

Japanese Turn to America to Buy Own Art Prints

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THE QIRAN MONAKA by TORII KIYONOBU I.

By HERBERT GORMAN.

LAST October in Japan a single sheet of paper with the design of a woman stamped upon it with wooden blocks was auctioned for 7,200 yen. In United States money this would approximately total \$3,600. At the same sale another sheet of paper went for 6,000 yen, or \$3,000. Those prices serve in some measure to show the tremendous advance in value that the Japanese print has undergone in the last decade, for the first mentioned sheet was the print of a woman on a silver background by Utamaro. The second one was the design of an actor's head by Sharaku. Only a few weeks ago at the American Art Gallery the famous print collection of Arthur Davison Ficke was sold for more than \$60,000. Among the high prices brought was \$2,400 for a pillar print by Toyonobu, \$1,375 for a Kiyonaka, \$1,150 for a Shuncho triptych and \$1,050 for a head by Sharaku. These prints would in all probability have brought less than half of these sums ten years ago. The reason for these advances in value is not hard to find. Originally the Japanese print was valueless in a monetary sense. It could be bought for a few yen and often for less. Japan did not realize what a wealth of art she was giving the world.

With the opening of Japan to the Western world, which almost coincided with the death of Hiroshige, the great master of landscape, the appraisal and appreciation of Japanese prints was set in motion. It was not until years later, in the 1890s, that a serious study of them was undertaken. Then art collectors from Europe and America began securing them at ridiculously low prices. Slowly the best work of the Japanese print artists passed out of its native country. With the twentieth century Japan began to realize what she was losing. The art that she had taken as a matter of course was receiving such admiration in America and Europe that it suddenly was brought home to her that she was being gulled. Her art agents began to fall over one another in their eagerness to buy back, always at prices considerably higher, the prints that had been taken out of Japan. To-day the Japanese art dealers and collectors are in the curious predicament of having to come to America to purchase the best examples of the art that in most instances they have sold in New York there is always a big sale in New York there is always a group of Japanese bidders anxious and willing to pay large sums for prints in order that they may send them back to Japan.

The value of the print continues to go up



WOMAN AND GIRL WALKING ON SNOW RIVER BANK by HARUNOBU

leaps and jumps. There is no standard by which it may be gauged except the eagerness of the collectors. They become fanatics, eager to expend their last cent for some precious and rare example of a great Japanese print artist.

It is interesting to observe just what the technique of the Japanese print is. In essentials it is similar to that once employed in Europe, the art of Durer and Holbein, for instance. The artist from whom the print takes its name draws his design on transparent paper. Frequently he merely designates the colors to be used by blotches of color placed on the drawing. It is then turned over to the woodcutter, who pastes it, drawing side down, on a block of wood. This wood, which generally consists of hard cherrywood or box, is always cut lengthwise in the direction of the grain. The carver then rubs the surface of the paper off until the design shows through quite plainly. The cutting itself is done with a knife, the two edges of the contour lines being cut along, then the superfluous wood is chiseled out with small gouges. Finally the bits of paper are removed from the contour lines, which now form little ridges, and the block is ready for printing. A block is cut for every color which is to be used in the print, just those parts which take a certain color being left in high relief. Correct register of the various blocks is secured by cutting an angle in one corner of the key block, which carries the complete design for the black outline. In another corner a straight line is cut for a slot. Then each block is carefully incised in the same way, so that in printing the sheets of paper may be imposed in such a way that perfect adjustment of register is made sure.

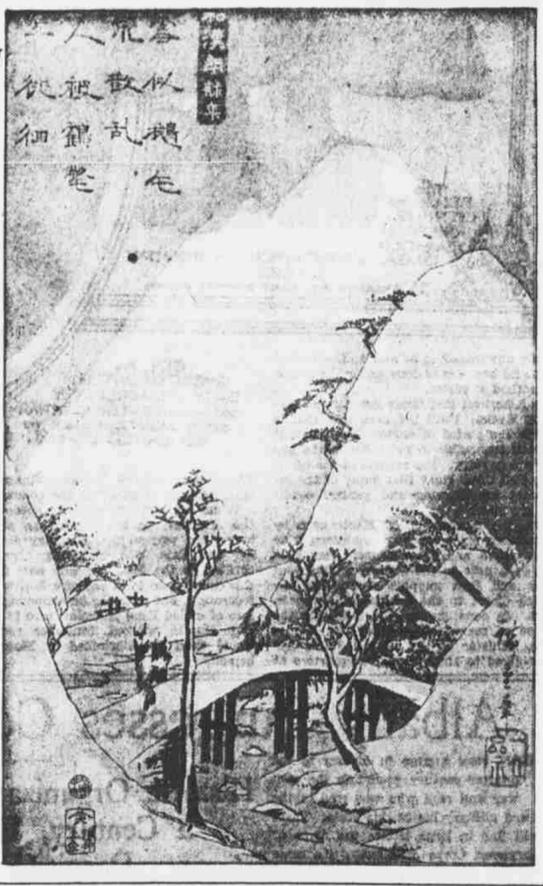
The coloring matter, which is always a water color, is mixed with rice paste and carefully spread on the blocks with a brush. The paper is then laid on a block and carefully and evenly rubbed with the hand or a rubber. The skill displayed by these unknown men who took the registrations was marvellous. They varied their colors by the use of water, intensified them, fused them gradually to another hue as in sunsets and backgrounds, made possible soft grays that deepened into clear, lustrous black and added saffrage and inset lacquer. It was a work of love.

Among the colors generally used was vermilion, a bluish red made from vegetable juice; tan, a brick red oxide of lead, which sometimes turns black with time, and Chinese cochineal red. The yellow is generally a light ochre. The blue is either carbonate of copper or indigo. Intermediate colors were introduced as time went on.

Beginnings of the Print.

There are many styles of Japanese prints, which, by the way, the Japanese call *shishu-kiyo*. The single sheet prints, which are most common, are called *shimizu-kiyo*. There are two sheets, and triptyches, in which it covers three. The pentaptych is not unknown. The long, narrow strips are called *kakemono*, and there is a still narrower sheet called the pillar print. One style of print on which the artists expended all their art is the *surimono*, a small square sheet used for a New Year's greeting or special announcement. This style will often be found loaded with gold, silver and copper toning.

In a limited space one may but touch upon a few of the greater figures in this world



THE SNOW GORGE FROM AN EXTREMELY RARE SERIES by HIROSHIGE

of art. There were several hundred print artists, many of them having schools of faithful followers who often took the names of their masters. The great figures among the primitives were Moronobu, Torii Kiyonobu I, Masanobu, Toyonobu and Kiyomitsu. Their principal aim was decorative.

Hishikawa Moronobu, supposed to have been born in 1625, was the son of a famous embroiderer. Originally a painter, he soon turned to the art of the print. Under the guidance of his genius the *Ukiyo* (or "pictures of the passing world") school received great impetus. It was he who changed the block print method into an art. About 1680 he began to illustrate books by means of blocks, and the number of booklets he issued are innumerable. His work is all in black and white, and the simplicity and masterful composition that he put into his work makes all his prints the delight of the collector. His figures, drawn with a great sparseness of line, fairly quiver with life.

With Torii Kiyonobu I begins the great Torii lines of painters. He was born in 1684 and died in 1739. He made as his special province the depiction of actors and heroes of history. Arthur Davison Ficke in his *Chats on Japanese Prints* says: "His bold and gigantic style of drawing lends some probability to the story that he was, when he first came to Yeddo, a painter of huge theatrical signboards or posters for the exteriors of theatres." There is a dash about his brush work that suggests speed in workmanship. Although many color prints are signed by his name it is doubtful that he used color blocks.

Masanobu carried the art of the print on by inventing the two color process. Born in 1685, he lived until about 1764, a life that took in great technical advancements of the print. Most of Masanobu's early work consisted of book illustrations, and parallel with them he produced a number of *tan-ye* or large single sheet prints in black and white. About 1720 he is said to have invented the *urushi-ye*, or lacquer print. It was in the year 1742 that he perfected the two color system, using two blocks besides the key block. The art of Masanobu is based upon the early primitives, but it is not as austere. He injected a graciousness into his figures that humanized them greatly.

Toyonobu and Kiyomitsu, last of the great primitives, were the experimenters and founders of the art of the print. Toyo-

nobu was born in 1711 and lived until 1785. There is a loftiness and beauty about his work that is unmatched. His figures carry a sense of majesty—they appear to move with slow and solemn steps—balance, repose and strength are qualities of his pictures. Toyonobu devoted himself to the drawing of the nude more than any other artist of his time. The Japanese mind appears to be quite antagonistic to the nude in art and it is rarely to be found.

Kiyomitsu, who was born in 1735 and died in 1785, was a rather formal artist. Most of his drawings were compressed into patterns. His is stylized and marked by many mannerisms. He may be described as the last of the primitives, for after him the print was an established form.

The Work of Harunobu.
With the experiments in polychrome printing of Harunobu comes the great color period. By 1765 he was using eight blocks and it is estimated that at times he used as high as fifteen. Harunobu was born about 1725 and died in 1770. His work is especially valuable to-day and goes at extremely high prices. It is marked by an aristocratic quality and grace of line that are almost perfect. He was essentially the painter of youth, the delicious figures of his young girls being one of the rare beauties of Japanese art.

Following Harunobu we may note the names of Koriyama, Shunsho and Buncho. Koriyama's life is shrouded in mist, but he is known to have been a samurai. His work is placed between 1770 and 1781. In his large sheets he secures an elaborate magnificence that is quite new. He was also famous as a pillar print artist. Shunsho, born in 1736, dying in 1792, is famed for his single figures of actors. The strength and characterization that he put into his drawing are unique. Buncho followed in the same path. He also was a delineator of actors. There is an awkwardness about some of his figures that appears consciously aimed at.

From this time on the number of famous print artists is bewildering. One may merely select a few of the names, picking those that appear to loom like mountains over the others. As representative a group as any should be the names of Kiyonaga, Yeishi, Utamaro, Sharaku, Toyokuni, Hokusai and Hiroshige. Kiyonaga dominated his period. He was born in 1743 and died as late as 1814. His unforgettable figures, tall, strong,



FIGURE OF A WOMAN by UTAMARO

stately, are almost Olympian. His women might be daughters of the gods; his men the sons of Apollo, for a Greek love of the human form animates them. The beautiful work of Yeishi carries on the traditions of Kiyonaga. His women are softer creations, their aloofness is not so apparent, but they move with a stateliness of the past.

With Utamaro we come to the most wonderful figure among Japanese print artists. The sinuous, voluptuous figures of his languid orans (courtesans) make him the supreme poet of passion among print artists. He is almost pre-Raphaelite at times; his yoshiwara beauties suggest Rossetti's women. Utamaro was born in 1753 and he died in 1806, with him dying the great days of the Japanese print.

But two names, both of them perhaps more widely known to the general reader and lover of art forms than any others in Japanese art, remain: Hokusai and Hiroshige. Hokusai, the Old Man Mad With Painting, was extremely versatile, but his



SCENE FROM A DRAMA by SHUNSHO

landscapes remain his greatest triumphs. He died in 1849, aged 89 years. Hiroshige, born in 1798, died in 1858. Both of these men were extremely prodigal in their output and loved to draw the daily occurrences of the common life about them, finding inspiration in those tasks of housework and labor that the artists who had gone before scorned to touch. With them the work of the Japanese print artist may be said to have come to an end.

Case Like Lansing's In Washington's Time

Edmund Randolph Forced to Resign After Treaty Fight and Much Bitterness Resulted

THE recent controversy between President Wilson and former Secretary of State Lansing is not the first in which a President of the United States has differed with his senior Cabinet officer during a treaty fight with similar consequences.

Under circumstances similar in many respects to those which mark the disagreement between President Wilson and Mr. Lansing, George Washington in 1795 forced the resignation of Secretary of State Edmund Randolph. While the charges against Randolph that brought about the displeasure of the Chief Executive were of a much graver nature than those of which the public was informed in the Lansing case, it is an interesting fact that historians of later years have almost unanimously agreed in a vindication of Randolph.

The circumstances of the Washington-Randolph controversy came to light again during some recent research work by officials of the Bulgrave Institution in preparation for the last Washington Day dinner.

In 1795 President Washington, like President Wilson, had a treaty fight on his hands. John Jay, the American plenipotentiary, had returned from Great Britain with the formal treaty, incorporated in which was one particular article that gave great offence to the sensibilities of the new nation.

This was Article XII, which permitted trade in American vessels between the British West Indies and the United States, but at the same time forbade the new nation to export sugar, molasses and cotton from the West Indies or the United States to any port in the world. The Senate, after much deliberation behind closed doors, finally ratified the treaty, but with a reservation. The offensive article was stricken out.

Washington Wanted Treaty.

Great Britain at that time was at war with France. There was a French party of considerable proportions in the United States, which protested for obvious reasons against the treaty. But Washington decided that the instrument was the best that could be evolved under the circumstances, and despite considerable national opposition gave it his strong support.

While the treaty fight was at its height a British warship intercepted a French privateer and took from among the ship's papers a confidential message to the French Foreign Office from M. Fauchet, the French Minister to the United States. This despatch, which was sent by the British to Washington, charged on its face that Secretary Randolph had made a suggestion to the French Minister that in consideration of money payments the support of himself and his three fellow Cabinet members could be had for French sentiment during the whiskey rebellion of 1794.

The passage in the despatch of the

French Minister that aroused the suspicions of Washington and the British read:

"Two or three days before the proclamation (relating to the whiskey rebellion) was published, and, of course, before the Cabinet had resolved upon its measures, the Secretary of State came to my house. All his countenance was grief.

"It is all over," he said to me. "A civil war is about to ravage our unhappy country. Four men by their talents, their influence and their energy may save it. But as debtors of English merchants they will be deprived of their liberty if they take the smallest step. Can you lend them instantaneously funds to shelter them from England?"

"It was impossible for me to make a satisfactory answer. You know my want of power and deficiency in pecuniary means. Thus the consciences of the pretended patriots of America have already their price. What will be the old age of this Government if it is already thus decrepit?"

Waited for Ratification.

This document was in Gen. Washington's hands for some time, but he took no action until the treaty with England was ratified by the Senate, which was on August 18, 1795. The next day, August 19, Secretary Randolph was invited to call upon the President. When he entered the latter's room there were also present Secretary of War Pickens and Secretary of the Treasury Wolcott.

The despatch to the French Minister was handed to Secretary Randolph by the President, and in the presence of his two Cabinet colleagues he was asked for an explanation. Randolph took offence at the presence of Pickens and Wolcott and left hurriedly, saying he would resign. His resignation was received the following day and was accepted by the President, who, however, wrote:

"While you are in pursuit of means to remove the strong suspicion arising from this letter, no disclosure of its contents will be made by me, and I will enjoy the same upon the public officers who are acquainted with the purport of it.

"No man would rejoice more than I to find the suspicions which have resulted from the intercepted letter were unequivocally and honorably removed."

In the preparation of a brief by which he sought to prove his innocence Randolph became exceedingly bitter in the intensity of his own defense. He wrote to President Washington asking for certain documents, to which the latter replied:

"I have directed that you shall have the inspection of my letter of July 22, and you are at full liberty to publish without reserve any and every private and confidential letter I ever wrote you; nay more, every word I ever uttered to you or in your hearing, from whence you may derive any advantage in your vindication."

Garden in Reach of Almost Every One

ONE of the first impressions that strike the traveller from the Old to the New World and sadly is the non-cultivation of vacant spaces, especially those around the moderate sized house and cottage. So much beauty and innocent pleasure is lost for want of a little knowledge and initiative. True, the frequent extremes of climate set up difficulties that are not faced within a more moderate zone, but these drawbacks can be neutralized. An exhibition of plants that can be grown with little care in a simple garden will be shown at the annual international flower show to be held at Grand Central Palace, beginning to-morrow, and lectures on gardening will be given by experts all the week. Sweetwilliams, hollyhocks, peonies, lilies, Pampas grass and a host of other beauties

are all ready to raise their heads at the first call of spring sunshine. It always saves much time and useless experimenting to buy a simple manual, with hints of the best aspect of sun and shade suitable to those flowers one wishes to cultivate. One of the most effective flowering plants is the great phlox, the nasturtium and the petunia, all easily raised from the seed. And what cannot be done with ivy—the English, the American and the Virginia creeper? All three can cover old tree stumps and unsightly fences. The common fern, too, and violet plant make ideal backgrounds for borders.

Nothing is more effective than the geranium and how hardy! Rose bushes of the hardy kind are a perpetual joy and will probably want only a straw covering in the winter months. The scarlet rambler rose is wonderfully quick in giving its branch laden blossoms.