

the past, again, never depicted the sky or water or night-time as such — these merely entered into the composition of a picture. Modern Japanese art takes up such subjects to show its skill in the use of colors in a realistic manner. Eastern art of the past laid principal stress on refinement, dignity, self-composure, finesse, unworldliness, tastefulness, and other abstract qualities; modern Japanese art tries to appeal to the understanding and appreciation of the general public outside a small circle of critical lovers of painting. Some modern artists have gone the length of using European pigments in a Japanese way.

The whole tendency, is a word, seems to have been toward realism, at the very time that the West is showing signs of the adoption of idealistic or symbolical elements. And yet the realistic in our art is not identical with

that of Europe; nay, the spirit of our modern art is still Japanese or Eastern, however much of Western influence upon some masters may be found in outward appearance. This peculiar spirit, emanating as it has from the personality and technique of the priest and literary artists of the early and latter feudal days, still expresses itself in the professional pride of not painting for vulgar appreciation or with the hand, and in the simplicity, *naïveté*, even child-like helplessness of the touches and strokes. After extracting what they can use from European methods and materials, certain contemporary painters are already aiming at the *multum in parvo* in their work, at storing a wealth of invisible contents in an apparently artless form. Our art-loving public, too, is progressing in the direction of finding and valuing the personality or thought of a painter.

SAKHALIN ISLAND: A FANTASY

BY ALFONS PAQUET

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WE entered the port of an island which the sailors identified by the saw-tooth profile of its mountains as Sakhalin. I landed, and came to a street in the town where a procession was passing, accompanied by music, flowers, and many flags. An elderly gray-haired man invited me to view this sight from the steps of a mahogany shrine. There I watched a throng of gay people passing, bearing branches of acacia blossoms, the undulating movement of which recalled the motion of our vessel. The marchers also carried gigantic spheres of gilded straw, and

representations of animals made of gauze. They themselves were clad in bright-colored summery attire.

'What festival is this?' I asked with interest. 'Is the war over?'

'We've heard nothing of a war,' was the reply. 'We are the subjects of a prince whom we have never seen; but his power and wisdom we see every day in his commands. Our prince has forbidden his subjects to occupy themselves with foreign affairs.'

'Don't you then receive the latest news every day by wireless?'

'It used to be so, many years ago,'

said the old man. 'Then they took down the mast, which had been erected on the summit of yonder mountain. It was burned, because it had served for spreading falsehoods, and its ashes were cast into the sea.'

'I supposed I was in Sakhalin!' I exclaimed.

'Certainly that's where you are,' replied my venerable companion. 'Why are you surprised? Join us in our festival to-day. It is in honor of our popular poets. Prizes are to be distributed to those who have written the best poems in our annual competition.'

A few others joined us, and we fell in behind the procession, which proceeded to a neighboring garden-crowned height. From this elevation I could look down on the sea and our vessel lying in the harbor. We were led to a gigantic pine, whose dense branches formed a thick canopy above us, and between whose drooping tassels we had a wide prospect over the surrounding country. Here we were served rice, lobster, roast chicken, candied flowers and fruits, and hot sweetened wine. They did me the honor, as a stranger, of seating me at the same table with the successful poets.

One of the latter was a railway official. He pointed out to me the beautiful, perfectly tilled plain which extended from the foot of the hill where we were seated. Pointing to another of the prize-winners, a young man scarcely more than a boy, he said:—

'The subject set for us was a short poem upon our mountain. I compared it with a song rising from a crowd of people. It seemed like that to me, lifting itself aloft from the dumb, stony, submerged underworld of the ocean. That boy called the mountain the throne of our invisible prince, whom he compared to the god of the air. An old woman, however, who earns her living gathering fagots, also received a prize

Her verses were merely a hymn of thanks to the mountain for the shade, for the flowers, for the fresh foliage, and for the dry twigs which it has so generously given her for sixty years.'

'What surprises me,' I said, 'is that this island is called Sakhalin. On the map your island is shaped like a pine-cone; but it looks from here like a round apple floating in the water.'

'Perhaps our island has changed in form somewhat,' said the railway official. 'Do you see that great dike extending far out into the sea? It blocks the Tartar Channel, and has given us another coast. Not only that, but it diverts the cold ocean currents, which used to bring us chill fogs and wintry rain; so we now have almost constant sunshine. More than that, it permits us to extend and cultivate that fertile plain at the foot of the hill, which is now the site of so many happy homes. Already the older children of the first settlers there are past school-age. Yonder young poet is one of them.'

So speaking he pointed out a little badge on the shoulder of the youngest prize-winner. It was a tiny silver spade. The boy himself remarked to me:—

'We shall always wear that badge as long as we live.' It was obvious that he was very proud of it.

'According to the accounts I have heard of your island,' I said, 'it is covered most of the year with snow, and its mountains are dark, gloomy places, clothed with virgin forests, the haunt of wolves. And—forgive me for saying it—most of us thought we knew that Sakhalin Island was a place where the worst criminals of a mighty empire were sent into banishment.'

My elderly companion replied: 'It used to be what you describe. You can hardly conceive what a few years of freedom from all political strife can do for a country. It is only a little more than twenty years ago since I myself

was sent here, to be confined in chains for life, for committing highway robbery. My early memories are like a den of serpents. But now my fate has changed. I date my transformation from the day our present prince ascended the throne. I do not know just what events immediately preceded his coming into power.'

'But you are the happiest and, without flattery, the kindest and most likable people I have met for a long, long time,' I exclaimed.

'We are happy because the sun makes us so; and it would seem irrational to us not to be as kind and courteous to each other as we are to our guests, whom we delight to honor.'

'Of course you have driven out the wild savages who used to be the plague of this region?'

'The former dwellers on our island, who consisted only of desperate criminals and their armed guards, had at some earlier date expelled the aborigines, driving them far away into the Polar snow-fields. But we have invited them back to dwell in our midst, together with our former guards and wardens. To-day we are all friends and neighbors, and we have almost forgotten our former contrasts of condition. If you, sir, knew the different types of men who used to live on our island, and who were separated from each other by bitter prejudices and hatred, you would appreciate that our younger generation has begun to form a truly new race. By dwelling in peace and amity with each other we are growing more alike; just as by dwelling in hatred and conflict with one another in olden times, we were constantly growing more dissimilar.'

'Happy island,' I said. 'You must be right. Your unknown prince must be one of the wisest men that ever lived. It seems to me that he must possess supernatural powers, to convert men

whom the world has hitherto regarded with horror into such happy and perfect beings.'

'To be sure,' said the old man, 'it was not entirely due to that great sea-dike, which we built at our prince's bidding. The temple which we erected at the same time on yonder lofty mountain should have part of the credit.'

'Do you mean that great white structure at the foot of the precipice?'

'Higher up.'

'Oh, that golden roof shining through the trees, half-way up yonder slope?'

'Higher up.'

'Is it that glittering point between the highest summits?'

'That's it. We call that light the radiance of the divine dewdrop. The temple really is resplendent inside with all the colors of heaven. Its shines brightest in the last hours of the night, just before dawn.'

'It is too bad that I cannot stay longer,' I said; 'but it's growing dusk and my ship will soon be leaving. Otherwise I should ask you to show me your temple, in order that I might describe it to my companions.'

'The temple is empty,' said the old man. 'You would find nothing inside except lofty windows of every possible color, and a great hall, whose inner partitions form smaller chambers. But these can be removed, so that all the colors intermingle. The red light from one of the windows awakens in the people exposed to it the quality of human love; the blue light fortifies their wisdom, and the golden light makes them gentle. Of course, all these colors are found in nature, and it is enough if we are truly receptive to them. We have, to name but a few examples, the red blossoms of the rose, the blue heavens, and the golden sun.'

Meanwhile, the people gathered on the hill had lighted their torches and were moving in a long column to the

valley. Below, in a wooded glade lighted by many torches, athletic contests were being held. An impulse seized me to challenge my guide who, in spite of his gray hairs, was a powerful, athletic man. He laughingly accepted, and in a moment I found myself lifted into the air and thrown over his shoulder like a ball. Quickly springing to my feet, however, I succeeded in lifting my companion from the ground. Raising him like a bundle in my arms, I ran toward the shore, shouting that I wished to take him with me. He

resisted desperately, and just before I reached the water I set him down, and springing aboard our ship, waved him farewell. The projecting remnants of an old fortress, which in its day had served also as a prison, protruded from the shore like the prow of a huge ship. A group of people gathered on its bastions, laughingly waving farewell to us with their banners and lanterns. Thus we last saw them as our vessel drew slowly out of the harbor, across a glorious silent sea, resplendent in the light of a full moon.

A PAGE OF VERSE

O HAND UNSEEN

BY EDWARD DAVISON

[*The Outlook*]

O HAND unseen be gentle and kind to me,
 Touch me in desperate hour
 When I forget thy guidance; though
 I be
 Impatient of thy power,
 Yet doth my heart elect
 To turn along that way thou dost
 direct,
 To meet the ultimate end,
 Content on thee, thee only, to depend.

Wake me with urgent influence to the
 sun,
 With Sleep's dark summit past;
 And when the happy morning is begun,
 Be visible at last.
 Descend in mantling light
 Below the clouds, till I behold thee
 bright
 Where thou dost intervene
 And bless me with thy peace, O hand
 unseen!

COUNTESBURY

BY WINIFRED TASKER

[*The Times*]

THE heather must be blooming on
 Countesbury hill,
 The gorse a glowing beacon on all the
 Exmoor height;
 O gold and purple shadows! I dream
 of you at nights,
 Here in the lonely darkness, when every
 wind is still.

By day the Lynn is silent, and her in-
 sistent song
 Is lost in louder music, by deeper
 voices drowned;
 For wind that blows through cities
 has magic in its sound,
 The merry wind of pleasure that whirls
 the hours along.

But when great stars come gleaming
 and Lynmouth softly lies
 Low in the lovely valley, lulled by
 the Devon sea,
 Those far-off wistful voices float all
 the miles to me,
 From Countesbury calling, under the
 midnight skies.