

The Land of the Chrysanthemum



A Japanese Lady

NATURE has been kind to the "thousand Isles of the Rising Sun." She has arrayed them in a garb often strange, sometimes stern, but always fair. Whether they be judged by their coasts, their mountains, their rivers or their lakes, these islands of the Eastern Sea can hold their own with any of the countries of the West. The grand and the sublime are no less present than the simply beautiful, and an infinite variety comes in to complete the charm.

It has been the fashion of late to decry Japanese scenery on the score of littleness. "Pretty, but petty" is a common verdict; but it invariably proceeds from a superficial acquaintance with the country. Landscapes dominated by mountain-peaks 8,000 to 10,000 feet high cannot be dismissed as insignificant—even when, as frequently happens, they are robed in verdure to their summits. Intermingled here and there with granite giants of rugged form may be discerned the soft and graceful contours of volcanic cones. With these also the suggestion of sublimity is not wanting. The most beautiful mountain in Japan—and perhaps in the world—was once the terror of the countryside. Fujiyama and Yariyake take perfectly represent the two diverse types of scenic grandeur to be found in Japan; but even where Dai Nippon does not aspire to magnificence, she can boast the charm of novelty. There is nothing in any part of the world quite like the landscape known as the typically Japanese, which makes a peculiar but irresistible appeal to every lover of the picturesque. The traveller who sees the real Japanese is always pleased, but—unless he can repeat, or make perpetual, the new experience—he is never satisfied.

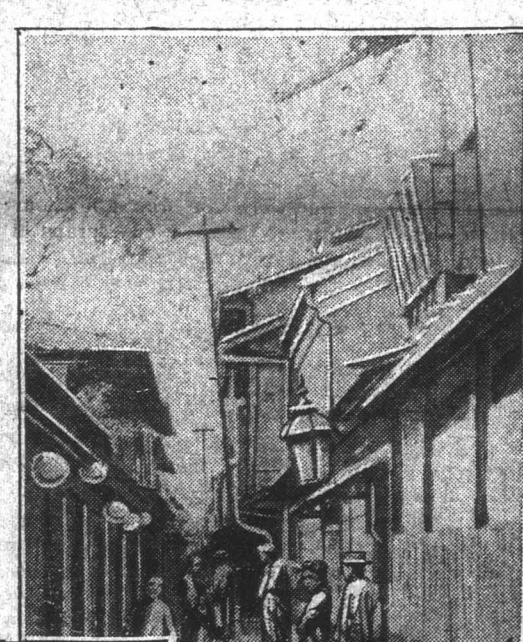
Times and Seasons.

The question is, "What is the best time to visit Japan?" has to be considered as much from the point of view of the visitor's intentions as from that of the climate. Late spring and early winter are usually recommended. People coming from temperate climes would find the heat of the "doyo," or Japanese dog-days, too trying if they purposed remaining in the vicinity of the treaty-ports and great cities. On the other hand, nothing could be more agreeable than to spend these same burning days in the mountain districts—three, four or five thousand feet above sea-level. But these very districts, with their romantic scenery and the precious boon of min-

eral springs, are for the most part inaccessible—or at any rate unpleasantly cold—in mid-April or November. Outside of them, Japan, essentially a land of flowers and foliage, looks her best in the first three weeks of April; "sakura" (cherry trees) are in full bloom, and "all the world" goes forth to see them. But the weather at this time of the year is sometimes the reverse of genial. The people of Tokyo, a few seasons ago, awakened one morning to find the cherry-blossoms weighed down with snow—a weird, if not pathetic, study in pink and white.

Without doubt, the season to be avoided is that known to the Japanese as the "nyubai," or rainy season, which prevails from the middle of June to the early part of July. This is of a peculiarly muggy and disagreeable description—alternately hot and cold, but always damp. In a normal year, however, these wet and misty weeks give place to a spell of brilliantly fine, hot weather, when all who can do so flee from the ports and plains to the cool, all-verdant hills. Perhaps the most settled and generally agreeable season of the year is the latter part of October. Bright sunshine out of a clear sky atones for the inclosing days, and the crimson tints of the fading maple-leaf turn many a mountain-side into a blaze of vivid red.

A good many years ago, when Japan was slowly opening her gates to the West, there appeared a book entitled "Unbeaten Tracks in Japan." Those tracks are no longer "unbeaten"; but, from the standpoint of the traveller visiting Japan for the first time, they are none the worse for that. "Call nothing magnificent," say the Japanese, "till you have seen Nikko." Thousands of travellers from Sunset lands, arrested by the vision of the Sacred Bridge above the rushing Daiyagawa—a span of scarlet



A Street in Kyoto



Geishas in a Japanese Tea House



travelling, by rail, electric car and jinrikisha in turn, will suffice to transport the visitor from the Yokohama Docks to the famous Fujiyama Hotel. There amid the most romantic surroundings the traveller may rest in luxury to the "lullaby of waters far and near." Within easy walking distance lies Ojigoku ("Big Hell") a gorge which roars and trembles with solfataras and boiling springs, while, on the further slope of the low divide, Hakone Lake presents, by way of contrast, a scene of tranquil loveliness. No visitor to Japan, even if he have but two days at his command, should fail to pass a night at one of the little semi-foreign hotels on the margin of the lake. Only less impressive than the sight of sunrise from the summit of Fuji is the vision of the great volcano, rose-tinted with the earliest rays of the rising sun, and mirrored thus in the placid depths of the "Sea of Reeds."

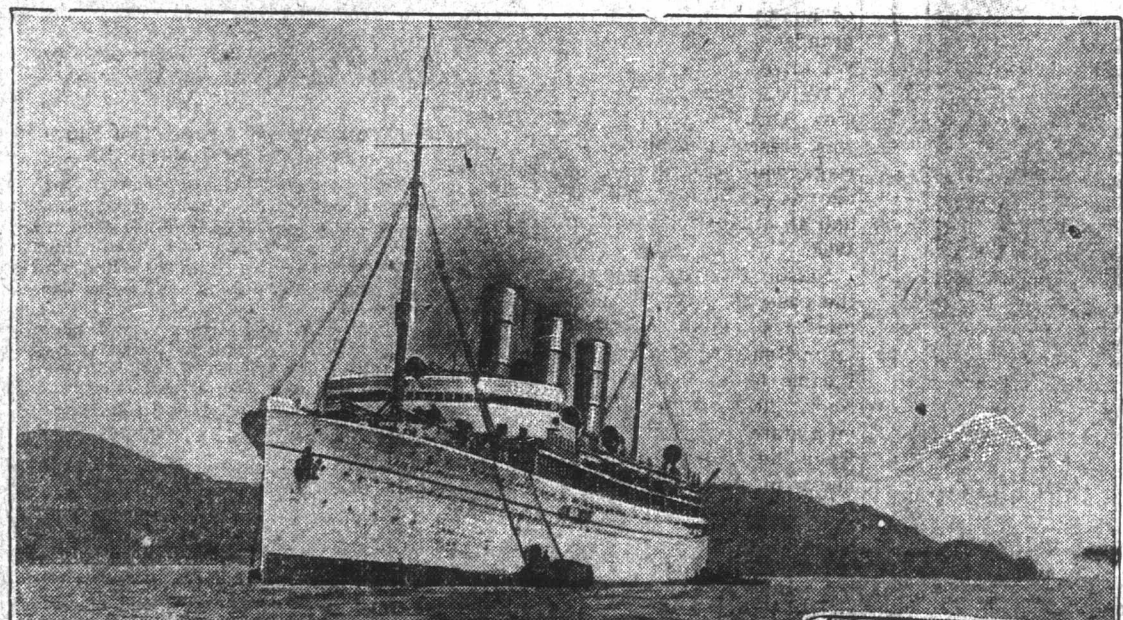
From America the quickest and without doubt the most picturesque route to Japan is by way of the Canadian Rockies to Vancouver, where the two fastest boats on the Pacific, the "Empress of Russia" and the "Empress of Asia" ply to Yokohama, Shanghai and Hong-Kong. The Canadian Pacific carries the bulk of the silk trade, Japan's chief export, and has recently placed on the Pacific those two very fine steamers for the growing passenger traffic.

In three weeks' time travellers can see a good deal of the Land of the Chrysanthemum. As to the best way of spending that time, if the visitor is specially interested in the arts and industries of Japan, he will prefer to spend it in the vicinity of Tokyo, Kyoto, Nara and Osaka. If, on the other hand, he desires to see as much of the country and its scenery as possible, he will leave the great cities for the picturesque interior. Much, again, depends upon the time of year. If it be April, the visitor has practically no choice. None of the mountain districts, with the possible exception of Nikko and Miyashita, is agreeable except in the summer months. The suggestions that follow will be found adaptable, with very little modification, to the requirements of the average visitor to Japan.

Starting from Yokohama, a day might be spent in visiting the great bronze Buddha (Daibutsu) at Kamakura—much superior as a work of art to the somewhat larger image at Nara—proceeding thence by electric car along the coast to the pretty island of Enoshima. Two days will suffice for the sights of the capital, among which the shops of the Ginza, the popular resort of Asakusa with its temple and bazaars, and the Yoshiwara, or licensed quarter, are perhaps the most characteristic—though in early April, the banks of the Sumida (Mukojima) should not be omitted. From the northern station (Ueno) a journey of five hours brings one to Nikko (Kanaya Hotel) where a day may well be devoted to the magnificent shrines of the Shogun. Proceed by road to the Kegon waterfall (250 feet high), Chusenji (Lakeside Hotel, four hours) and Yumoto (Nanma Hotel, semi-foreign, two hours). Four days should be allowed for this district. Instead of returning to Tokyo the traveller, by changing at Utsunomiya and again at Omiya, could the same day reach a mountain resort of a very different type—here, by comparison with Nikko's wealth of foliage, but much in favor among foreign residents in Japan. This is Karuizawa (Mampel and other hotels), whence the ascent of the great volcano of Asama, 8,250 feet) may be made. Thirty miles to the north by road—horse or jinrikisha—lies the most remarkable of Japanese spas, Kusatsu (Shirane Hotel) where, in water containing free sulphuric acid and of a temperature of 125 degrees F., the bathers submit to a species of drill under a bath-master. The railway may be regained by crossing the grand Shibuya-toge, a pass 7,000 feet high, to Shibu (Japanese inns with hot springs) and Toyono (for Nagano).

From Nagano the traveller may return direct by way of Suwa Lake, Kofu and Hachioji to Yokohama, catching, en route, the neighborhood of Matsumoto, grand views of the sharp, snow-streaked summits of the Japanese Alps. Three or four days might then with advantage be devoted to the Hakone-Fuji district. On reaching Kobe, the old-world cities of Kyoto and Nara, with their numerous temples, flower-gardens and curiosities, would amply occupy the balance of the traveller's time.

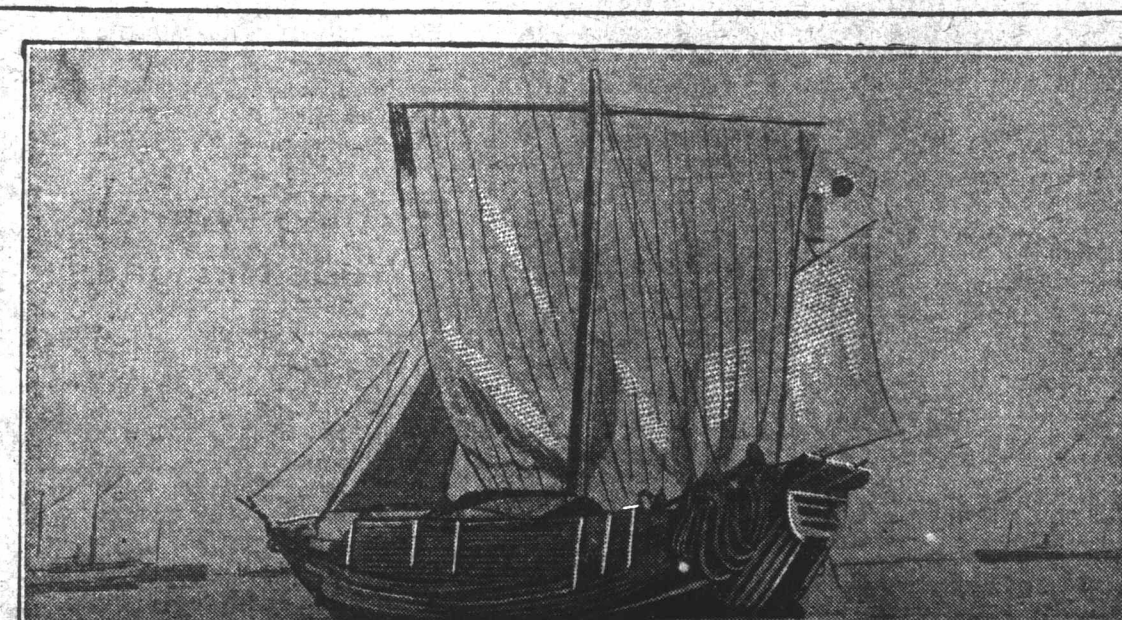
If arrangements have been made to rejoin the "Empress" at Nagasaki, the traveller could, by breaking the railway journey at Miyajima, visit that sacred island, which is ranked by the Japanese as one of the "Sankei" or Three Beautiful Places of their beautiful land. Kyushu, the southernmost of the four main islands, offers as its chief attractions the great volcano of Aso (rail from Mito to Kumamoto) with the largest crater in the world, and the scene of frequent suicide; and, in the opposite direction, the solfataras district of Unzen. For either of these excursions, three days should be allowed.



Trans Pacific liner The EMPRESS OF RUSSIA near Fujiyama

lacquer athwart the sombre green of the cryptomerias which overshadow the gorgeous Shogun tombs—have enthusiastically endorsed the native proverb. Nikko still is Nikko, and will be to the end of time. But, if summer has come, linger not by the scarlet bridge. Mount your horse and push on through crowds of big-hatted pilgrims to the famous brink from which the surplus waters of Lake Chuzenji fall like a silver beam into the throat of a dead volcano; pass to the lake itself—made sacred by the sacred peak which dominates it; and then ascend, in five miles, another thousand feet to the still waters of Yumoto—the loveliest lake in Japan. Those who can claim acquaintance with the little spa which nestles mid steaming sulphur-springs and pine-clad solitudes at its head, five thousand feet above the sea, may "lay the flattering unction to their souls" that they know something of the real Japan.

Less of a journey, but equally delightful in its way, is that to the Hakone hot-spring district, where a group of round-topped volcanic hills forms as it were a stepping stone to the majestic Fujiyama. Four hours



A Sampan In the Inland Sea