JAPANESE ART.

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We quote from the advance sheets of Professor Raphael Plumley's work, entitled "Across America and Asia," the following interesting essay on Japanese art, contributed by Mr. John La Farge :--

Interest in Japanese art must have much increased to have made Mr. Ruskin fear some malign influence upon his artists coming from this heathen source: and it is true that many artists are in the habit of looking to it for advice and confirmation of their previous tendencies and efforts in art.

Our first knowledge of Japanese is not recent. Japanese products have come into Europe for the last two hundred years.

In 1664 the importations into Holland of Japanese porcelain, fine specimens, amounted to 44,943 pieces. Japanese museums were formed at Dresden and in Holland; and very good sale-catalogues (raisonnes) of the last century distinguish carefully between Japanese and Chinese work.

They have always been admired and col-lected, but, like other rare things, have had their best merits passed over, because they could be made the objects of a vulgar curiosity. Though they furnish a test, if ever there was one, for discernment in art, those who make it their business to instruct in such matters were silent. Original appreciation of excellence is never abundant; even so late as 1851, Mr. Owen Jones did not include Japanese decoration in his "Grammar of Ornament.

Since then, the opening of the treaty ports has made it familiar to all of us. We have all admired the many objects made lovely by their workmanship; their inimitable lacquers, embodying on their surface a complete school of ornament: their unrivalled ivory and metal work; their porcelains and enamels; their bronzes, of colors unknown to ours, cast and polished beyond our means: their colored printing, contrasting with our own brutal chromo-lithographs by its frankness, or by a delicacy equal to exquisite hand-work. These things all please the eye, as if with the sense of touch. On analysis, besides the wondrous finish, we notice the novelty of the design, its energy, its accuracy, its sentiment, very often the grandeur of its style, very often a stamp of individuality or personal talent, its recalling of natural objects, the enchanting harmony of its colors, and its exquisite adaptation to the surface ornamented.

We feel that we are looking at perfect work, that we are in presence of a distinct civilization, where art is happily married to industry. These accompaniments to everyday life, studied out, reveal a complete school of art. While it is still pure, uninfluenced and uninjured by new contacts, it will be well to inquire into its value, and to learn what lessons we can derive from it. Its limits seem at this day distinctly traced. What we shall know hereafter cannot contradict the points already made, even if it should very much displace them. Notwithstanding that every nation bears intellectual fruit neither natural nor tasteful to others, this is truer of literature than of plastic art, for this last speaks the more universal language; and without our aiming at a full analysis, the principal characteristics of this decorative art may be here described in some connected order.

Most evident in Japanese art is the use of a marvellous decoration, the very crown of that power over color always an heir-loom of the East, and a separate gift from ours. To Eastern directness, fulness, and splendor the Japanese add a sobriety, a simplicity, a love subdued harmonies and imperceptible intellectual refinement akin to something

character of the human form, and since | Japanese art that deeper individual persondrawing may be divided into the drawing of form and the drawing of motion, they may lay claim to a full and consummate ownership of the latter. If their modes shock our own conventionalities, we cannot gainsay that never before have artists so lived at home with animals and plants; never has artistic skill held under a more subtle sway the thoughtless tribes of sea and air.

The printed sketches of Hoksai, one of their later artists, are types of the manysidedness of the Japanese sketch-books. Birds, beasts, insects, and plants-their growth and movements; curves of motion in water-falling, running, or even thrown; the curl of smoke; the ceremony of the Daimics, the shuffling of the Bonzes, the strut of the soldiers, the quarrels of the populace, scenes of home and ont-door life, games of children, military exercises; all trades with the workers in them, and de formities born of their work; men too fat, men too thin; landscape effects; studies of architecture and perspective; and especially, and always, all possible positions of the human body are noted down in these little All this is done in a manner which albums. would grace the sketch-book of the best draughtsman that over lived, with sensitive feeling, a detached mind, and gentle humor. Art is a necessary enaggeration of nature, and implies a bearing heavily upon certain distinctive points (varicatura). A certain grotesqueness marks these Japanese drawings. I do not refer to that side which, in all works of art, marks national differences, and which has for other nations something ludicrous; but there exists here a vein of humor which everything tells us must be a national expression. Their constant and delicate observation recalls with a smile the secret mechanism of actions, from the slight indications of any habit to extravagances of gesture and demeanor which

fourish in an open life like theirs, Their hand is light, and never suffers from that Western spirit of caricature which underlines and insists and dwells upon its joke. A few lines give it. If we understand it, so much the better; if not, we shall not have failed in a puzzle or a robus. We can still admire the accuracy of whatever is detailed. the comprehensiveness of what is suggested, often the prace and beauty, always the swing and energy of the design; for the Japanese draughtsman unites within him what is often separated in the Western artistthe power of representing grace and awkwardness, and a feeling of dignity, with a sympathy for the laugh on things. A Japanese hero strains under a ponderous weight, or a lady flirts her fan, and it is hard to say whether we receive most distinctly the impression of manly effort or of female grace. The summons of the idea is always answered by their imagination: the real bends before their will, though never trampled upon, and retaining all its essential laws. However much the motive, the main forms or the accessories help the story and belong to it, they retain their elementary construction, and their strength or their grace is merely framed by a more feeling line, Hoksai, in the inscriptions alongside of some designs equal in all but beauty to the Greek inventions of the centaur or the fawn, modestly remarks that it is more easy to draw things that no one has seen, than to represent things that every one sees. With us, however, this ease of imagination is not an every-day matter, though with us, also, the greatest successes in realism have been attained by men among the greatest in imaginative power. The exception with us seems to be an essengradations, and what may be called an tial character with them, transforming nature, deeply studied and wisely understood. in the Western mind. If we wish, their | The sum of all this makes up our first imworks can be for us a storehouse as pression that the two opposites of realism and ample and as valuable in its way as decoration form the art of Japan, and that, in this successful blending, it take

ality-the glory of our greatest art-and which may perhaps be connected (however illogically it has been proved) with the education of the Western world by Christianity. That attempt at bringing to the surface some of the sublest, deepest, and most compli-cated feelings of the mind, which is the soul of the works of Leonardo, of Michael Angelo, of Rembrandt, has had apparently no exemplar outside of modern and Christian Europe. We shall miss that unconscious inferiority of the artist to his intention which so often gives a naive charm to early works. Art is a slow growth, as slow as civilization; and the consummation of refinement in certain of their designs, meant to be repeated for common uses, is a sufficient proof that it is old in Japan. Besides that, we have its Chinese antecedents: its long intercourse with China, which has an ancient art history, and the antiquity of some of the few documents we know. All our judgments have thus far been based upon the pictorial art of Japan, the only accessible to us, and open to any inquirer. The questions regarding other forms of art with them-the social questions connected with the position of art among them-cannot be undertaken for want of room.

Inquiry into Japanese art would give mate rial for appreciation of the social state of the artist-workman in mediceval times and in a military race, or again in Pagan antiquity, and for a study of the advantages and disadvantages connected with a fixed social condition; to which comparison the analogies and differences with their Chinese brethren will add help. But it must now be sufficient to have helped, in any way, to call attention to this art, which helps to bridge the gulf be-tween us and the Eastern gardens. It can be the source of useful influences from a living school, equal to any in the study of nature and the use of decoration; and it offers, to all those willing to put themselves in the proper mood, a new and fresh fountain of imaginative enjoyment.

EUGENIE.

The Empress of the French at Constantinopic. A correspondent writes from Constantinople under date of October 13, as follows:-

It was a beautiful sight when the Empress' yacht, along with twenty steamers, came today into the Bosphorus, which was almost literally covered with caiques. The Empress was on deck with half a dozen other ladies all the time. In about ten minutes the Sultan. who had been waiting her arrival at the palace, came out to her yacht in one of the most magnificent of boats, manned by twenty men, with a gorgeous throne and canopy at the stern. After some difficulty in getting alongside the yacht, the Sultan rushed up the stairs with no little empressement. She met him at the top with a cordial greet. ing, but did not kiss him, remember ing, perhaps, her own feelings when she saw Napoleon kiss Queen Victoria. They then fell back and looked at each other a moment. As they could not talk they did the next best thing; they bowed at each other, and then the Empress went down into the Sultan's boat. He followed immediately, and they sat side by side. She wore a plain high-necked dress of straw-colored satin, with a trail two yards long, and a bonnet of the same color. The current in front of the palace is very strong. Five hundred caiques and twenty-five steamers crowded with people were jammed together in horrible confusion, and I can hardly understand now how we all got out of it without loss of life. The Sultan, on landing, conducted the Empress to her apartments and left her to rest there for some minutes. He then preto her all the Ministers sented of the Sublime Porte and the functionaries of the palace, and hastened across to his official palace at Dolma Baghdie, whither Empress followed him in about an hou pay her respects to the Valide Sultana tan's mother). This old woman is, by alterable custom, supreme within the pa and she does not at all approve of the wa which the Sultan is disgracing himself this bold-faced infidel woman. She thrown every possible obstacle in her and made herself just as disagreeable as dared. She could not refuse to see he day, but she overturned the arrangement the Sultan by refusing to receive the Em with Mustapha Pasha's daughter as lac waiting and interpreter. She said she v teach Mussulman girls not to learn inlide gaages and not to assume infidel cust The visit of the Empress to her was short formal, and she passed out of the harem the apartments of the Sultan to dine with in state. [No doubt the Valide Sultana gi her teeth with rage, and no doub will rate the Sultan for his indecent viol of all propriety; but the deed is done, an will rave in vain. A shameless female g has gone where even the Sultan's mothe never permitted to go. This shows more pluck on the part of the Sultan than you well realize. Thursday, Eugenie receive diplomatic corps at Beylerbey. In conv tion with Mr. Morris, our Minister Resi the Empress declared that there was no which she more desired than to visit An -that she was only waiting for some pr for going, which she hoped would be i before long. She conversed with all th dies in their own languages. She s English remarkably well, and certainly more like an English than a Spanish During the reception she wore a ro amber satin, with a very full train hoops, too, I believe), trimmed with a velvet; her bonnet was also amber co Her only jewelry was a pearl necklace she wore no earrings.



the treasures of form left to us by the Greeks. For the Japanese, no combinations of colors have been improbable, and their solutions of such as are put aside by Western knowledge recall the very arrangements of nature.

the structure upon which it rests, and excellence of design is not seldom unrecognized in the works of great colorists. Little as this is felt in the harmonious synthesis of Japanese decoration, Japanese drawings and woodcuts in black and white allow us to gauge their abstract power of design and their knowledge of drawing. Stripped of those other beauties of color and texture so peculiar to their precious work, these drawings give us in the simplest way their control of composition, that power in art which affects the imagination by the mere adjustment of lines and masses. Herein their work can be compared to the best, in this the most simple means of expression in art, for by this all its forms and periods are united, and the tattooing of the savage is connected with the designs of Michael Angelo. In fact it is the nearest expression of the will of the artist. which is the very foundation of art. Japanese composition in ornamental design has developed a principle which separates it technically from all other schools of decoration. This will have been noticed by all who have seen Japanese ornamental work, and might be called a principle of irregularity, or apparent chance arrangement: a balancing of equal gravities, not of equal surfaces. A Western designer, in ornamenting a given surface, would look for some fixed points from which to start, and would mark the places where his mind had rested by exact and symmetrical divisions. These would be supposed by a Japanese, and his design would float over them, while they, though invisible, would be felt beneath. Thus a few ornaments—a bird, a flower-on one side of this page would be made by an almost intellectual influence to balance the large unadorned space remaining. And so, by a principle familiar to painters, an appeal is made to the higher ideas of design, to the desire of concealing art beneath a look of nature. It has the advantage of allowing any division and extension, and super-imposition of other and contradictory designs. With another analogy to the higher forms of art, the Japanese look to more symmetrical arrangement for their graver effects and religious symbolisms. To carry out this subtle conciliation of symmetry and chance, this constant reference to the order of nature, requires of course an incessant watching of all its mood and all its details.

The daily record of such attention fills the sketch-books of all artists, and many of the little Japanese books of prints are nothing but fac-similes of such sketches. Whether they are careless or studied, an impression of nature disengages itself from them all; every one who sees them will be more or less sansiof hurried civilization. With the exception only hited by understanding the neces-sities of it. Any excess is in the direction of Japaneses and accentuation is a note of for plastic be. If they have not the feeling Greek ancestory that we inherit from the

place, never before filled in the logical history of art. Some of the compromises made necessary by this combination are interesting. Chinese

Great beauty of color is apt to obscure art is often ridiculed for its complete absence of perspective; but our own practice of copying paintings, imitated in all their modelling and light and shade, upon the curved surface of our vases, is itself an utterly barbaric notion.

The perspective of the vase destroys the perspective of the ornament, which it is impossible even to see from a proper point of view. The treatment of perspective in Chinese decoration is, therefore, the result of a very sensible idea. But the Japanese have improved upon the usual Chinese manner, and have invented an interesting compromise, in which certain rules of linear or isometric perspective are used with a deep feeling for the actual appearance of nature; and by the use of high horizons, so that the different planes shall come one above the other, they manage to frame large compositions within quite an illusive effect. It is owing to this bird's eye view that they are able to represent crowds and masses of people with enviable felicity, and give the feeling of open air and expanse to their smallest landscapes. In the gradual separation of decoration and pictorial art with us there was at least this advantage, that the artist was impelled to the individual study of nature that he might mirror the great world in the little world of his picture.

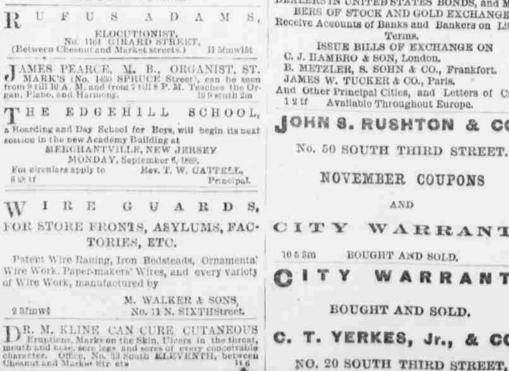
To different origins we shall reasonably look for the causes which have kept the Japanese artist to flat tints and boundary lines in drawing, and have prevented his pursuing others of nature's appearances, and attempt-ing to give the forms of things by the oppolongs to all good art, Japanese works, if they do not solve the latter problem, offer at least very successful sketches of such solutions. Their colored prints are most charmingly sensitive to the coloring that makes up the appearance of different times of day, to the relations of color which mark the different seasons, so that their landscape efforts give us, in reality, the place where—the illuminated air of the scene of action: and what is that but what we call tone? Like all true colorists, they are curious of local color, and of the values of light and shade; refining upon this they use the local colors to enhance the sensation of the time, and the very colors of the costumes belong to the hour or the season of the landscape. Eyes studious of the combinations and oppositions of color, which must form the basis of all such representations, will enjoy these exqui-site studies, of whose directness and delicacy

nothing too much can be said in praise. The possibilities of art resemble very much those of life, and cutside of this peculiar art live to a spirit of observation unfamiliar to we can imagine many openings. We certainly have in the colossal statue of Daibutz, fema, certain idealized storeotyping of the in its screne ideal of contemplation, a surmise of some of the things that might have been in Japan.

I have no space to consider whether, if the Japanese have an ideal, it can be contained, as with the Greeks, in the dream of a perfected beauty. The sufficient ideal of realdeep sense, a propour mind, they show a ism is character. Nor, any more than in ad knowledge, of the Pagan antiquity, need we expect to find in

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