacquer beloved of Marie Antoinette and a few other cognoscenti. Ivory carvings reach us in plenty, but they are mere okimonos, delicate, skilful, artistic in a way, as the work of descendants of the men who inherit a tradition of fine carving could scarcely fail to be; but the real netsuké, first and essentially an article of dress,

"A thing of beauty and a joy for ever"

only in a secondary and subsidiary sense—these the dainty hands of the artist craftsman of Dai Nippon will never fashion more.

H. SEYMOUR TROWER.

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES.

Plate BEC is a print by Outamaro. A young nobleman—he wears two swords—comes to pay a visit in full ceremonial dress. Woven in the stuff of this dress—very sober in line and colour as is usual with men's dresses—is the flower of the Paulownia, a crest or *mon* indicating relationship with the Imperial family. The *mon* is of universal use in Japan, and there is no need to be of noble birth to adopt for oneself and one's family some of this kind of armorial bearings. Everything made for the use of a great family—stuffs, bronze vases, sword-handles and scabbards, all are marked with the *mon*. Our visitor has prostrated himself most politely and proceeds to go through the deep and ceremonious salutations which among people of good breeding must precede all conversation. The scene is laid at the threshold of a house, on a verandah, separated form the garden by a sliding screen half open. Through the gap of another screen peep curiously three heads, two young ladies of the house and a maid-servant, the latter recognisable by her round face and puffed cheeks, contrasting with the aristocratic oval of her mistresses. A man of the lower orders sitting outside and trimming the stubble on his chin—he is no doubt the coolie who has brought the visitor—helps to make up a reunion of the two opposite types of which the population of Japan is composed, the aristocratic race with its long pale face and aquiline nose, on the other hand the Kalmuk nose, chubby forms and copper complexion which characterise the people.

Plate GH is taken from the Santaï Gwafu of Hokusai (1 vol., 1815). The word Santaï means literally three currents; it is probably here an allusion to three different ways of treating drawing used in the same work. On the left are two branches of plum-blossom, on the right some single and some double cherry-blossom. These four fragments are evidently treated with a view to producing a decorative design, while also forming an interesting study of spring flowers.

Plate BFE reproduces six little landscapes from a volume of prints by Hiroshigé. No one ever possessed in a higher degree than this great landscape painter the art of putting the greatest distances into a tiny scrap of paper, whether he shows us, as in the first of the four smaller drawings, a few pines in the foreground of a stretch of water, or the wooded shores of an island with the double arch of a bridge thrown across to a low shore; or the rocks of a promontory, with nothing but a distant flight of birds to break the calm of the horizon; or again, sails seen from quite near, half hidden in the mist. Of the two subjects in the right hand part of our plate, the one represents the end of a lake surrounded by mountains, the tops of which alone are visible through the fog; the other, small as it is, gives a striking impression of a tract of country buried under the snow, flakes of which still fall thick and fast.

Plate BIH is a collection of five sketches from an album by Hokusai. The conscientious research in these studies of the human form proves that it is well not to be in a hurry to make the assertion, which has almost passed into an axiom—that the Japanese never troubled themselves about the human body. We must consult the sketch-books of their great masters to realise that nothing was ever produced at hap-hazard. Note the care with which Hokusai searches the form of joint and muscles, and how he succeeds in expressing the various attitudes of the human body. We regret that we cannot reproduce the whole of this album. Our readers would then see that there was no part of the human body to which the great artist remained indifferent. They could appreciate the thoroughness with which he studied now an arm, now a leg, a head, or simply the action of a muscle.

Plate AJH, representing the narcissus, is one of a series of prints of flowers. Some of these are, like this one, completed by the introduction of an insect or enlivened by the addition of some little bird. In the execution there is always that same simplification, that same insistance on the essential shape of everything which forms the fundamental characteristics of Japanese drawing.

Plate CJB is taken from a work in three volumes, with no author's name, the Yehon Minanokawa. It is a collection of illustrated *outa* (short poems) by different poets, from which we have already had occasion to borrow (see No. XXVI., page 26). We mentioned then that the illustrator belonged to the school of Sukenobu, if indeed he were not Sukenobu himself. The plate portrays a promontory, fortified against the action of the water by masonry, and overshadowed by the branches of a colossal pine. Some of the people whom we see at the foot of the tree gaze on it with admiration. Like all nations, more so perhaps than others, the Japanese have an especial love for the old trees which at times overshadow some point of view in their picturesque country, at others adorn the entrance to a temple. They cherish with the greatest reverence these heirlooms of their forefathers, to leave them as full of life and vigour to future generations. It is a public mourning when some fierce typhoon, descending on one of these giants, sweeps away in a few minutes a monument which only the work of centuries could raise up. In this case it is a tree on the shore of lake *Biwa*, in the province of *Omi*, one of the eight classical wonders of this province. It is the famous fir-tree of *Karasaki*. Its trunk measures eight yards in circumference, and its branches, carefully held up by props, overshadow a circumference of two hundred paces. It is an object of almost national veneration, pilgrimages are made to it, and legends are told of its fabulous age. It was already so big and so old as far back as the memory of man can go, that tradition assigns its birth to the days when the gods still ruled the land. That was more than two thousand five hundred years ago. This tree has witnessed stirring scenes in the history of Japan. The mountain which rises above it the *Hiyeï-san*, was of old covered with hundreds of monasteries, real strongholds, wherein, amid princely splendour and luxury, a whole people of monks, belonging to the famous Buddhist sect of Yen-riaku-ji, held sway. A tremendous storm swept away all that a little

more than three centuries ago. The powerful general and dictator, *Nobunaga*, exasperated by the audacious political plots which were always being hatched against the established government in the sanctuary, deemed inviolable, had the magnificent place destroyed by fire and sword. Not a soul escaped the massacre. The walls became the prey of the flames, and now, of all that once surrounded the famous holy city nothing remains but this old tree.

Plate BIE. Six *netsukés*, the description of five of which is given by Mr. Trower in the present number. On the left the circular metal *netsuké*, described on page 47 ; then the ivory *netsuké*, representing the young Yoshitsune, playing with the *tengu* under the paternal eye of the old *Tengu* king (page 43). The snail is mentioned page 45, as is also the little field-mouse rolled up in a ball. The devil's mask is described on page 48. The sixth *netsuké*, a wooden one, with beautiful brown patina, belongs to a Paris collection. It represents a carver of masks. Seated on the ground, which is Japanese wont, and holding in his right hand the tool with which he works, he is attentively scanning his work and seeking how to give it a still more lifelike appearance ; while his face shows the expression aimed at. This little masterpiece is signed *Mizwa*.

Plate BCG reproduces a bronze flower-bowl. The lack of depth in these vases is to be explained by the fact, that in order to hold up the flowery branch, which in Japan takes the place of our bouquet, a bit of bamboo is used, thrust into the inside of the vase so as to go across it about half-way up. An incision made in this slip of bamboo receives the cut stem, and the branch is held up as if growing out of the ground. The vase is then filled with grass, or more often with gravel. This bowl is held up by a toad, while a smaller one crawls along the rim. The toad is not in Japan as with us, the victim of an unjustifiable dislike ; and yet it often attains a size of 10 or 15 inches in length. Artists have often reproduced its heavy form and rough skin. There are well-known instances in wood, bronze and pottery, of very fine representations of this animal pariah.

Plate BDC. A group of two cocks with outspread wings, forming an arabesque very suitable for a *mon* (see above, page 50). The design which is intermingled with them is an arrangement of the flowers and leaves of the paulownia.

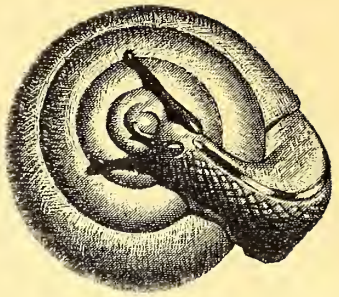
Plate CJJ shows a very rich design, formed entirely of chrysanthemums, *kiku*, the imperial flower, when, as here, it is formed of thirteen petals. It constitutes more particularly the armorial bearings of the Empire, whereas the paulownia is the *mon* of the Mikado's family. The use of this emblem on clothes or utensils was forbidden to every one else. The chrysanthemum was probably chosen as the symbol of the supreme power on account of the radiation of its petals which recalls the sun, of which the Japanese Emperors are the direct descendants.

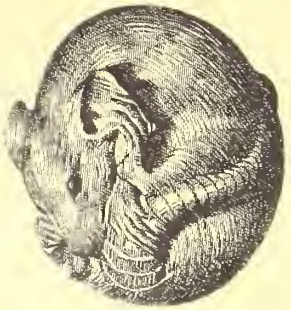
Contents of Number 28.

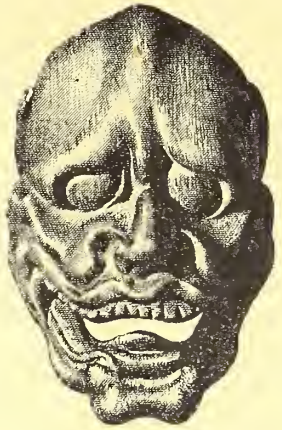
SEPARATE PLATES.

The next number will contain an article on the Japanese Theatre, by M. A. Lequeux.

GRAV IMP PAR GILLOT





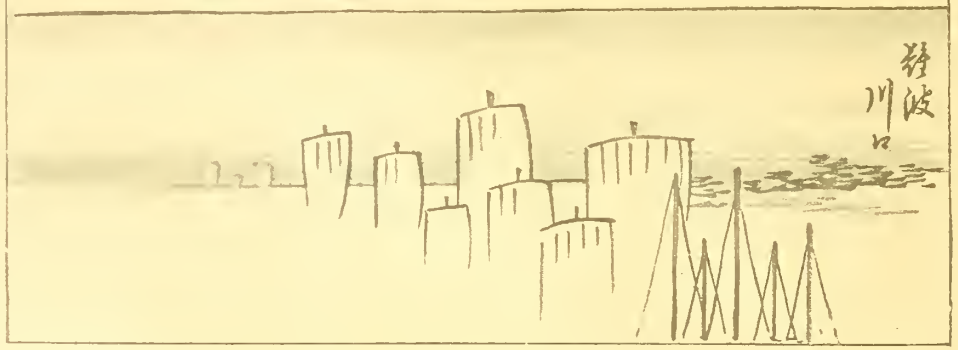


播磨 高砂の松

武蔵 金沢

摂津 須磨浦

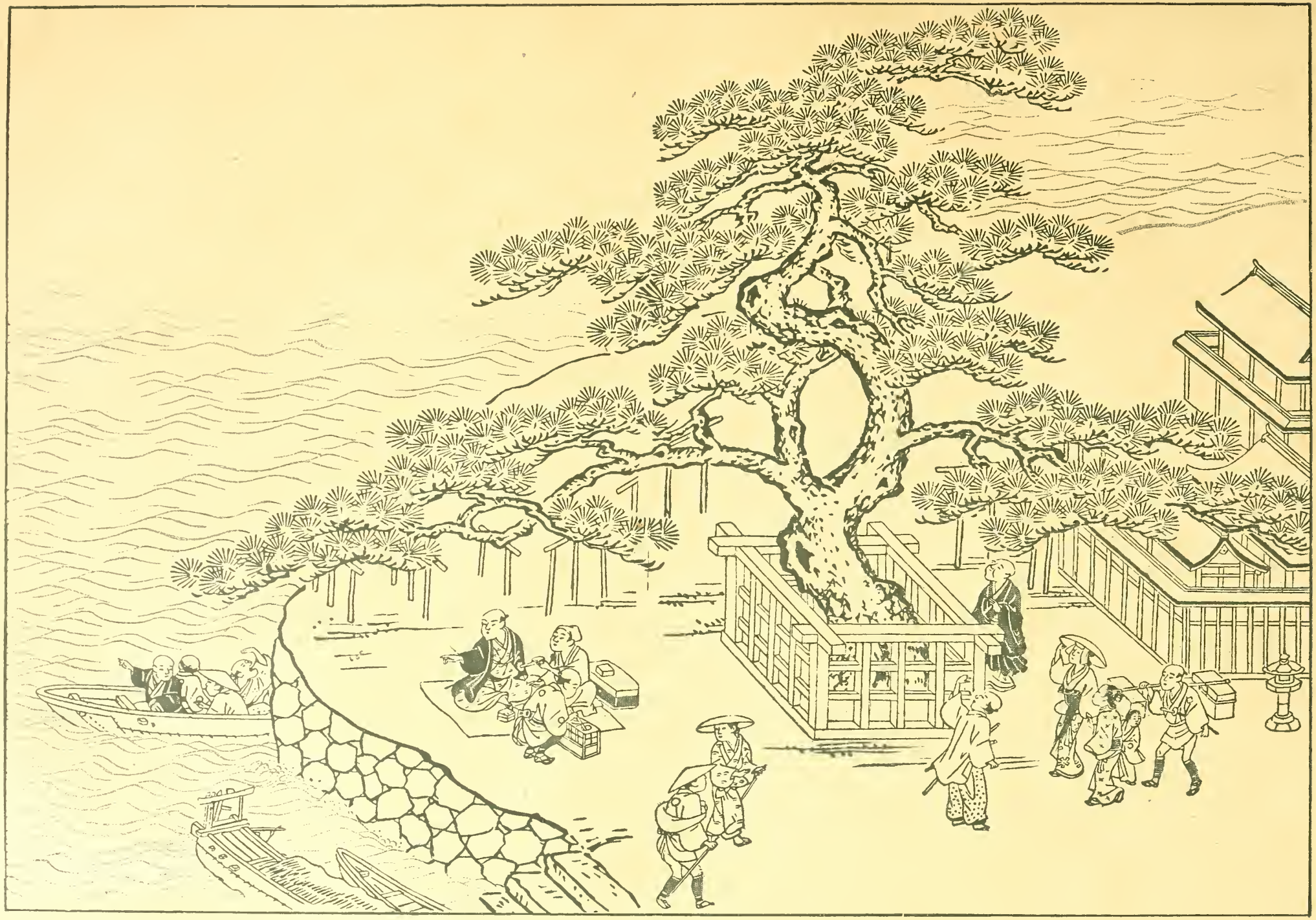
摂津 難波川口

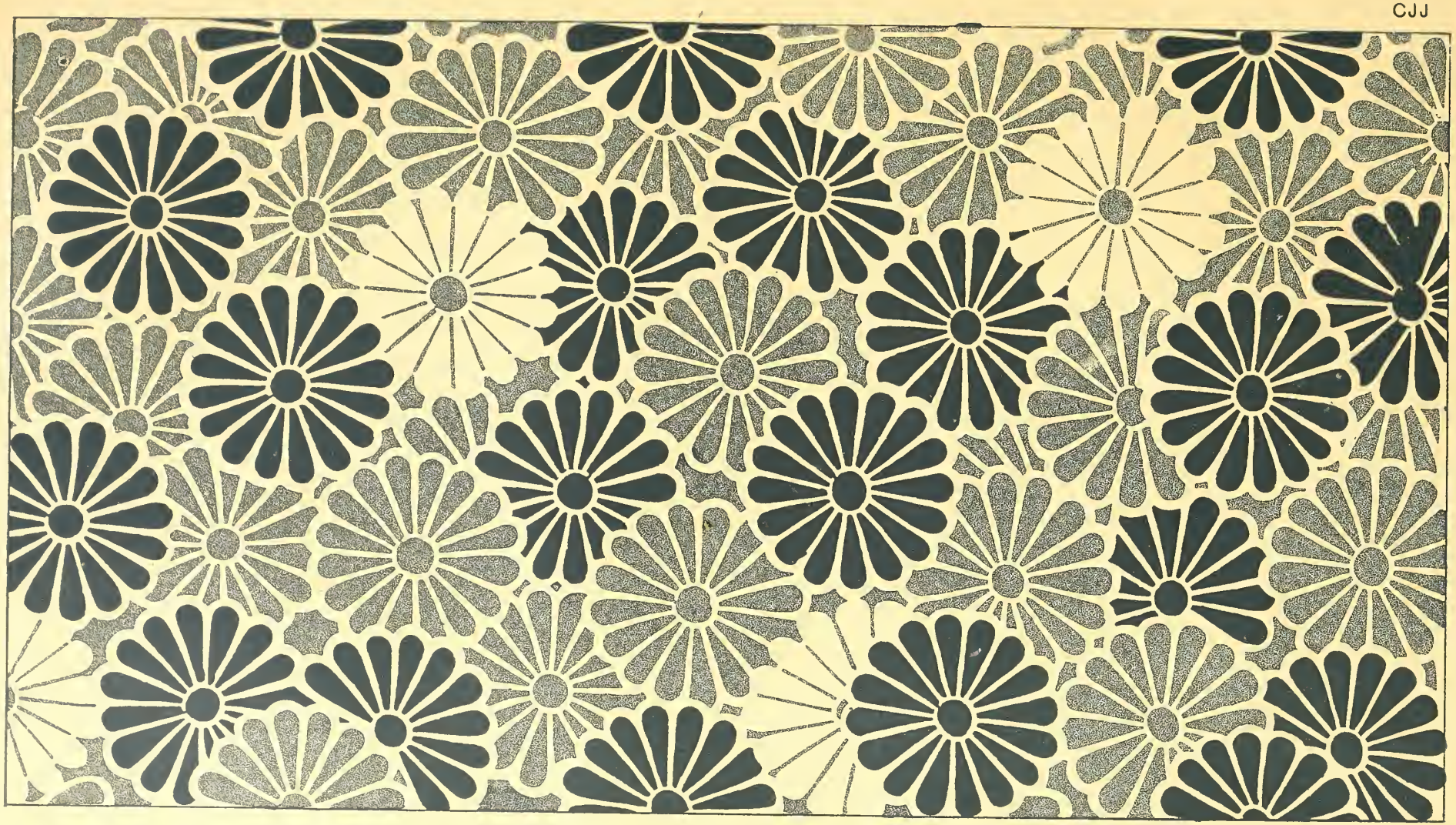


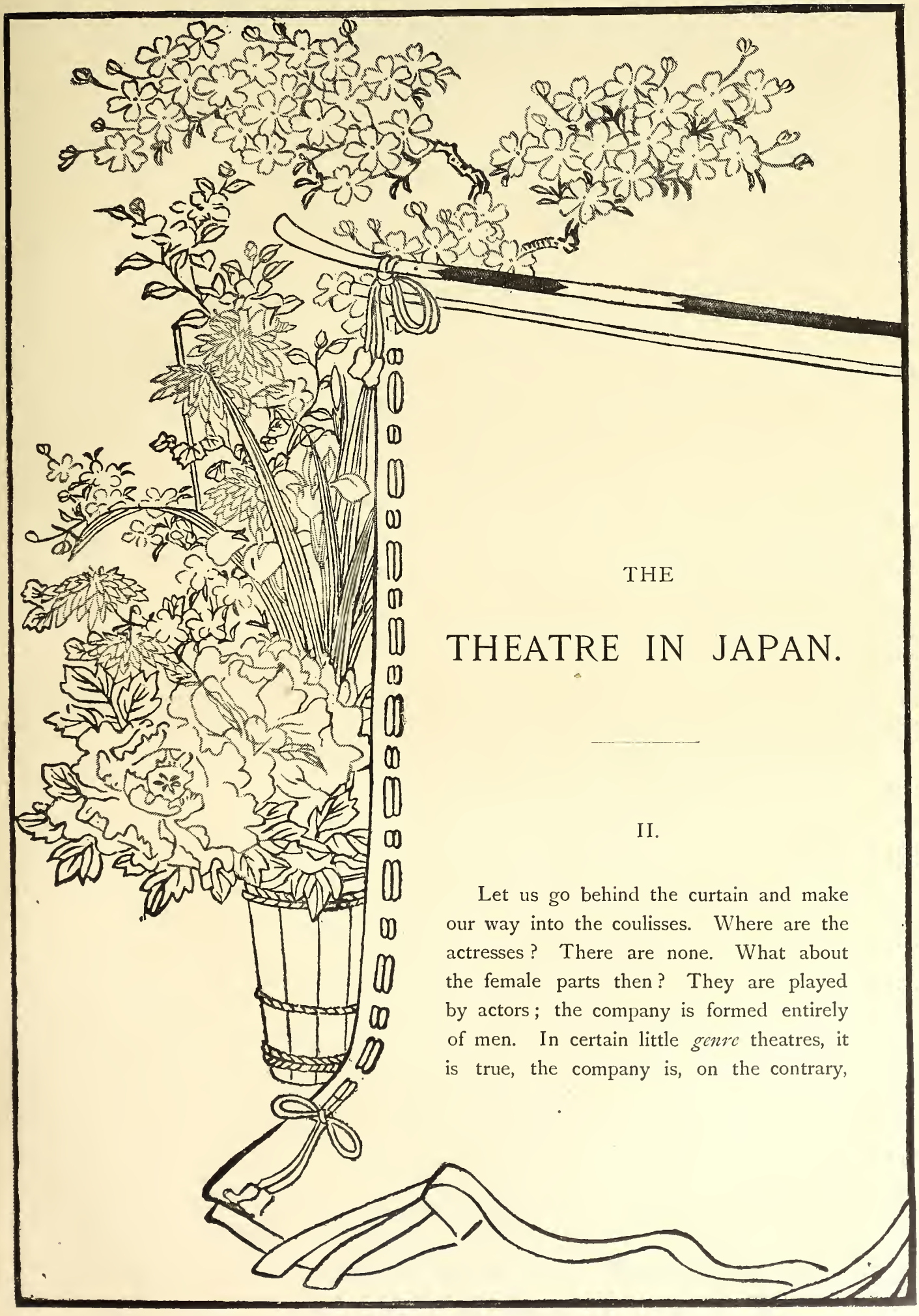
山城 京 嵐山

江都 吉原 弁天山

GRAV. IMP. PAR GILLOT.







THE

THEATRE IN JAPAN.

II.

Let us go behind the curtain and make our way into the coulisses. Where are the actresses? There are none. What about the female parts then? They are played by actors; the company is formed entirely of men. In certain little *genre* theatres, it is true, the company is, on the contrary,

Sketch by Korin. Seventeenth Century.

entirely composed of women. This, however, is a lower branch of the drama.* At any rate, the sexes are never mixed on the Japanese stage. This is, we have been assured, a question of morals. But, truth to tell, if we may believe what we have been told about the morals of the dramatic world in the Far East, it is doubtful whether morality gains thereby. So far as regards resemblance to nature, the only faulty point is the voice. Even in this point some actors arrive at a most marvellous imitation. Japanese costume so completely conceals the figure that in this respect the substitution of sex offers no difficulty. Lastly, so clever are the artists as mimics, that they complete the illusion by their deportment, gestures, and manners, so characteristically feminine, that they quite deceive the spactator. They know how to imitate—they are trained to it from their childhood—the peculiar walk of the Japanese ladies of rank,† and the even more peculiar walk of the great courtesans. The latter, which might almost be called classic, consecrated as it is by the traditions of the Japanese *demi-monde*, is the *ne plus ultra* of effiminate languor.‡

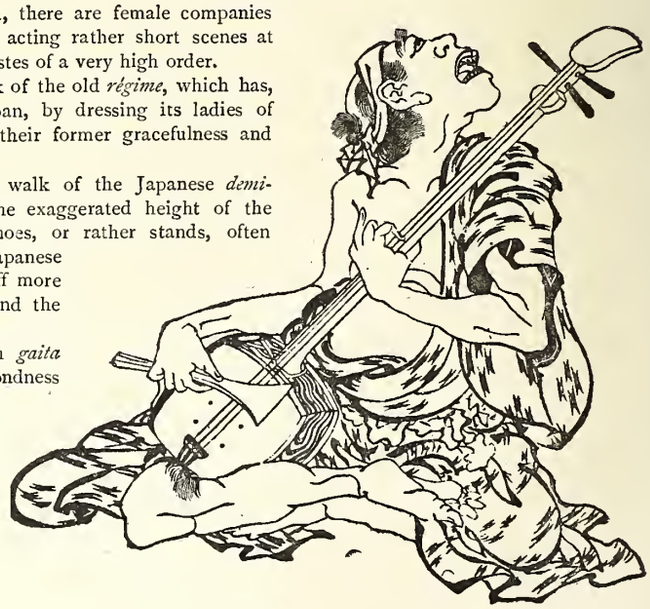
Do Japanese actors limit themselves, as ours do, to grasping the

* In certain towns, notably in Kyoto and Nagoya, there are female companies known by the name of *No*, who make a specialité of acting rather short scenes at private entertainments. Some of these actresses are artistes of a very high order.

† We are speaking here of Japanese ladies of rank of the old *régime*, which has, so to say, taken refuge in the theatre. Modern Japan, by dressing its ladies of quality in European clothes, has robbed them of all their former gracefulness and dignity.

‡ One of the most salient characteristics of the walk of the Japanese *demi-mondaines* is an extraordinary nonchalance, due to the exaggerated height of the *gaita* which they wear. These *gaita* are wooden shoes, or rather stands, often made of black lacquer for women, on which the Japanese place their feet. They are kept on by a strip of stuff more or less wadded, which passes between the big toe and the second toe.

One cannot help comparing this fashion of high *gaita* prevalent among the Japanese courtesans with the fondness shown by women of a similar class amongst us with pretensions to stylishness, to exaggerate to a ridiculous degree the shape—graceful in itself—of the Louis XIV. heel. As, however, the foot always rests flat on a *gaita*, however high it may be, the manner of walking which results from this fashion can have no analogy with that which comes from the use of high heels.



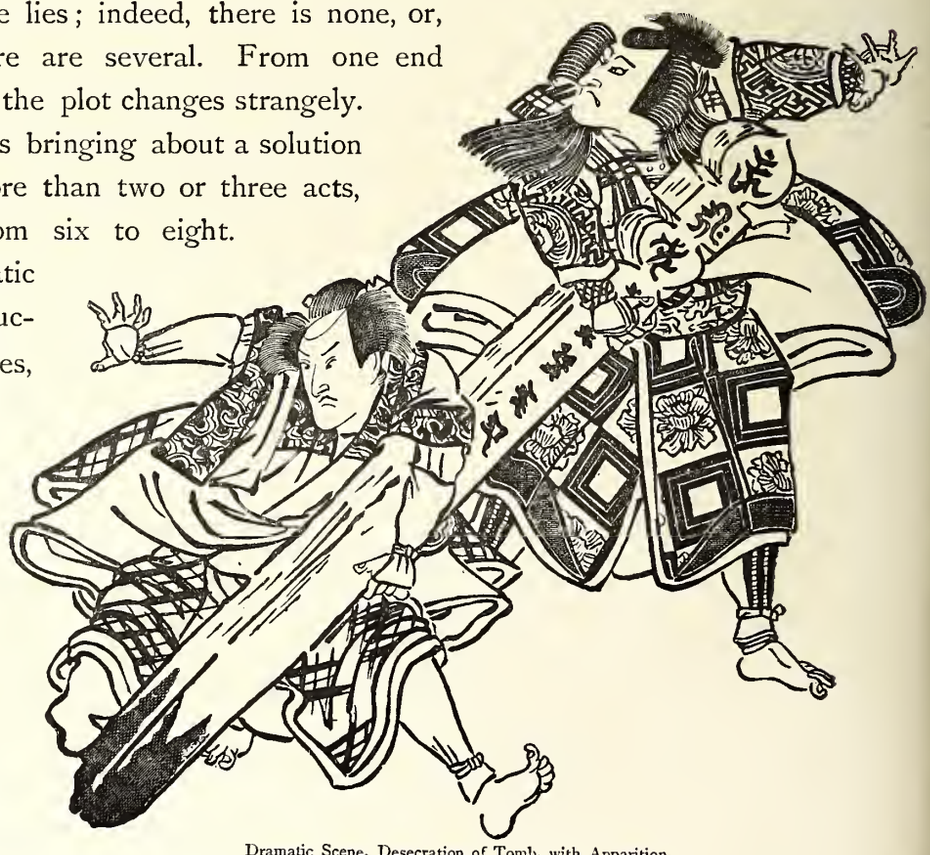
author's idea, and rendering it as they understand it? Not at all. They do a great deal more than this; they themselves collaborate in the piece; they compose it, so to say, the author furnishing only the idea and a framework, more or less complete, on which the actors embroider at will. We see how limited and insignificant is the part played by the author. Great actors every day improve or modify, without even consulting the author, and often on the spur of the moment, not only their manner of playing their own parts, but, further still, the action of the piece, and even the thread of the plot. Hence it comes that a piece is often played to the public for several weeks before it becomes definite. Japanese actors must be improvisors of a very high order. Such proceedings could never be reconciled with our rules of dramatic art. But the Japanese theatre cares little for the three unities. Unity of action itself is the least respected. The Japanese drama, as we have already remarked, is rather an image of real life than an ideal picture executed in subordinance to certain artistic principles. Thus the author and the actors who, not confining themselves to the interpretation of the piece, take a share in constructing it, do not hesitate to load it with incidents natural enough in themselves, but having nothing to do with the main action. So far from considering this as a defect, they consider that they thus get nearer nature, which is always their aim; and, indeed, they do so, their dramas of real life never stopping the ordinary course of existence, and the thread of their plots being interrupted by a thousand and one extraneous circumstances of a more or less trivial nature.

With such wide rules, the greatest liberty of invention may be left to the actor's fancy: instead of playing a part, he has to live it on the stage. He has only to master the main data of the piece, and to identify himself with the personage whom he represents. The result of this is that dramatic art in Japan is something quite different to what it is with us. The main lines of a piece, it is true, scarcely vary from one day to another; but the

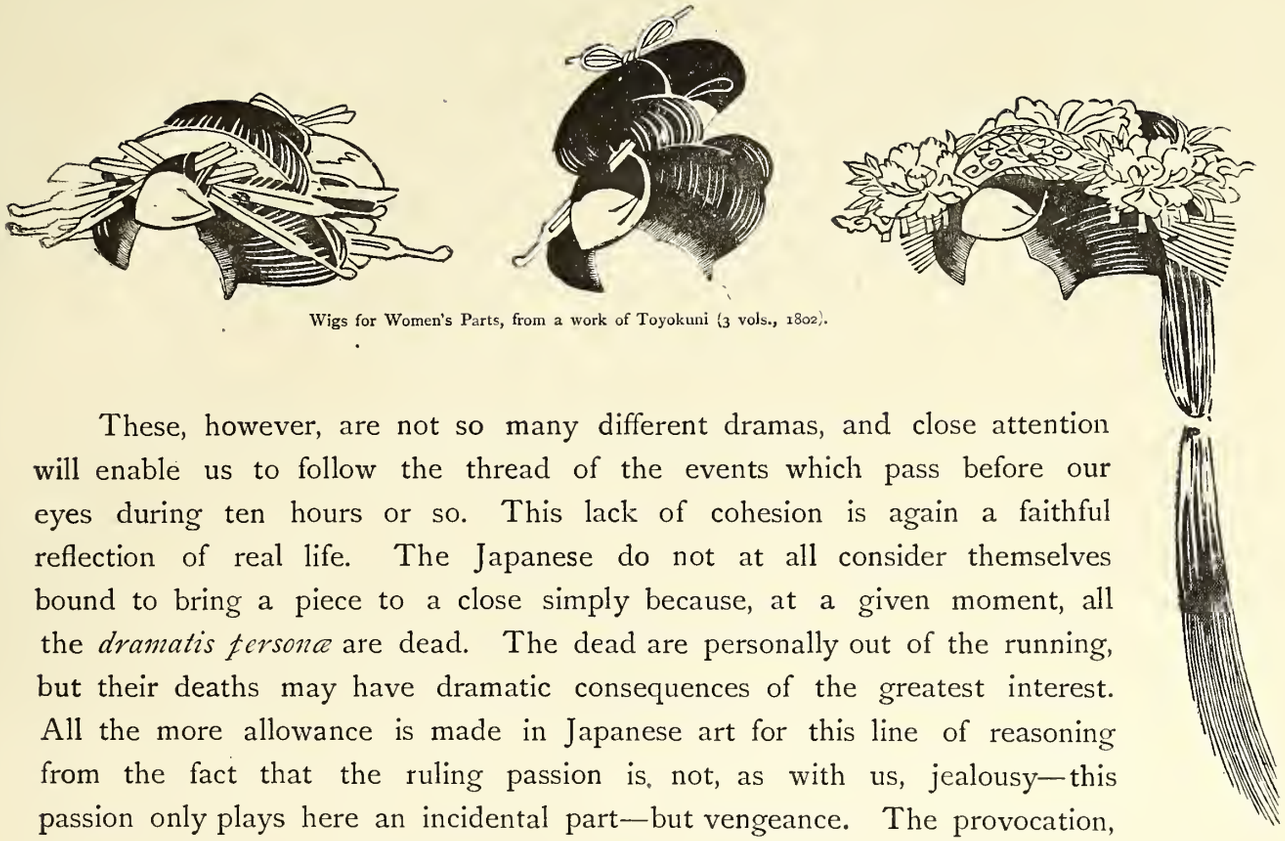
Wigs for Women's Parts, from a work of Toyokuni (3 vols., 1802).

dialogue is not fixed to such an extent as to bind the actors. They are consequently trained to follow the plot without being put out by the more or less unexpected phase it may present. They have always an answer ready for every occasion, and one of the greatest difficulties of their calling, a difficulty which they master most admirably, is to avoid on the one hand inopportune hurry which might cause disorder and confusion, and, on the other hand, hesitations or surprise which might make the dialogue halt. We need scarcely add that there is no room here for a prompter. It is, however, customary to write, *in extenso*, the text of certain passages in which the words are of capital importance in view of certain dramatic effects studied beforehand. In such cases a prompter is sometimes employed; but he is not, as with us, hidden in a box. He simply takes his place on the stage, crouching down behind the person whom he has to prompt. All the spectators can see him, with his play-book in his hand, performing his duties, which are, we must add, only momentary. But everyone knows that he does not count, and so makes an abstraction of his presence.

It is not only in the incidents that the Japanese drama, in its striving after truth, frees itself of unity of action. It would be difficult to decide where the dénouement of the piece lies; indeed, there is none, or, to put it otherwise, there are several. From one end of the play to the other, the plot changes strangely. The same series of facts bringing about a solution rarely stretches over more than two or three acts, and each piece has from six to eight. Three or four dramatic situations thus pass in succession before our eyes, almost without any connection with each other; and it is difficult to recognise by what links the end of the piece is connected to the beginning.



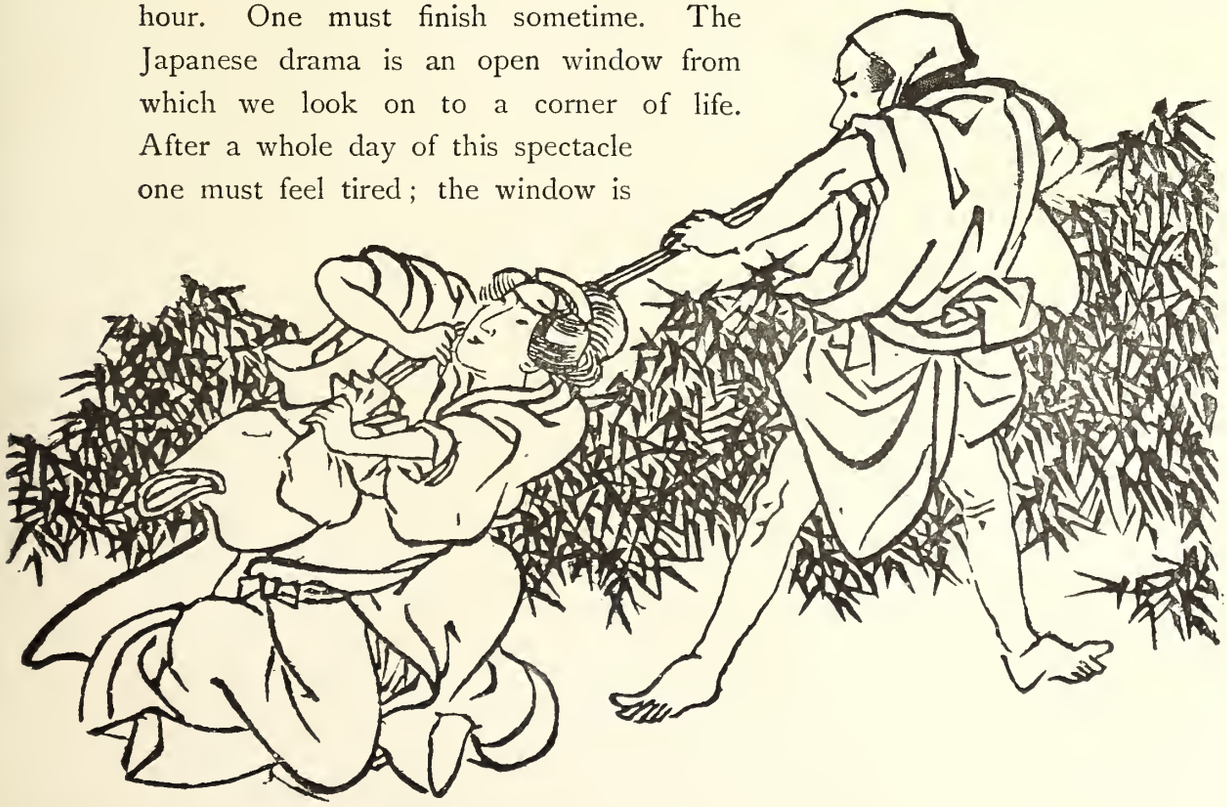
Dramatic Scene, Desecration of Tomb, with Apparition.



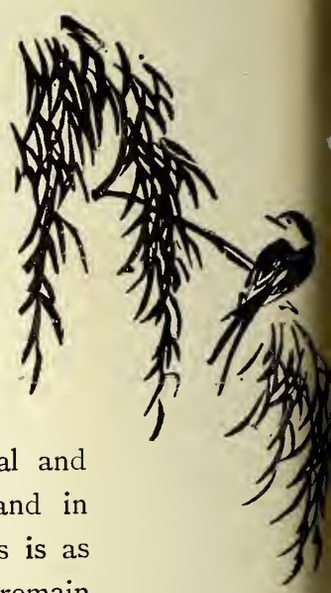
Wigs for Women's Parts, from a work of Toyokuni (3 vols., 1802).

These, however, are not so many different dramas, and close attention will enable us to follow the thread of the events which pass before our eyes during ten hours or so. This lack of cohesion is again a faithful reflection of real life. The Japanese do not at all consider themselves bound to bring a piece to a close simply because, at a given moment, all the *dramatis personæ* are dead. The dead are personally out of the running, but their deaths may have dramatic consequences of the greatest interest. All the more allowance is made in Japanese art for this line of reasoning from the fact that the ruling passion is, not, as with us, jealousy—this passion only plays here an incidental part—but vengeance. The provocation, the conception, the preparation of vengeance, such are the mainsprings of the Japanese drama, such are the points on which it is entirely based. The Japanese are essentially a vindictive people, and the history of Japan is one long *épopée* of vengeance.

Hence, too, comes the great length of their pieces. In Japan as in Corsica, there have been celebrated *vendettas* which have lasted for several centuries, fed by a long series of murders, one resulting from the other. The piece is brought to a close at last, not by a final catastrophe, but by the hour. One must finish sometime. The Japanese drama is an open window from which we look on to a corner of life. After a whole day of this spectacle one must feel tired; the window is



Dramatic Scene.



then closed. In old days the representations used to begin at dawn and last till long after sunset; they could thus continue almost without interruption for fifteen or eighteen hours. Under the influence of civilization, Japanese customs have grown milder: nowadays, after ten hours of a piece, the public thinks that it has had enough; the representations begin later and finish earlier. For some time past, in the larger theatres, it has become the custom at nightfall to light the gas; there is a row of footlights as with us. The smaller theatres, however, have not yet reached this pitch of civilization, and still employ the old-fashioned system of lighting, the only one formerly in vogue, the effect of which is very fantastic. The process is singularly original and peculiarly characteristic of Japan: it is now gradually disappearing, and in its disappearance local colour will sustain no small loss. This process is as follows: no attempt is made at lighting the house; the audience may remain in the dark; the stage itself is in utter blackness; only the face of each actor is lighted. For the Japanese *the* thing which it is particularly desirable to see on the stage is the play of physiognomy. The actor on the stage is therefore followed about by one of those dumb personages, one of those strange beings, counting for nothing, of whom we have already spoken, who holds all the time under the actor's nose a lamp with a reflector, fixed on to the end of a long handle; each actor has his shadow who follows him step by step as he moves about. It must be confessed that with regard to this manner of lighting, the Japanese public, so exacting about a realistic reproduction of nature, must forego a good deal of its pretensions. But this public seems to be so constituted that it revolts against the suppression of any portion of real life, while it tolerates an addition. It can take off, but cannot add on. Here, then, we have the very opposite of our dramatic Art.

In their manner of applauding, the Japanese again borrow from us. Such applause is as yet feeble and rare, but still it has begun to make itself heard. The old-fashioned way of applauding, which consists in calling out the name of the actor to whom this tribute of enthusiasm is directed, is still prevalent, but is daily losing ground. In Europe the audience calls out the names of the actors or actresses only for one or more

calls before the curtain, when they have gone off the stage; in Japan this is done right in the middle of a tirade, of a dialogue, or even of a scene in dumb-show; and the Japanese put so much originality of expression into their manner of applauding, that it would be impossible to convey the tone of it by words—it is a mixture of tenderness and of mannered affectation.

Dramatic Art being such as we have described it, it is not astonishing that there should be but few written plays in Japanese literature.* The only thing which the lover of the stage who wishes to keep a souvenir of a piece, or anyone who wishes to prepare himself beforehand for a piece which he is going to see, can get, is a book with the analysis of the piece. These books are numerous for one and the same piece, and do not always tally. This is to be accounted for by their origin: they are the work of various spectators who have a contract with the publishers or act as reporters to the native newspapers. There is the less reason to be astonished at these divergences between these theatrical analyses that they are not all made on the same day, and that, so long as a piece is new, it undergoes some variations at every representation. Now, it is just during this tentative period of a piece that the books are written.

Actors of note share between them the audiences of Tokio and Kyoto. Outside of these two towns, there are scarcely any but troupes of a lower order, provincial companies of more or less merit, according to the numerical importance and the artistic taste of their audiences. Even Osaka, which counts a far larger number of inhabitants than the old Imperial residence, is not nearly so well supplied, from the theatrical point of view. People are much too busy in this great commercial and industrial town to have time to give to the theatre. In Japan the theatre is not, as in western countries, an evening recreation earned by the day's work, but on the contrary the occupation—and a very absorbing one too—of a whole day.

* Nevertheless certain pieces which have become, so to say, classic, have been written *in extenso*, and have thus passed into the domain of literature, properly so called. These, however, form the exception.

The larger theatres of Tokio contain as many as two thousand spectators. But the inhabitants of this town are so numerous and such enthusiastic theatre-goers, that a piece may have a run of several months and draw full houses. It is lucky for the managers that this is so, for it costs a large sum of money to put a piece on the stage.

As a complement to this sketch, I hope to be able to give the readers of *Artistic Japan* in a future number an account of a Japanese drama. Amongst those which I have seen acted, I shall not choose "The Forty Ronin," the classic drama par excellence. This piece has already been analysed by many writers on Japan. Moreover, it is perhaps a little too classic, I might almost say too easy to understand, consequently it fails to convey a fair idea of the average of Japanese dramatic art. In other words, it is too well defined in its outline to be the type of the general æsthetic character of the Japanese Theatre. It is the piece which most European travellers are sent to see.

It will, I think, be preferable to add to the explanations which I have just given some more characteristic example. The drama which I intend to analyse is a good bit of local colour, even in its defects and on account of these defects; at the same time it contains scenes highly elevated in sentiment and others of thrilling horror which perhaps Shakespeare or Æschylus would not have disowned.

A. LEQUEUX.

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES.

Plate CJD represents, half the size of the original, a statuette in carved and lacquered wood. This work may serve as an argument against an opinion too often entertained which would limit the task of the Japanese sculptor to a miniature art. To rectify this idea, we must take into account something else besides the fancy knick-knacks of which nearly all of our collections are composed. Side by side with the popular artist who gave free play to his prolific imagination in the microscopic marvels of the *netzuké* and smoking accessories—nay, long before him—great masters had laid down in works full of power all the rules of beauty in its most opposite aspects, severe or charming, rigid or lifelike. In the matter of large proportions, the boldest conceptions failed to daunt the Japanese sculptor. The gigantic bronze Buddha, which rises at Kamakura—the remaining trace of a vanished capital—and that other, before which the believers bow in the mysterious twilight of a temple in Nara, are immortal witnesses of this fact. If an ancient tradition of Indian origin have prescribed a certain style for the idols of every kind which people the Buddhist sanctuaries (the Shinto religion forbids the use of images and admits no other personification of the Divine Being except the mirror, the symbol of the sun), we must set against this the more restricted, but not less interesting realm of profane sculpture, where the personal feeling of the artist reveals itself in its full intensity; where all the life of plant and bird and beast lives over again; where man is portrayed not only with a perfect knowledge of modelling, but also with a characteristic expression of the moral being. We will place before our readers these various manifestations of Japanese sculpture. To-day we present him with a specimen of religious sculpture.

We have here a representation of the god Kwanon, better known in Europe under the name of Kuanin, according to the Chinese pronunciation. He was the son and comrade of Dyani-Buddha-Amida, and often appears at the side of Buddha-Sakia-Muni. All the Buddhist sects in Japan hold him in high esteem. He is the god of Charity and Pity. He is often represented under the form of a woman; he then becomes the goddess of the sea, who is also the goddess of beauty and the protectress of women and children. The hieratic representations of Kwanon are extremely varied; some have several pairs of arms. This, which has only two, is the Sho-Kwanon, "true Kwanon." The lotus which the figure holds in its hand calls up the idea of piousness by allusion to the lotus flower, which also serves as a pedestal to all the representations of Buddha, and symbolises the heart of man opening to the faith. The sculptor's chisel has been wielded with marvellous success in softening all the naturally hard forms of the wood to render the light stuff in which the god is draped. A smoke-coloured tint enlivened by a light net-work of dim gold gives this statue, which dates from the seventeenth century, a fine warm and sober colour. The frontal stone is a constant attribute of Buddha. The head-ornaments and the pendant fillets are in metal, cut out and gilt.

Plate BJI is a scene of actors by Kiyonobu, the earliest of the Torii (1690), and the inventor of coloured xylography. The print here reproduced is stamped in only two colours, a pale green and faded rose. It was, as has been already pointed out in No. XXV. page 330, quite at the beginning of printing in colours that these two tones were employed, the blending of these two delicate tints being in the highest degree satisfactory to the refined eye of the Japanese. If the art of printing figures was still only in its infancy, the same was not the case with the art of drawing. We may see what skill and knowledge these old masters possessed in the composition of their subject and the arrangement of the draperies; how Kiyonobu has contrived to dress his personages, uncovering a woman's shoulder, giving the dress the appearance of an indoor garment, with none of the stiff folds of a ceremonial costume. The *mon* (No. XXVIII., page 367) or crest on the dress of each actor corresponds here to the personage represented on the stage, contrary to its usual signification when worn by actors on their out-of-door dresses. The same *mon* is then used by all the members of one company, and becomes so to say the flag of the troupe.

Plate BDI represents another scene with actors. In this case it is a concert, probably in a private house.* Sometimes it is a pantomime which is performed, the musicians explaining the story bit by bit, the actors varying the entertainment from time to time by spoken scenes; at other times the programme consists of songs called *djorori*, which the performer accompanies by striking a little gong held in one hand.

The author of this composition also belongs to the family of the Tori-i, but later than Kiyonobu (see the preceding plate). This print dates from the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Plate BCA. Some little drawings by Keisai-Yeisen; sketches dashed off the end of his brush, notes from nature, bits of designs for some object or other. Here we have a sparrow perched on the flowery branch of a tree, two circles framing a flight of three storks; there a landscape, after Hiroshigé's well-known manner; then again we see one of those bamboo conducts which serve to bring water for watering gardens or irrigating rice fields, with a growth of young bamboo shoots and a bright little bird who comes to drink at this artificial spring. A bunch of leaves, made up and tied together in the traditional manner, adorn one part of the aërial canal, and serve to tell that it is a day of festival.

Plate CJE is taken from a volume by Keisai-Kitao-Massayoshi. Grouped together as chance presented them, these little scenes represent a hundred and one occupations of the daily life of the people sketched from nature; women dressing themselves or doing their hair, massage, the kitchen, children at dinner, etc. Many people will be tempted before this print to call up the name of Hokusai. This proves that if Hokusai succeeded in carrying to the acme of perfection almost everything which he touched, he was not in everything an initiator, and that before him other artists had learned to observe and reproduce the life around them. This print is eloquent as characteristic of the school which had already existed for a hundred years before Hokusai made his appearance and became the personification of its highest development.

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* Cf. in this number, Note 1, p. 372.

Plate BJG is taken from a volume of flowers (in 4to, Yeddo, 1813) bearing the signature Joshin, which is only another name assumed by Massayoshi, the author of the plate of figures which we have just been looking at. Different as are the subjects in these two pages, we may recognise in both the same qualities of observation, and in the latter great skill in rendering the kind of indecision, the appearance of flowers and leaves bathed in intense light, which does away with the half shades, suppresses all the high lights, and leaves only the dominant note of the tone.

Plate AAC represents a fight in mid-air between two sparrows tearing each other to pieces, beak and nail.

On the right is the Japanese lark, very like our own European bird.

Plate BHC is taken from a work by Ninagawa Noritané, *Kwan-ko-szu-setsu*, of which we have already spoken (No. XVII., page 64). Here we have two pieces of pottery, on the left a little hot-water jug for tea, and on the right a *tsha-tsubo* for keeping tea in. Ninagawa gives these objects the name of *Otayaki*. The word yaki means pottery. Ota is a village near Yokohama and the china-factories there are of recent origin. They were started by the potter Makudzu, a native of Kyoto, who has since then produced largely for the European market. The glaze which runs over the vase on the left hand bears a great resemblance to the ware of Haghi. The other piece shows signs of incrustation with shells, either from having remained a long time in the sea or from the potter having amused himself with imitating the marks of shells. We cannot clear up this point, not having had in our hands (as was the case with the other objects of the Ninagawa collection), the original pieces here reproduced.

Plate BGH is a decorative design composed of a blind, in front of which little birds, whose wings and long tail feathers resembling those of swallows interlace and form a very rich pattern.

Plate BIJ shows to what a point the Japanese have pushed the art of arrangement, and their love of the unexpected in the way of decorative design.

Charmed by the appearance, new to them, of European characters, the meaning of which they did not understand, they struck on the idea of placing them in symmetrical groups. The ground-work of this pattern has been all filled in with little umbrellas and words made up of cursive characters put together at haphazard, just as might have been done by some European decorator struck with the decorative appearance of Japanese or Arab inscriptions.

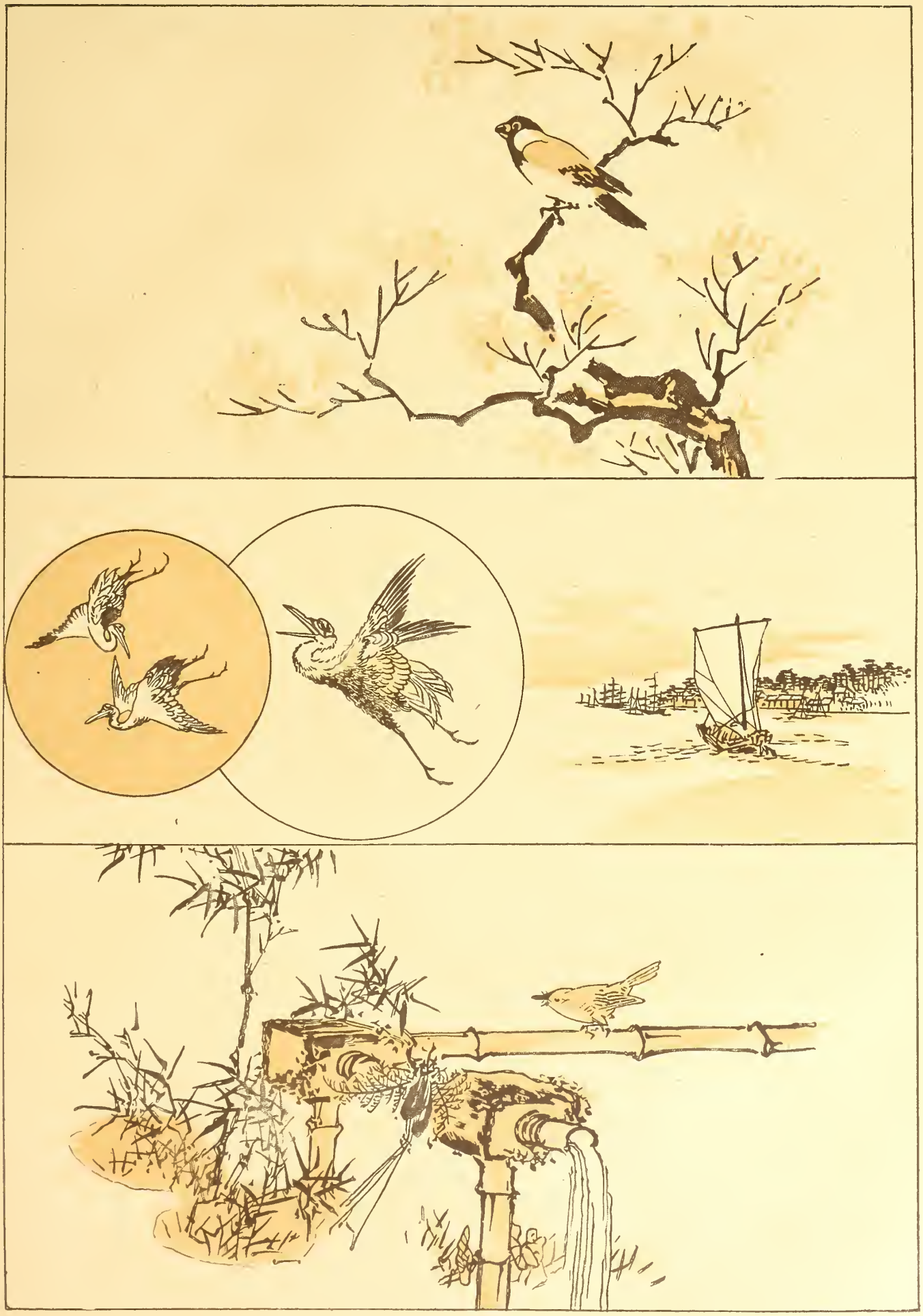
Contents of Number 29.

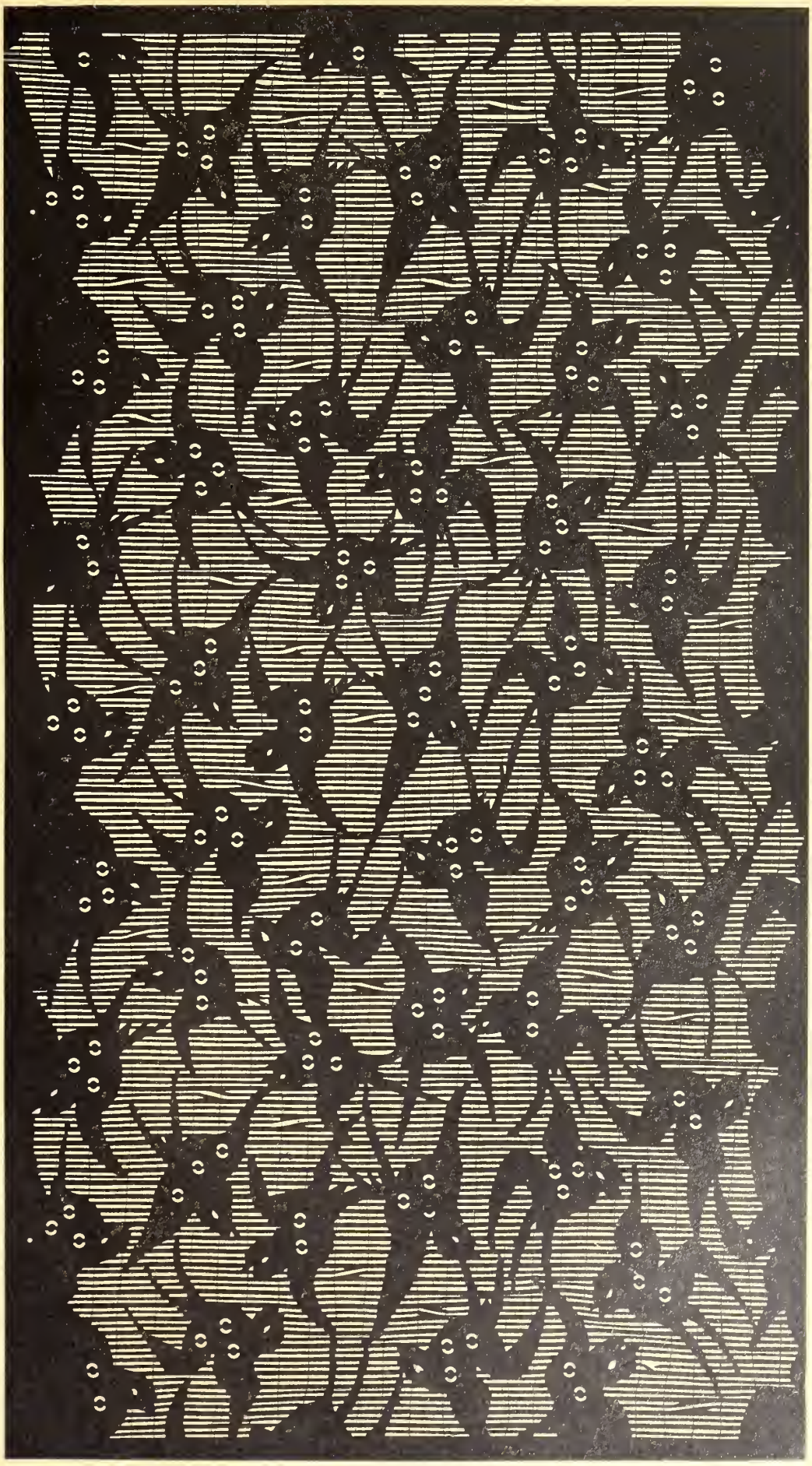
SEPARATE PLATES.

鳥居清信筆

GRAV. IMP. PAR GILLOT.


佐々木
幸八
高吉坊
文字太夫
同志書太夫
てくてく
大あくび
瀬川菊之丞
中村





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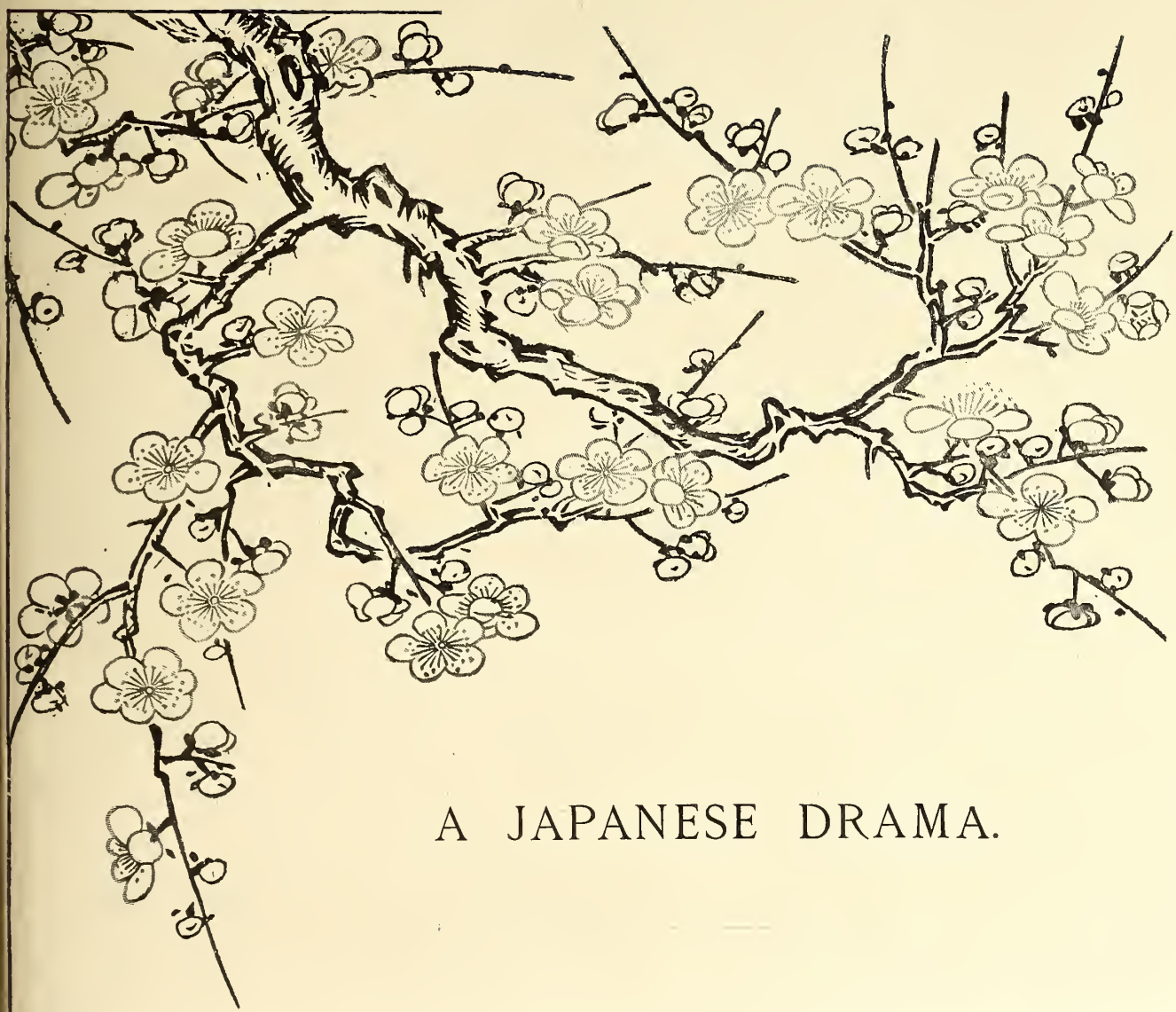
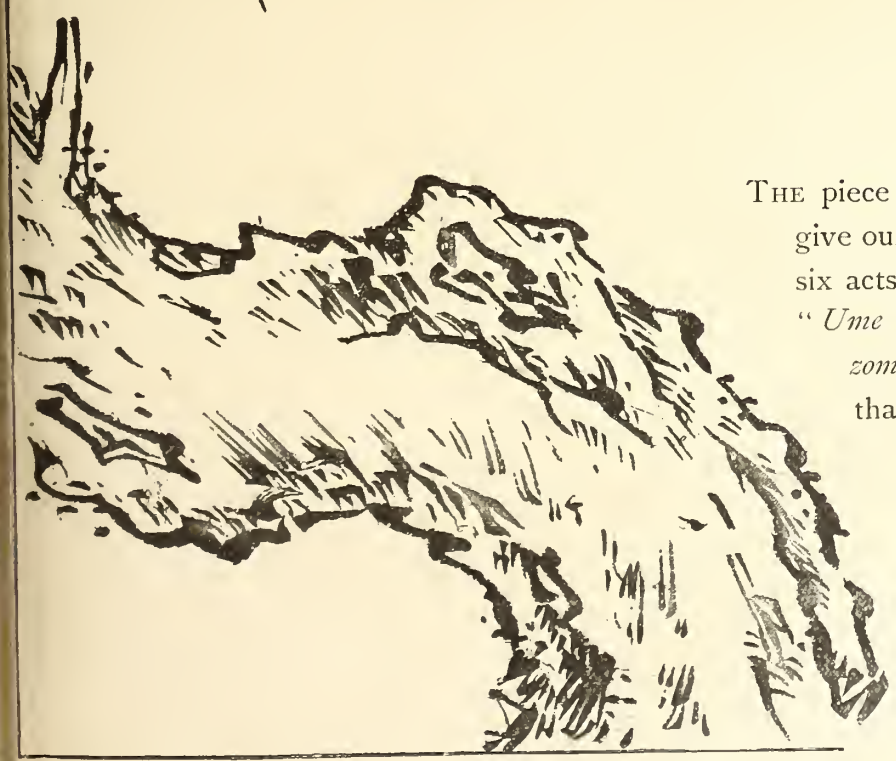


A JAPANESE DRAMA.



I.

THE piece of which we will endeavour to give our readers an idea is a drama in six acts and thirteen tableaux, entitled "*Ume no haru tate-shi no go sho zome.*" How can we translate that? Let us take the phrase word by word in the order of Japanese grammatical construction: *Go sho zome* = hangings serving to adorn a court apartment; *no* = of;

tate-shi = a part of a large house; *ume no haru* = the springtime of plum-trees. This is all that we have been able to arrive at after consulting the best interpreters. The title is an enigma. This is frequently the case in Japan. The titles of theatrical pieces have often a most subtle connection with the pieces themselves. Sometimes it is even useless to look for any connection at all. Such seems to be the case in the instance before us.

Obliged to confine myself within the limits of a magazine article, I must limit my endeavours to setting before the reader some characteristic scenes from the great mass which constitute a Japanese drama.

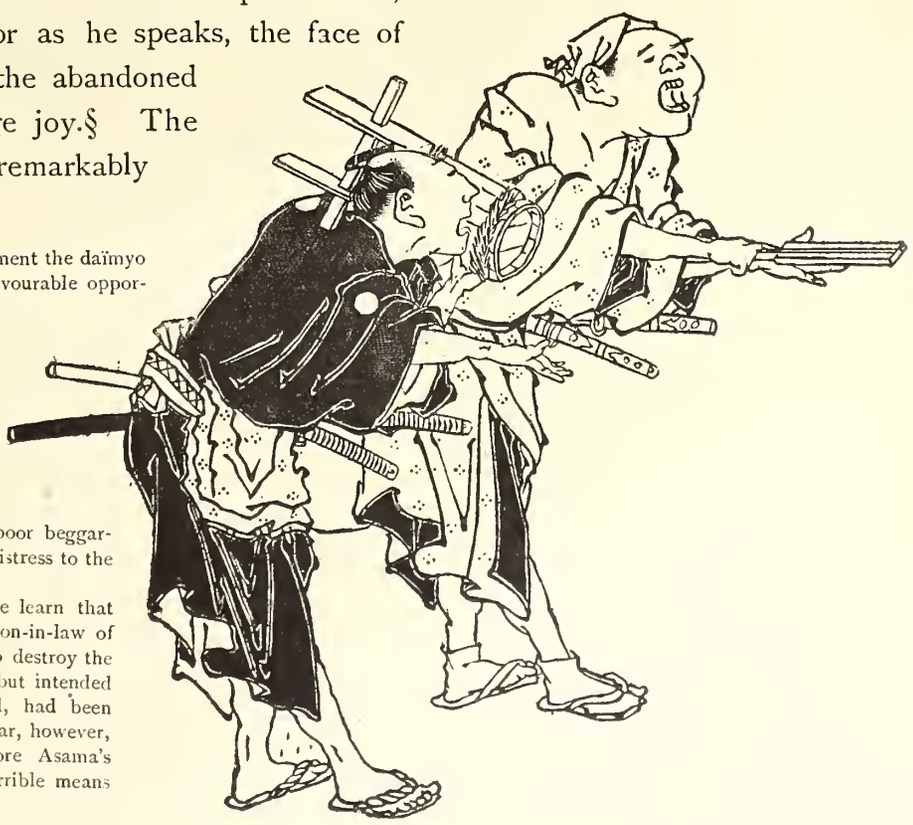
In order to understand the passage which follows, the reader must be told that in the beginning of the piece the daïmyo Asama, while travelling one night, has rescued a poor girl from the attack of some brigands, fallen

in love with her, and made her his mistress, an arrangement countenanced by the moral code of old Japan. This brings us to the beginning of the third act, in which takes place the scene which I am now going to describe.

First Tableau.—The scene represents the garden of the palace on the river Katakami-gawa, in Oshu. It is the middle of April; the trees are in blossom.

After a few incidents of little importance, Nadeshiko, the legitimate wife of the daïmyo, appears in a gorgeous dress. She is sad, feeling she has been thrust aside by her husband for a concubine, the adventuress whom at the end of the first act the daïmyo and his attendants rescued from the hands

of the brigands. But she knows how to bear her sorrow with dignity. She goes inside the palace, and soon after we see enter on the stage her mother, an old woman of sixty-five, with quite white hair, and a face betokening great energy. Less resigned than her daughter, the old woman can scarcely keep within bounds her anger against her son-in-law; she cannot brook that a wife, and that wife her own daughter, should be supplanted by a mistress.* Her attendants, despite all their efforts, cannot succeed in calming her. Then the keraï Yakuro,† an officer in the service of the daïmyo, makes his appearance. He makes a sign to the mother of Nadeshiko that he has something to say to her. Thereupon the old woman, always suspicious, orders such of her maids as she does not implicitly trust, to retire. Yakuro approaches, and proceeds to offer his condolences for the contempt with which the daïmyo Asama, his lord and master, has treated Nadeshiko since the arrival at the palace of Hototogisu, the concubine.‡ With many circumlocutions, he relates that he has been in treaty with the doctor, who has promised to supply him with a sure and deadly poison. Yakuro's precautions, however, are superfluous, for as he speaks, the face of Yuri Nokata, the mother of the abandoned wife, lights up with a savage joy.§ The play of facial expression is remarkably



* In act iv. we shall see that at this moment the daïmyo had just left for Kiôto, thus affording a favourable opportunity to the designs of his mother-in-law.

† A personage who has already appeared in the second and third *tableaux* of the first act. He it was who carried off for the daïmyo the poor beggar-girl, who subsequently became his mistress. We shall see what a detestable part this double-faced individual plays.

‡ This elegant name was given to the poor beggar-girl when she was raised to the rank of mistress to the daïmyo.

§ In the beginning of the next scene we learn that Yuri Nokata had already tried to cure her son-in-law of his passion for Hototogisu by attempting to destroy the latter's beauty. A first poison, not mortal, but intended to spoil her good-looks and make her ill, had been administered to Hototogisu. It would appear, however, that this had not been sufficient to restore Asama's affections to his wife. Other and more terrible means are then resorted to.

well done by the actor who performs this part. The doctor is there waiting. He is shown in. Without allowing him time to finish his salutations, Yuri

The Apparition, by Hokusai.

Nokata asks him point-blank if he has brought the drug. He hands it to her with all due ceremony, and is rewarded with a gift of money. But Yakuro remarks in a whisper that it is dangerous to let him go away thus. Yuri Nokata grasps the wisdom of this observation, and tells the doctor that as a token of honour she wishes to offer him a sword.* She makes a sign to Yakuro to pass her one of his; she wishes to present it with her own hands to the doctor. The latter advances most humbly, and appears deeply touched by so great a favour. Just as he is about to take the sword, Yuri Nokata strikes him with it, and lays him dead with a single blow.

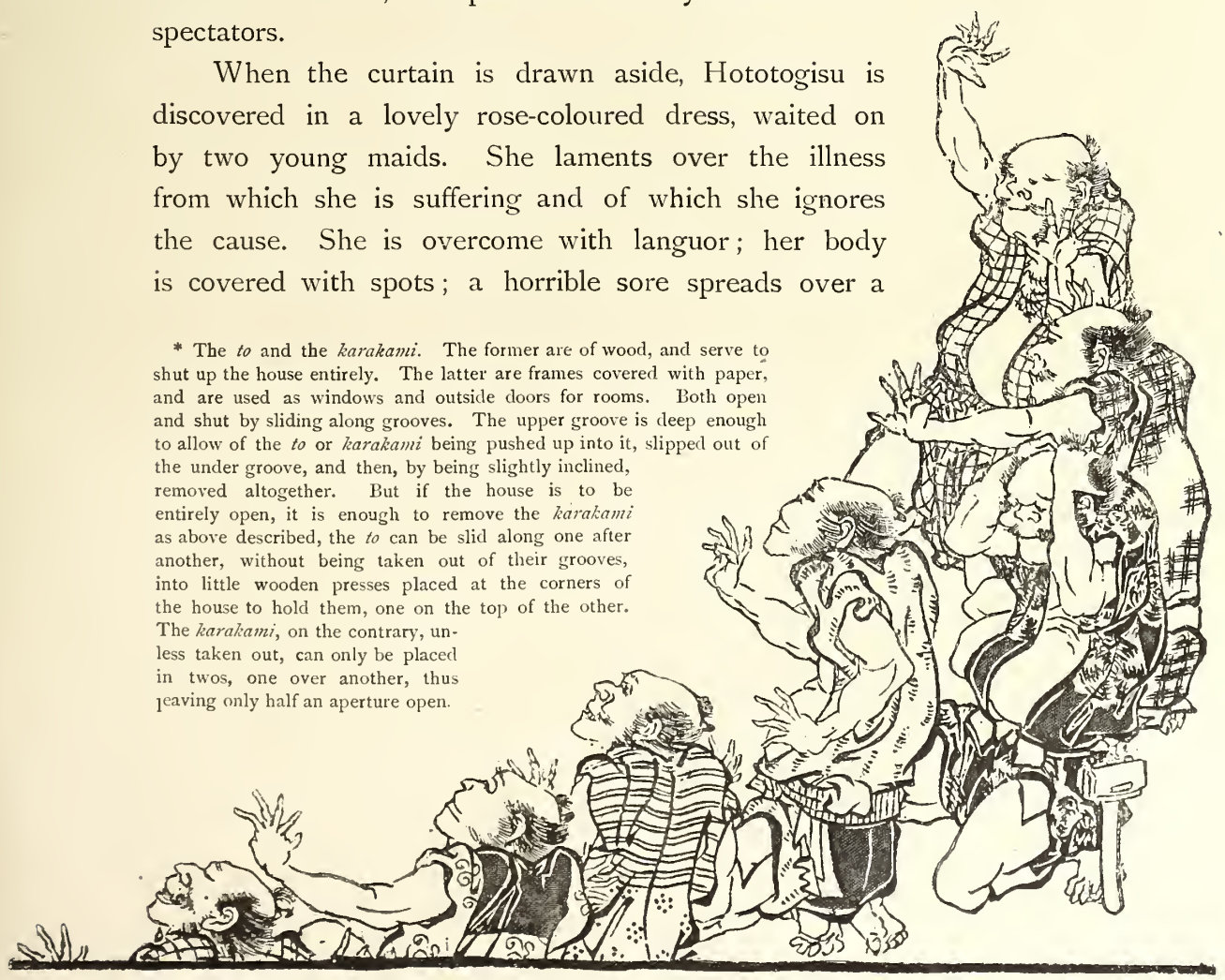
* Under the old *régime*, doctors were, besides noblemen, the only persons allowed to wear a sword; but they were only allowed one rather short sword, whereas the samuraï wore two.

The doctor was an inconvenient witness; it was necessary to get rid of him. The old woman appears to be delighted with her success; this is, as we shall see, by no means her last exploit. She receives the congratulations of Yakuro and her servants. Orders are immediately given to administer the poison to Hototogisu.

Second Tableau.—The pavilion inhabited by the favourite. The outside panels * having been taken off, we can see into the room, which is very elegant. All round the house stretches a charming garden, through which meanders a little river, crossed by one of those zig-zag bridges only to be found in Japan. The river and the bridge take up one of those platforms which stretch from one end of the house to the other. The scenery is thus brought in among the audience, and presently the action, at the most dramatic moment, will pass in the very midst of the spectators.

When the curtain is drawn aside, Hototogisu is discovered in a lovely rose-coloured dress, waited on by two young maids. She laments over the illness from which she is suffering and of which she ignores the cause. She is overcome with languor; her body is covered with spots; a horrible sore spreads over a

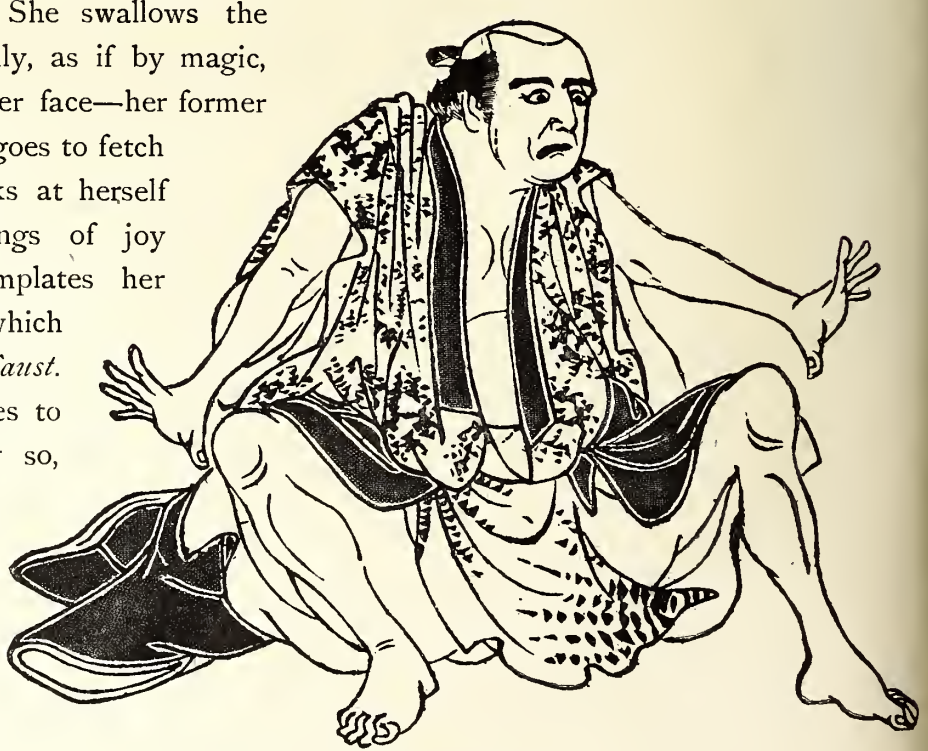
* The *to* and the *karakami*. The former are of wood, and serve to shut up the house entirely. The latter are frames covered with paper, and are used as windows and outside doors for rooms. Both open and shut by sliding along grooves. The upper groove is deep enough to allow of the *to* or *karakami* being pushed up into it, slipped out of the under groove, and then, by being slightly inclined, removed altogether. But if the house is to be entirely open, it is enough to remove the *karakami* as above described, the *to* can be slid along one after another, without being taken out of their grooves, into little wooden presses placed at the corners of the house to hold them, one on the top of the other. The *karakami*, on the contrary, unless taken out, can only be placed in twos, one over another, thus leaving only half an aperture open.



Spectators at a Wrestling Match, by Hokusai.

quarter of her face. A gentle breeze is blowing, and the irises on the river-banks sway to and fro in it. Night falls, and Hototogisu dismisses her maids. She remains alone for a few minutes; then suddenly a strange noise is heard; she is seized with fright as she beholds a flame rise from the earth, followed immediately by a spectre. Overmastered by her terror she is about to fly; but the ghost bids her stay, telling her that it wishes to speak to her. Gradually she calms herself, then she is again seized with terror as she recognizes the Court doctor. He confesses to her that love of money has led him to commit a crime for which he has already been punished. He tells her about the resentment of the daïmyo's mother-in-law, and her resolution to be revenged on the favourite. He informs her that the illness from which she is suffering is the result of a drug which has been administered to her, but which will not cause her death. That Yuri Nokata is however determined to get rid of her daughter's rival at any price, and that for this purpose she has asked for a deadly poison. "This poison," he adds, "I have just given to her, receiving in reward a sword-thrust. Beware of taking the medicine which will be offered to you; it would be death. As to the disease to which you are a prey, you will be cured of it by drinking the contents of a little phial which you will find there"—pointing to the shrine of the domestic deity. "This was what I wished to tell you." The ghost disappears. Hototogisu, after reflecting for a few moments over what she has just heard, advances towards the spot indicated by the spectre, and finds that there really is a phial there. She swallows the contents of it, and suddenly, as if by magic, the spots disappear from her face—her former beauty has returned. She goes to fetch her looking-glass, and looks at herself in it with mingled feelings of joy and surprise; she contemplates her reflection with gestures which recall the jewel-scene in *Faust*. Radiant with joy, she retires to rest, closing, before doing so, the windows of her room.

Two furies, each armed with a sword, now

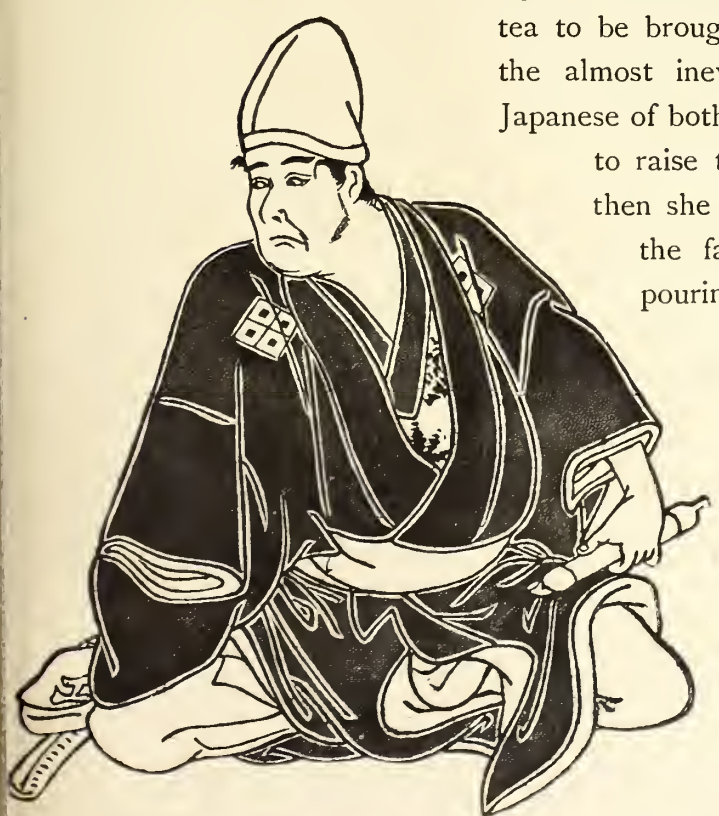


Actor, by Riukosai Jokei (1800).

enter; they are two maid-servants of the daïmyo's mother-in-law. They advance cautiously over the little bridge across the river. From their conversation we learn that their mistress has on reflection resolved to employ the sword as surer than poison. Stealthily they creep towards the pavilion, separate to take up their position at the two extremities of it, then rush in at the same moment. The window is raised, and we see the unfortunate Hototogisu covered with blood and struggling with these two wretches; her strength is soon exhausted and she falls apparently dead.

Yuri Nokata makes her entry on the stage from the far end of the house, followed by three or four waiting-maids. Her servants make signs to her from a distance that their task is accomplished; her face beams with joy, and she proceeds to seat herself near her victim.

Suddenly, however, the latter rises to her full height and reproaches her mother-in-law with her cowardly conduct, relating all that she has learned from the doctor's ghost. "Yes," replies the old woman without flinching, "it was I who brought thee to this plight. Why? Hast thou not wiled away the heart of my son-in-law? My daughter is resigned and hides in silence the shame which is gnawing her breast. But I could not do the same." The younger woman turns from her with a gesture of loathing. All then fall on her and pierce her through and through with swords and daggers. She falls back, but life is not yet extinct. Blood streams all over her dress. Yuri Nokata takes up her position on a bench, the better to gloat over the sight. She feels no prickings of conscience, for she orders tea to be brought to her and quietly smokes her pipe—the almost inevitable concomitant of a rest with the Japanese of both sexes. She makes a sign to two servants to raise the dying woman, and hold her upright; then she rises and places her still burning pipe on the face of her victim, as a crowning insult, pouring forth the most cruel invectives against her. Intoxicated by her own words, she thrusts the pipe into the gaping wound in her victim's throat, tearing the bleeding flesh in a paroxysm of rage. Hototogisu gives a shriek of pain and her body writhes convulsively. This scene is horrible, but it is very fine in its way.



Actor, by Riuko-ai Jokei (1800).

Actor, by Shokosai (1820).

Then Yuri Nokata begins to detail a fresh string of invectives; she reproaches her enemy with her beauty, her charms, those eyes which had ravished the heart which by right belonged to her own daughter, that mouth which had intoxicated Nadeshiko's husband with kisses, those arms which had wound themselves so lovingly round his body—so perfidiously round his reason. As she utters these last words she seizes the sword of one of her maid-servants and severs, at a single blow, one of her wretched victim's arms. The latter moans piteously, the arm falls on the ground, the blood spurts out. The unhappy Hototogisu drops down utterly exhausted.

Believing her to be dead, the bloodthirsty band retires to rest. Yuri Nokata is surrounded by her maid-servants vying with each other in congratulations and attentions. While they are thus occupied, Hototogisu recovers consciousness; she has just enough strength left to drag herself to the little bridge; she is on the point of escaping. The old woman perceives her; thrusting aside her servants, she rushes out herself, armed with a sword, in pursuit of her victim, who can scarcely crawl along. She easily overtakes her. Then seizing her by her trailing hair she drags her over the bridge; when one hand grows tired she changes to the other, and then finding her sword hampering her she holds it between her teeth. She is hateful and at the same time sublime. At last, no longer able to accomplish her task alone, she makes a sign for help; then coiling her victim's long hair round and round her right arm, she has herself dragged by her left to the middle of the stage, hauling after her the wretched Hototogisu, fainting or dead. At last the death-blow is dealt, and Yuri Nokati sits down quietly to rest after her exploit. She has a fresh cup of tea and smokes several more pipes.* She has earned them well. When she has

* The tiny bowl of a Japanese pipe contains just enough tobacco for two or three whiffs; but several pipes are often smoked without interruption. The pipe is lighted each time at a little brasero for this purpose, or from the still burning ashes of a former pipe. The only difference between men's and women's pipes is in the length of the stem, which is longer for women. Some people, who have only seen these pipes in Europe, believe them to be used for smoking opium. This is quite a mistake. In Japan only tobacco is smoked; opium is, we may add, strictly forbidden by the Government.

recovered her breath she orders the dead body to be thrown into the river; the severed arm is thrown in after it.

At this juncture the two young maids of Hototogisu enter; they seem terrified, and hiding themselves as well as they can, they endeavour to escape. But Yuri Nokata has caught sight of them; by their demeanour she understands that they have seen the murder. They might speak, and must therefore be got rid of. She gives the order, and the poor things are killed, without having the strength to show any resistance. Their corpses are pitched into the water after that of their mistress.

By a movement which is intensely human, and which shows a profound study of nature by the actor, the old woman before retiring to bed comes forward and peers into the river at the spot where the bodies have been thrown in. She is hideous to look at in the ferocious joy of her satisfied revenge. Suddenly, just as she is leaning over towards the river, a flame flares up from the water; it is Hototogisu's soul. Terror-stricken, Yuri Nokata and her attendants take to flight; but some one is approaching in the distance who cuts off their retreat. They have only just time to hide themselves behind a little building raised on one side of the stage. The new-comer is a samuraï in the service of the daïmyo going the round on night-watch. He feels something damp and slippery under his feet. He snatches up a lantern which has been imprudently left by one of the servants in the precipitous flight. He detects blood-stains, and tracking them, he is led to the river-bank, where, by the glimmer of the lantern, he can discover at the bottom of the stream the three corpses. Much astonished, he turns his steps towards Hototogisu's pavilion. What is his amazement to find it open and all in disorder! Yuri Nokata, from her hiding-place, has watched this warrior going to and fro. Here is another dangerous witness to be removed. She sends against him the two trusty servants to whom she generally confides such murderous missions. Armed with swords they approach stealthily and suddenly fall upon the samuraï. The warrior, although he has to do with two furies, has no difficulty in felling them to the ground; he disarms them and gets rid of them contemptuously, striking them with the flat of his sword. The wicked old woman witnesses this failure with grief. But if she be without pity she is not devoid of courage. Her end too is attained. Her vengeance is complete. What matters the rest to her? She can die now.—She kills herself.

A. LEQUEUX.

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES.

Plate BHF is by Torii Kiyonaga. We have already on several occasions (particularly in Part IV., page 47, and Part XXV., page 12), spoken of the school of the Torii. We know that these artists, beginning with their founder Kiyonobu, applied themselves almost exclusively to theatrical prints, scenes on the stage, or portraits of actors. Kiyonaga was the first of the school to break with this tradition, the first to stray in search of subjects out of the paths trodden by his predecessors. He enlarged the too exclusive field of their art by reproducing scenes from every-day life, depicting the people in the midst of whom he lived, and that with a powerfulness of drawing and a faithfulness which entitle him to rank as one of the great masters of the Ukioyé. We have already reproduced one of these coloured prints (Part VII., plate 2), and the covers of Parts VII. and X. are also prints by Kiyonaga. He certainly cannot be reproached with uniformity and lack of expression in the physiognomy. All his figures show clearly the feelings by which they are moved, and the social status to which they belong. In this family scene in front of a house, the open window-frames of which allow us a peep into a little garden, he shows us with a telling simplicity the tender care of a mother who has turned from her household cares to watch her little child eating. The difference between the refined features of the mother and the broad, heavy face of the servant-girl is most striking.

Plate CJC is taken from a work in three small 12mo. volumes, composed exclusively of little sketches like those in which the artist, Hokusaï, has not indicated the features. It is the *Yehon ayabiki.* Each page has a different letter; the work forms a kind of illustrated alphabet, and the name of all the little subjects begins with the letter stamped on the page. In this case it is *sa,* the thirty-seventh letter of the *hirakana* alphabet, which is made up of forty-seven.*

Plate ACH (double plate) is a painting by Kôrin, who lived before and after 1700, representing a thick tangle of blue and white irises. This sheet is taken from a screen of eight sheets, one of which we have already reproduced in Part XI. We must refer the reader to what we then said on the subject. We recognise in this painting the powerful decorative feeling of this artist, although he has not here given us a manifestation of his usually so fantastic genius, which M. Louis Gonse has so ably analysed. All conventionality has been banished from this painting; pure nature alone remains—the living plant in all its simplicity.

Plate BAH is a reproduction of one of the numerous pages engraved by Shunboku from old classical pictures which he had under his eyes at that epoch. We have already given (Part XXIV., plate AHB; Part XIX., plate BAG; Part XX., plate BBF; Part XXIV., plate BBC) some specimens of this charming manner in which the artist has handled the graving-tool with the same suppleness and ease as a brush. The bird is modelled entirely under the few patches on the breast; the big feathers, the feet, are indicated by a single stroke, and the creature is all alive, clinging to the branch of cherry-blossom treated also in the most summary, but at the same time in the most eloquent manner.

* The Japanese have two different kinds of writing, the *katakana* and the *hirakana.* The former of these is borrowed without modification from the Chinese. The *hirakana* has, on the contrary, been modified for current writing to allow of the letters being formed by a rapid stroke of the brush.

Plate BIG. Two pieces of pottery. That on the left is of Awata ware. Brought to Europe in the eighteenth century, the time at which it was produced, it has been mounted on a bronze pedestal. French catalogues call this sort of pottery "*vieux truite*" (old trouted ware). It is of rather fine paste, overlaid with a creamy-white enamel, covered with a minute network of cracks. The use to which this object was destined is very evident; it is a *saké* bottle. The subject is very appropriate, for this figure, with its cheery smile, holds in its hand, with a gesture signifying that it is about to tilt it up, a little bottle, by the mouth of which the liquid is meant to come out.

The other piece is a pot with a cover made of a light friable paste, and belongs to the *raku* group. This ware is particularly characterised by monochrome enamels, especially by blacks or reds, of an unusual quality and warmth. The piece which we here reproduce shows red and yellow enamel, and the ornaments have been traced in the soft paste with a spatula before the enamelling process. It was meant to hold ashes, and must have been made about a hundred years ago.

In Plate BIA we have grouped together three little bronze vases, life-size. The first on the left is a square vase of Chinese style, with a very dark patina, ornamented with an archaic leaf design; the foot of the vase is decorated with a representation of waves. The second vase is quite plain, remarkably pure and severe in line, with a beautiful patina producing dazzling reflections. The other is notable for the grace and lightness of its outline. The foot and the bowl are formed of delicately-bent peacocks' feathers. It is an elegant perfume-burner.

The vase on the left may be about two hundred years old, while the two others are of the eighteenth century, or possibly of the beginning of this century.

Plate CJH represents a statuette of pottery about eighteen inches high, of a green and yellow colour, except the head, which is flesh-colour. The enamel with which this object is coated has been badly fired, and its bubbling has produced the kind of pock-marks which our reproduction shows. It is the statue of a holy Buddhist priest wearing the ritual robe of the bonzes, with the ring which holds up this vestment on the left shoulder.

This statue is an admirable specimen of religious sculpture. True, no concession has been made to physical beauty as conceived by our traditions. But with the artists of the Far East the research of regularity of form in the human figure is always subordinated to the reproduction of profound expression and of one characteristic of the individual. This for them constitutes perfection, and not the arbitrary concealment of the truth of Nature in the name of a stereotyped or conventional ideal. Observe the impression of grandeur in this face. What a lofty type of moral beauty under the physical ugliness, speaking to the intelligence without resorting to any artifices! The date and place of the production of this work are a puzzle. Everything in it would lead us to suppose that this is the work not of a potter but of a sculptor, more familiar with the special secrets of his own art than with the technique of ceramic art.

This head, so eminently human, wears a penetrating expression of religious peace; in the thick mouth, the well-accented nose, the heavy eyelids, what interior contemplation, what intensity of thought! The bent back, the hands joined together in an attitude of meditation and prayer, increase still further the strength of the effect; the very failure in the material process employed adds a strange charm, and this rough pottery, by the sole strength of the idea, becomes an imposing work of art.

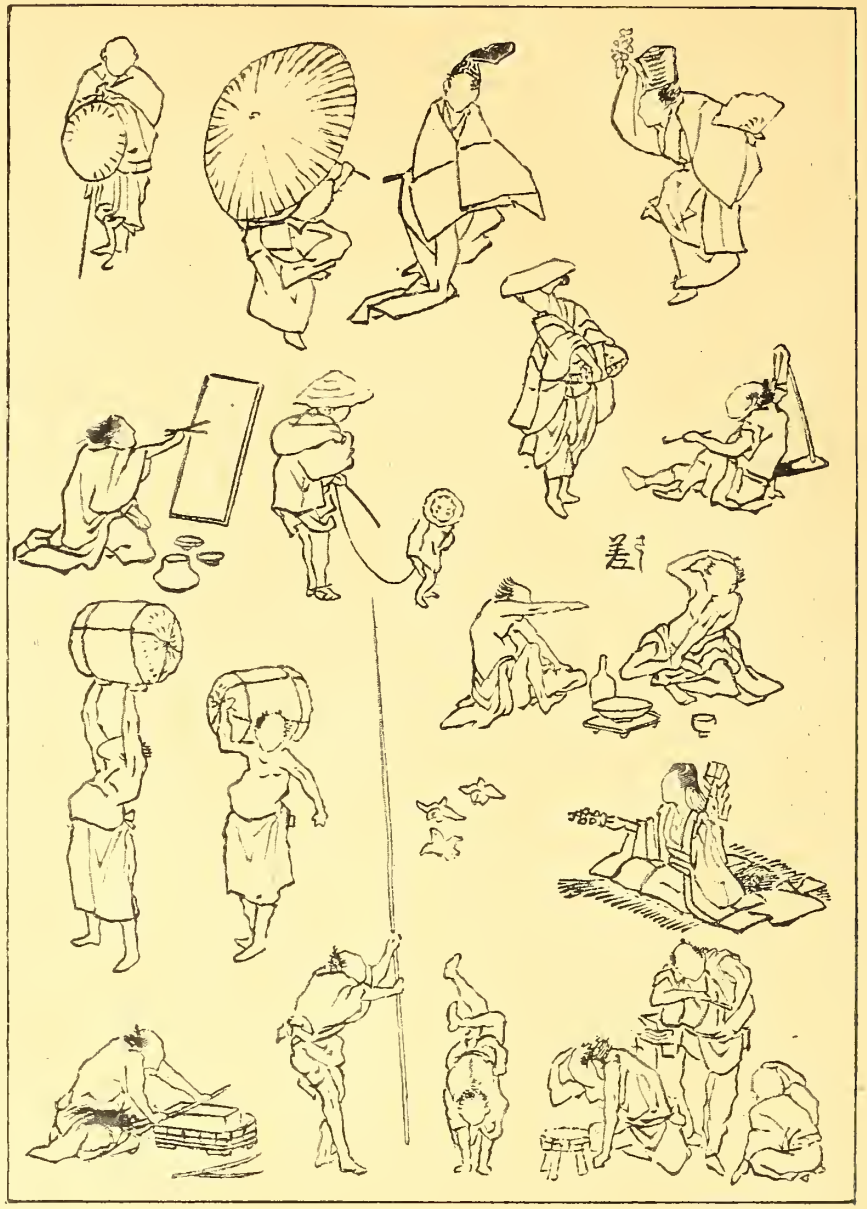
In Plate CJA the ornamental design is formed of background of iris leaves and flowers still in bud or full-blown, on which fly swallows.

Plate BCI gives designs for metal-workers. Here we have the bird Ho, the fantastic bird of the Empresses, which has borrowed the flowing lines of the peacock. There we see the dragon, the myth common to the mythologies of all nations. The flexible plumes of the bird and the undulating scales of the reptile in the lower part of the page, form, by the union of the animals brought face to face two by two, a well-balanced design full of elegant curves.

Contents of Number 30.

SEPARATE PLATES.

Number XXXI. will contain the conclusion of M. Lequeux's Analysis of a "Japanese Drama."




梅と鳥