WHEN JAPAN IS AT HER LOVELIEST

Summer Pilgrimage by Thousands Religiously Inclined to the Summit of Mount Fuji.

Annie Laura Miller Makes Side Trips Among Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water

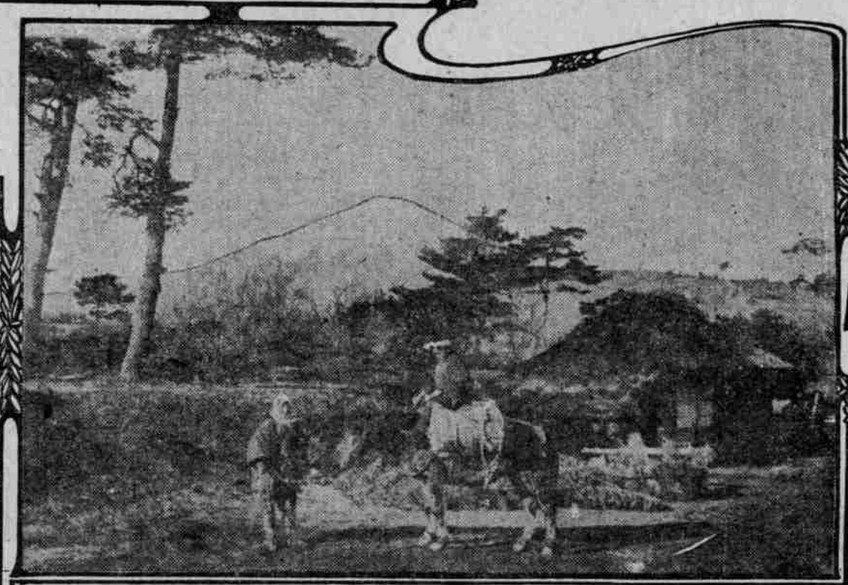
PEASANT WOMEN HUSKING RICE NEAR FUJI

FUJI AS SEEN FROM NINOOKA GOTEMBA

FARMER IN HIS STRAW RAIN COAT

RETURN OF FISHING BOATS

TYPICAL FARM HOUSE



A REAL BEAST OF BURDEN

FUJI PILGRIMS IN THEIR WHITE COSTUMES

KAMEIWA SHRINE MOUNT FUJI

BY ANNIE LAURA MILLER.

GOTEMBA, Japan, Aug. 30.—(Special Correspondence of the Sunday Oregonian.)—One hears most of the beauty of Japan in the Spring and Autumn, yet the country is really loveliest at the height of the Summer season. To an Oregonian, used to the yellow grain fields and the smell of tar weed that fill the Willamette Valley in midsummer, the fresh green of a Japanese August comes as a surprise.

It was especially striking the other day when we came down from the mountain resort of Karuizawa with its wealth of wild flowers into the fertile plain that stretches from Takasaki station 63 miles to Tokio and beyond. This plain was covered with rice plants, as with a thick green carpet, with, here and there, clumps of dark green trees, garden patches and ponds of beautiful pink and white lotus. And here where we are now, at Gotemba, 63 miles southwest of Yokohama, in a plain at the base of Fujiyama, there is the same fresh green of rice and grass and leaves growing rapidly, a juicy green due to the many rains that fall in the Summertime.

Not only is all the country green; it is many shades of green. In front of our house is a little cornfield set about on two sides with cedars, pines, acacias and bamboo, while on the other side is wild grass dotted with blue scabious; in the distance, showing rounded slopes of emerald green and darker wooded hollows, are the mountains of the Oyama Range. To the left of them, about eight miles away, sweeping majestically up from the plain to the height of 12,365 feet above the sea, is Fuji itself.

Pilgrims to Fuji.

This morning early the air was clear and the mountain towered against a cloudless blue sky. We could see the one small patch of snow, the long slopes of red cinders, near the summit, part of the winding pathway and several of the station huts that mark the ascent. But now great, soft white clouds hide the summit and cast black shadows on the lower slopes. Back of us are the Hakone Hills, green to their summits with bamboo grass and wooded gorges where dark shadows lie.

A mile and a half away on the railroad is the mountain town of Gotemba, where most of the pilgrims alight for climbing Fuji. Just now it is very gay with its inns all decorated with cotton hangings and brightly painted pilgrims' towels flapping on poles to show the popularity of the hostelry. At train time the station is thronged with returning pilgrims, the most devout among them dressed in white, wearing great hats with the outline of the summit stamped on them, straw mats hanging from their shoulders as a protection against rain or sun, rosaries about their necks, bells tied to their waistbands, ringing with every step, and in their hands staffs of white wood bearing the stamps of the different stations.

Traveling Under Stress.

If the weather be good Fuji is not a difficult mountain to climb; the steep path is of cinders and lava, a long and weary ascent, but the way is divided into ten stations, each station having a hut, where rice, eggs and tea can be got and where one may have an uncomfortable night's lodging. The weather is very changeable and each year out of the thousands of people who climb some lives are lost in storms of wind and rain; while foreigners are sometimes forced to spend several days in a hut, unable because of stress of weather either to ascend or descend. Only two weeks ago in a hard typhoon, when five feet of rain fell, a party of foreigners were storm bound for 48 hours in a hut near the base of the mountain.

The season is very short, lasting only from July 15 to September 10; after that the huts are closed. This month, between the fifth and twenty-fifth, 6518 people made the ascent. Most of the Japanese go from a semi-religious feeling, for they believe that a Shinto goddess dwells in the crater. The other day we heard of a Japanese family in Shidzuoka who refrained from climbing for more than a hundred years. In their garden is the grave of an ancestor who was killed, so they say, by the fire god on the summit of Fuji. None of the family dared brave the wrath of the god until last year, when a cousin made the ascent in safety, and this year the son of the family is going.

There are interesting trips to be taken hereabouts. In July we went around the base of Fuji, walking and riding over rough paths and boating across several lonely lakes surrounded by high mountains, ending the four days' journey by shooting the rapids of the Fujikama. Another time we spent a day at Sano, a place nearby, where a semi-foreign hotel is situated on the side of a stream in "the garden of the eight waterfalls." The falls are not high, and the stream forming there is a small one, an artificial outlet of Lake Hakone, but the effect is very picturesque. The other day, after the great typhoon (80 hours the rain poured without stopping), that has wrought such havoc in other parts of Japan, Fuji was clear and the weather promised to be fair, so we set out for the coast, 15 miles from here, to catch a glimpse of beautiful Enoura Bay.

At Numadzu, a big country town near the seashore, we took rickshas, going out of town among the ricefields, then through a village where most of the population were enjoying an afternoon nap. It was very hot, but in the midst of the heat we saw marching impressively down each side of the street two Japanese men, dressed in heavy, foreign trousers, Prince Albert coats, military caps, waistcoats of white, stiff white shirts, cuffs, collars, ties and—they are very fashionable in Japan—white cotton gloves. Clothes, so many and so warm, were a strange contrast to the loincloths of the village men, the simple petticoats of the women, and the total absence of clothes on the brown children who swarmed in the streets to watch the men walking with military tread playing wheezy concertinas.

At the Hoyokwan, a rambling old-style inn in a pine grove on the seashore, the host and his wife welcomed us, kneeling and bowing their heads to the floor. The house was very crowded, they said, but they gave us two neat, little rooms which with the narrow verandah formed a separate cottage connected with the main inn by an outdoor passageway.

With Fishermen on the Coast.

Out on the half-moon beach a beautiful view greeted us; far away was the mountainous promontory of Izu, with white clouds hanging above; in the blue sea near us was a tiny rocky island with the Summer house of a wealthy Japanese gentleman on it; muscular, brown fishermen, wearing only loin cloths and wide hats of rushes, were pulling in their nets, pushing their high-prowed boats up on the sand above the reach of the tide, while other fishermen sat mending nets or gossiping and smoking in groups. Behind us rose mountains with outlines as irregular as those unbelievable ones the Chinese love to paint, and along the shore for a mile or so was a forest of the gnarled, wide-branching pine trees, so different from the straight, towering pines of the Pacific Coast of America that old association would have them oaks.

At night the inn was quiet, except for the watchman who went his rounds with a noisily-clicking wooden alarm. After breakfast next morning we left, attended to the gate by six ne-sans in blue cotton kimonos, and by the landlady, a fine looking woman with the Jewish type of face seen often among the Japanese. All of them said "sayonara," with many bows, like a stage chorus.

Out in the smooth, blue bay were white-sailed fishing boats; near the shore were big round baskets in which caught fish are kept alive until they are wanted; fishermen were swimming and working on the beach, which was covered with drying nets. Naked boys of all ages were playing as boys of all nations love to play; the less adventurous tiny ones dug holes in the sand, one a little older rolled a firkin in the edge of the waves, uttering the coolie chant, "It is heavy, it is heavy," while two others farther out rocked in a shallow bath tub brought from home for their voyage; others sailed toy boats, puffing their cheeks round and blowing with all their might to make up for the lack of breeze; while bigger boys swam on boards and dived from a boat in the water's edge. Passing an imperial villa, of which we could see only the roof between the high stone wall and the low boughs of the pine trees, we came to the Ashibuse hotel out on a wooded promontory.

In General Oyama's Villa.

There is a cut in the promontory leading to General Oyama's private villa, with grounds that are open to the public during the General's absence. Steps lead up to an octagonal Summer house at the end of the point, and from here the view is charming. Below in a cave about an acre in extent, with a bit of cunning beach, is the house, a big, irregular unpainted Japanese bungalow, surrounded by young pines. A bit of vegetable garden is back of the house, and a stone well with a sweep of bamboo. But the most interesting thing in the garden is a bronze image of the Kamakma Daibutser, some three feet high, set in a little cave of natural rock. Rainwater had trickled down over the face so that it was stained as if with tears. The old gatekeeper who was sitting in the shade near his cottage making a wooden weaving machine while his black-toothed wife prepared squash for cooking, told us that General Oyama came to the villa only twice a year, in August and December.

Such little excursions as there are interesting, but of never-failing interest are the venders who come to our Summer cottage hawking their wares, and the simple peasants who cultivate the fields in the plains at the base of Fuji. These peasants live in wooden houses with roofs of thatch a foot and a half thick. Some of the places are so shabby and dirty as to make one hurry by, while others of the farmhouses are large and fairly neat, with flowers in the gardens, but all the people seem very poor, just simple, cheerful, hardworking peasants. As for the children, one longs for permission to scrub most of them with soap and hot water so that one might know if they are pretty or not. Two little girls came to see us as we sat on the veranda the other day—neat, picturesque little figures in cotton kimonos, each holding a parasol over a tiny pink brother with a fuzzy head tied to her back. The women work in the fields picking tea and mulberry leaves and doing harder work, often side by side with the men. Sometimes we see them riding by on horses that have heavy loads on the sides, while the women sit above cross-legged in queer saddles in the way that the Japanese used to travel in the old days before the railroad.

Often we see horses going, only head tail and legs visible, under a great load of grass cut high up on the slopes of the Hakone Hills by the sturdy peasant leading his beast.

Peddlers come along carrying fruit and vegetables swung in boxes from poles across their shoulders. When we have chicken it is brought to us by a farmer's wife who comes across the strip of lawn in front of the house, carrying the dressed fowl and bowing low, saying a pleasant "good day" to us.

By the same way, too, comes the milkman, a lad in a tight-fitting suit of striped cotton crepe with long stockings, a coat of dark blue cotton with Japanese characters in white on the lapels and a flaming big red emblem between the shoulders. The shoemaker goes by carrying leather shoes new and mended to his customers, while he walks along barefoot save for straw maragi.

Once a week a lamp vender appears carrying bright-colored glass lamps and chimneys balanced in baskets on a bamboo pole; and once a week the cheerful old umbrella mender comes by with boxes of canes and umbrellas. Sometimes there are poor old beggars, who rejoice if we give them a few sen. Not long ago a very dirty and picturesque pilgrim came by drumming with a stick on a sheepskin fan, while he mumbled a chant. He was making a round of temples, having come here from Minobu, where the boxes of a Buddhist saint of the thirteenth century are enshrined in a beautiful temple. The other day two men with heavy packs came to the door and showed their wares—boxes, picture-frames and singing tops—all made of Hakone wood, cunningly inlaid with woods of different colors. The Shinto priest who owns the land on which the 24 houses of this foreign community are built is a gentle-faced man with a long, thin black beard. He is an imposing figure in his panama hat, his long black gauze coat, with white crests, and gray silk trousers so wide that they look like divided skirts. But the favorite of all the settlement is the mail carrier, who comes twice a day shouting "yubin" (mail), at our front doors. He wears a uniform coat and trousers and a mushroom hat, all of dark blue, with a cape to protect him when the weather is bad. One day he had substituted stockinette underwear for the trousers, and once, during a typhoon, he went splashing by in hat and cape. But when the mail comes from America the yubin haidatsu might be dressed in a Roman toga and not a soul would be the wiser, for in a minute we are all across the ocean again at home with our friends.

WHY THUS ON THE STAGE

"AND then, too," went on the man with the interrogative eye, "there are a whole lot of other things happening on the stage all the time that I can't figure out at all.

"For one thing, why is it that the adventuress, whether she's in the house or out of it, always wears a black sequin spangled dress with her milky shoulders sticking 'way out of the top of it?

"And when she scratches the match to light her cigarette, why does she always scratch it on the high heel of one of her shoes? I've always considered that dangerous, for she's liable to set fire to the lacy stuff that shows when she lifts up the foot to get at the heel with the match. I've been waiting for years for some stage adventuress to set fire to herself while doing this.

"And in vaudeville, to skip around some, where does the fun come in when at every pause in the rapid-fire talk between a pair of sidewalk comedians the one of 'em who's dressed up slaps the other one across the face with all his might with a folded-up newspaper? D'je ever notice how the whole house just howls and rocks with laughter every time that happens?

"'Say, I seen y'r sister las' night,' one of the sidewalk comedians says to his companion, and then, biff! he gets himself swatted right across the face with the folded-up newspaper, and then for a couple of minutes you can't hear yourself think, the folks all around you are swaying in such a veritable gale of laughter.

"'Yep, I seen her las' night,' the sidewalk comedian repeats, and then, zing-o! he gets another one of those newspaper wallops, and again everybody just careens back and forth a-hollering over it.

"Queer, hey? What's funny about that? Where does the shriek come in?

"And, say, what is there in the common, everyday cuss word that tickles all hands in every kind of a theater audience, high or low, so immensely? The cuss word always gets an immense laugh out of 'em. So does the word used to designate the hot place. Some years ago I saw a play performed by a well-known almost comedian that was absolutely carried to success by the frequency with which this prominent near actor ejaculated that hot place word.

"You never hear cuss words evoke any wild laughter in ordinary life. Why should they be a source of such tremendous cachinnation when emitted by somebody on the stage?

"Why again does any allusion to booze on the stage inevitably get all of them in the audience to grinning and looking one another over craftily and appearing sort o' pleased and gratified? Search me there. I'm not jerry to that one.

"Some fellow on the stage says something about how good a highball would taste and he makes an immense hit. Now, in the commerce of ordinary life a highball's a matter-of-fact sort of an affair and there's nothing at all funny about it—I've seen the time after falling for too many of 'em when they seemed durned tragic to me—on the following morning, I mean.

"But any allusion to rum by the stage person is just naturally bound to make all kinds of a hit. There was a vaudeville piano player who did his stunt in the makeup of a tramp burglar, going around last season, who said, as he started off the stage after his final encore every night: 'Now I'm goin' out an' git one that high,' indicating with his hands how high a one he was going to stick into his system, and, my! what a roar that did bring forth every blessed night! What's the answer? Which? Show me the blue prints. Gimme a peek at a diagram. I'm not there.

"In one of those knockabout acts, why is it that the pitiable knockabout person who is getting such a horrible lot the worst of it gains so little sympathy from the audience?

"The knockabout duck gives him a frightful kick on both shins, and then how everybody does chuckle! Wonder if it can be that everybody in a theater audience is just naturally cruel.

"The other knockabout chap then sinks a hatchet deep into the skull of the hard luck one—more mighty laughs. Then he stiffens two of his fingers and deliberately pokes them into his unfortunate partner's eyes.

"I'd like to have a look at Exhibit A to find out for why they laugh.

"Two Dutch comedians, both with huge balloon-size stomachs, are doing their dialogue in front of the drop, and every time one of them works off a witticism on the other he is slapped resoundingly across the stomach with the strong, crook-handled cane in the hands of the other one. And everybody laughs. I'm from the Ozarks once more. What for?

"When, in a sure-enough drammer, the young woman who has been cast out into the snow with her che-ild, with no place to go and with no idea as to where she can hock the $12,000 worth of diamonds that she is wearing out in the snow—why, amid these circumstances, does the orchestra always play, muted, the first measure of 'The Flower Song?'

"Why does the leading woman in the society drammer always turn her back completely upon the young feller when she's talking to him in her boudoir? And, by the way, what's he doing in her boudoir, anyhow? In the common or garden variety of life that we lead, do young ducks call upon their ladifrens in their boudoirs? Show me some more. I'm a-waiting."