

HOW JAPAN SEEKS THE KEYS OF THE NEXT WORLD



Benton—the Japanese Venus—on a little island. Merry crowds were flocking by chattering, wondering at the vast illumination, and I stood by the little temple to watch them, something I love to do, so much honest, simple enjoyment I find on their faces and so much that is touching in their family groups.

Between Two Religions, Shinto and Buddhism, the People Look After Their Souls—Many Great Temples

happy they standing there should be if called on to follow them. So they stood for perhaps ten seconds profoundly stirred. Then they moved slowly to the edge of the platform and looked down the slope while the officer explained some thrilling step in the mighty conflict of ten years ago. Here was Young Japan making its vows of patriotism afresh.

One morning in May I was at the Kudan shrine of Tokio, sacred to all the dead of all the wars of the Meiji—a comprehensive shrine indeed. It is a mighty, impressive fane, with the greatest of all torii in bronze before it. You look through the first temple across a quadrangle to a great structure beyond. Only those related to some one who has laid down his life for his country can

your behest, or at least take it under consideration, if you wear a certain kind of string around your neck and a little tablet tied to it. Superstitions naturally abound under such conditions, and the roster of the queer things the peasants will or will not do unless every evil influence is out of sight would remind us at once of the similar things that our own people regard as lucky or unlucky. It all harks back to an earlier day, when these left handed beliefs went the round of the world in the wake of the worship of sun, moon and stars. It is, of course, certain that Japan worshipped the sun and the moon, but they seem only to have differentiated the milky way from the rest of them.

Religion, however, in its true serviceable sense, is alive in Japan. Those from the west who miss the regular gatherings for Sunday services may think otherwise, but they are mistaken, as a little observation will show. A mighty witness to the live religiosity of rural Japan exists at Kioto. The Higashi Hongwanji temple has been rebuilt within twenty years. It was known that ropes of the very greatest strength were needed to lift and hoist the great columns and roof-reef timbers into place, and some zealot proposed that it be of human hair, which makes the strongest rope of all. The response was enthusiastic, and 30,000 women of a single province sacrificed their beautiful dark tresses to the needs of the great Buddhist shrine.

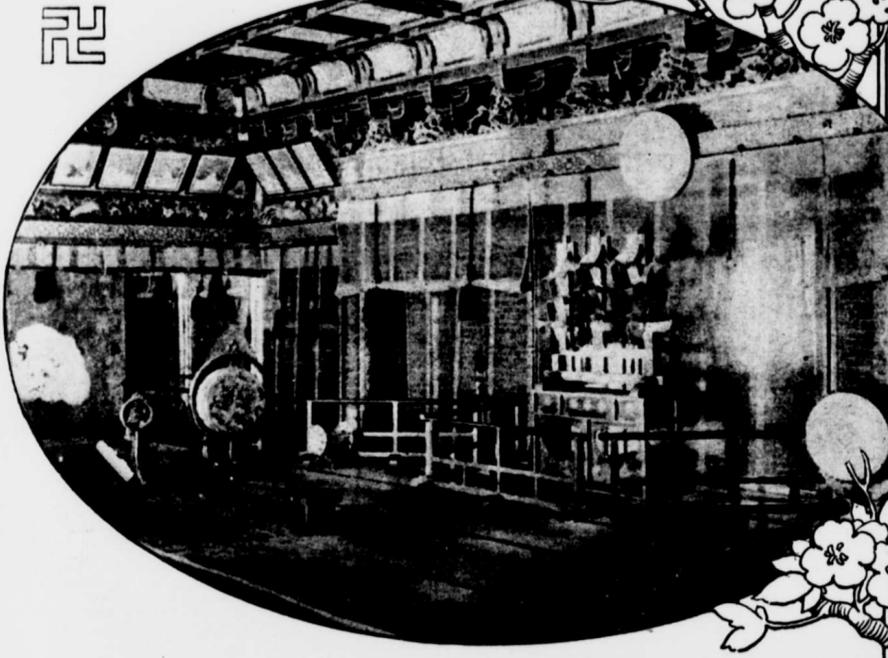
The rope that performed its task without a break is shown on the temple grounds to-day. It is closely woven, 22 feet long, 13 inches in circumference and over four inches in diameter! One touched its lustrous coils with reverence; it meant so much sacrifice; so many wishes from the depths of the human heart went with it. You can see the woman kneeling before the family Buddhist shrine, the shining length of her dark locks lifted in both hands and on her lips the prayer "O, Eternal Buddha, in thine enlightenment will thou not see for me and find for me the way of my heart's desire!" And 30,000 such women, so praying in one province; think of it!

But the temples themselves, which stand ever open and invite the wayfarer, how do justice to them in half an article? You do not do it in a dozen general, brief observations, then tell something of a few that one has seen.

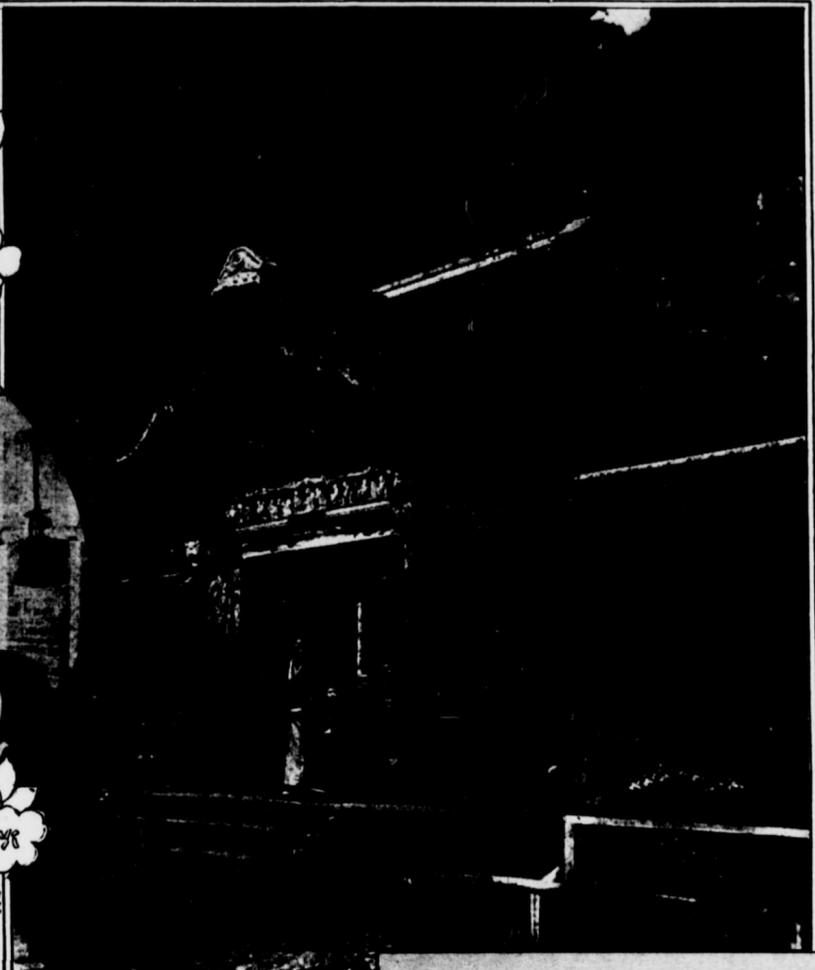
I have been over temples and looked into shrines almost without number, and still the desire exists to see more. As to construction, it may be said that the buildings in Japan are all of wood, with gable roofs slightly curved and with far projecting eaves, the other marked feature being the weight and size of the ridge pole, which is often a heavy squared timber with projecting ends carved and decorated and often with an upward turn. The roof in the larger temples is supported by great columns, the rounded boles of great keyaki trees, giving dignity and sometimes massiveness to the front, which is the longest side of the building.

It is always approached by a flight of stone steps, which, lifting the structure, add to its impressiveness. Within the lofty columns give a fine effect. In the greater Shinto temples when the wood is not plain it is painted or lacquered a vivid scarlet. Set among the green of surrounding trees the vivid color is modified beautifully.

In the smaller Shinto shrines the roof is usually of straw. Then you find one great structure beyond the other, the last the most sacred, but containing only the mirror spoken of already or in addition an ancient sword, both wrapped in silken veils only removed for the



Interior of the Honden or Golden Oratory of the Iyeyasu temple at Nikko. Above—Steps to the Niomon or first gate of the Iyeyasu temple at Nikko.



Golden gate on fourth terrace of temple at Nikko.

By JOSEPH L. C. CLARKE.

KNOW nothing jollier than a crowd of Japanese pilgrims on their way to one of the great shrines or temples. There may be from 50 to 200 of them of all adult ages and both sexes. They are generally villagers from one or a group of contiguous villages.

They are dressed in their poor best; they are all scrupulously clean, and are having the time of their lives. They travel third class on the railroads, led by one elderly bellwether of the flock, one who has made the pilgrimage before. In all else but the railroad trip they go afoot for miles and miles, taking the level valley paths or climbing the plentiful hills indifferently, and do it all cheerfully.

They put up over night at the poorest inns and live on the plainest food, and whatever coin they carry it includes a goodly supply of the very smallest coins—those of one-tenth of half an American cent. These are for the temple of ferms, recalling Dr. Johnson's sarcasms—and probably unjust definition of the half farthing—one-eighth of a penny—a coin designed to enable the poor to subscribe to charitable institutions.

In front of all shrines and temples, Shinto or Buddhist, is a large contribution box with wooden gratings on the top. If it is a Shinto shrine the pilgrim tosses in his or her coin, takes hold of the gong rope and rings, then of the small jingler bell rope and sends it, claps hands to attract divine attention, joins palms and bows head uttering the proper pious invocation of wish, and it is all over.

At the Kinkaku hillside shrine at Kioto the local priest was explaining its virtues to a crowd of about a hundred pilgrims. The coins were dropping and the gong was ringing continuously, what at the rear a local guide, who might properly be called the "barker" of the holy place, suddenly called out: "If you want to see the Lover's Leap, where the two honorable lovers plunged hand in hand to death, come over this side."

In a twinkling the whole crowd had descended the shrine, and were gazing in rapture down the cliff. Their religion is, nevertheless, ingrained, what ever it may be, and it often combines Shinto with one of the sects of Buddhism. It involves little ritual on the part of the people. The priests attend to that, and the Buddhist priests attend to an unending series of offices to pilgrims.

Shinto—the Way of the Gods—is the ancestral worship of Japan. It is founded on ancestor worship. It derives from the sun goddess, whose direct descendant was the Mikado throne since the most ancient times and who also is the mother of the entire Japanese people. In Shinto therefore the past members of the race are all gods (Kami) and in a particular way one's own forefathers, one's deceased parents and grand-

parents, for instance, are godlike spirits devoted to a constant care for their descendants and must be worshipped and honored with offerings every day for the good they are doing for you, and to fend off the harm they may mete out to you if offended. They can be terrible when they please, these family gods, so forget not to pay due homage daily. It has a great array of subsidiary gods—the elementary gods—fire, wind, thunder, water, with many home-keeping kindly deities who are invoked and honored with a thought, the seven gods of felicity, the god of good women, the god of the oven, the god of the fields, the rice god and whatnot.

Shinto involves no moral code. It presupposes morality in the worshippers. Morality is a civil affair. Its temples and shrines are simple of construction. Without, at a little distance, is the torii, a typical two-pillared gate, with two pillars and curving slightly upward. Within, a single bronze mirror in the inner chamber that only the priest sees and emblematic of truth and purity.

In the outer hall, a drum, a gong, a rack on which are paper strips telling which gods are particularly honored there. Very simple of ritual, too.

It has nearly 200,000 shrines, great and small, in the empire. In every village there is one, its little court a playground for the children. Often in the country one notes a clump of trees in the fields with a small torii at the edge and the eaves of a little temple showing. Thither the people go in the summer evening to meet and amuse themselves for an hour before the early bedtime.

Buddhism came to Japan some 1,500 years ago. It took over Shintoism in a way; has manifold ritual, and is rich in moral precepts, has a gospel of mercy and life-sparing, and a high philosophy of life with temples full of statues, emblems and adornment. It enriched Japan with art from India, China and Korea, gave a warmth to life, even in its own degeneration, and its taking on many gods and goddesses like Kwanon, the merciful and the terrifying Deva kings, who are affrighting to evil spirits only, and the two guardian dogs of Fo with curly tails, one with the mouth open and the other with the mouth shut. I have learned not to laugh at any sincere religion, but sometimes one discreetly smiles—a la Japonaise.

not intensely and stimulatingly national like Shinto, so it had to suffer privations in line with its original severity of sacerdotal abnegation. It crumbles, but it has taken to proselytizing with some vigor in places on the lines, curiously enough, of the Y. M. C. A.

So, between the two religions, often intermingled, Japan looks after its soul. I have seen two votive shelves, one Shinto, one Buddhist, in the same humble house, both carefully tended. For Shinto, one of the great expounders, Hirata, wrote: "Learn to stand in awe of the Unseen, and that will prevent you from doing wrong. Cultivate the conscience implanted in you; then you will never wander from the Way."

And that, at least in theory and largely in fact, is the base of the Japanese man's attitude to his religious beliefs; the attitude are more given to precision in tenets and to copiousness and frequency in prayers and invocations.

Of the higher Buddhism not many of the mass of Buddhists of Japan are aware. As Lafcadio Hearn in effect puts it: "There is but one Reality. The consciousness is not the real self. Matter is the mass of things that we see and feel created by force of acts and thoughts. All existence is made by Karma—the present creation of the past, and present and past together make the future." And then there is the succession of lives and the hope of the attainment of Nirvana, which is not a heaven but an eternal passionless calm.

No, they have little of this in popular Japan. For them it is a richer colored belief in the light of the Eternal Buddha, which is a godship to which they themselves may attain by force of good deeds.

When we remember, as one should constantly in thinking of the Japanese people, how they were for centuries dragged into law and order and habit and custom under repressive sumptuary edicts, all created for making Japan safe and easy the iron rule of the daimios, we may see how they would take refuge in a religion that gave them the keys of the next world. With this crushing pressure removed and law and order placed on self-supporting bases a change might be expected. It is found in a growing agnosticism prevalent among the pupils of the colleges and higher schools. All but the ancestor worship is weakening in young Japan. That clings because of its appeal to national hope and desire, and is indeed a mode of subtle self-worship.

But there is plenty of outward display of religion. I have instanced the pilgrims. To Ise, the master shrine of Shintoism, where the Emperor goes on occasion to worship his ancestors—the gods—so also perhaps a million pilgrims in a year. There is a whole town that lives on entertaining them and selling them mementos. The pilgrimage may largely be a sightseeing institution, but it is a faith feeder as well.

One summer night at Ueno Park in Tokio, where the exposition is now held, the whole landscape—grounds and buildings—one blaze of electric lighting, I came upon the shrine of the goddess

enter either. An old Japanese couple, both bent with age, were coming down the great alley of trees from the torii. They went direct to the shrine. The woman dropped a coin into the huge box. I could hear it rattle and fall. Then the old man uncovered and both clasped their hands and bent their heads in prayer.

What son did they mourn? Was he

made, and still they did not come. We went on with our chat and a group of young priests gathered near us and indulged in light chaffing among themselves about the merchants who were thus failing to keep their appointment with heaven.

It was all very human and interesting—just what you might expect among the ushers at a fashionable American wedding when the bridal party was behind time. I suppose the higher priests, perspiring in their hot silken vestments in the inner chambers, simply sat and glared as the Bishop might who was waiting to tie the nuptial knot in, say, Chicago.

At length the merchants came, three-quarters of an hour behind the hour set, and once in the Honden and on their knees and sitting comfortably back on their heels the service—a kind of mass—began, a priest warning them that at certain times they were all to bow until their foreheads touched the floor. As "foreigners" we were told that we might look if we did it circumspetly, but could not enter. It appeared to be the first time that most of the sixty had attended such a service, as many were inclined to bob at the wrong time.

The use of charms and amulets is almost universal among the less instructed people, and these are obtained mainly at the Shinto temple, but the Buddhist priests are not averse to a little addition to their funds from this source. Little strips of paper inscribed with incantations hang from the eaves of all the houses and flutter in the wind warning off evil spirits who are, it seems, a simple minded kind of beings after all, and easily deceived.

Then there are other impressionable spirits who will blow hot or cold at



Imperial messenger gate, Higashi Hongwanji, Kioto.

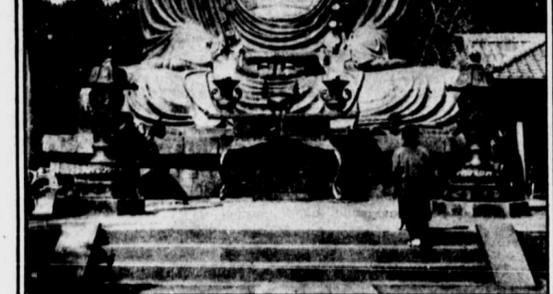
highest authorities, as at Ise for the Emperor himself. In the Buddhist temples there is on the contrary a wealth of carving and coloring. The under sides of the eaves are painted daintily in many colors, a light green prevailing, but the carving and decorating without and within have no limit.

The great bells, indeed the temple bells of all grades, are things that have their part in the religions of Japan. Many are very large; most of them are very old. There are no chiming; they do not ring as we think of ringing. They boom. One loud, long stroke that sings and thrills on the air and dies down to a murmur as of bees; then silence, and then, and only then, another boom. At the sound all within its reach will pause and listen, for it speaks to them in a language they understand; tells them of time and tide or circumstance. It must mostly soothe, for most men and women smile a little when they hear it. Only when it sounds an alarm are the strokes close together; then the whole town arouses.

Of the modern Shinto temples the Heijin gu at Kioto was built twenty years ago to celebrate 1,100 years of the city's history and in honor of the Emperor Kwammu, who made Kioto his capital. It is very vast and bare. The pillars are red. It has a fine gate called Otomom, and the temple itself is called Daikyoakuden. It is set on the plain and depends on its dimensions for its majesty.

But the great beauty of the temple shrines of Japan derives in large part from their hillside location. No such lofty structures as the Gothic cathedrals of Europe are to be expected. The religious architects of Japan wrought

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Great bronze Buddha of Kamakura, 49 feet high.