

Landscape and Life in Japan.

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MOVING inland from the fishing villages and the long towns that bead, as it were, the highways on the seaboard, we take note of the farmhouses and the monasteries and the castles. It is at once evident that this land bears the impress of ancient feudal and ecclesiastical systems, and that this impress heightens vastly the natural picturesqueness of the land. It is a land of a romance strangely parallel to that of mediæval Europe, the Buddhist community corresponding to the Catholic Church, and the feudalism with which Buddhism was allied, and even at times, in the case of warlike prelates, identified, so developed as to be pronounced by good authorities the most elaborate the world has seen. Blending with the natural sunshine of this bright land is the soft, sweet, mystic Light of Asia, keeping watch with its mountain fastnesses are the white curving-eaved towers of its many castles of chivalric fame.

Descending a mountain pass, a lush green plain opens to the eye, flat as a chess-board and chequered like a chess-board with rice

fields. In the middle distance cluster the buildings of the provincial capital, and central and conspicuous among them the towers, white above the grey battlements of the castle, rivalled only by the pagodas and marquee-like roofs of the temples. Beyond rises a blue background of mountains. Farmhouses and villages are packed cozy in clumps of wooding, and around the temples are dense groves, and Far Eastern pines stretch their arms over the castle moat. The Castle of Yedo has a spiral moat at least ten miles long, spanned until lately by forty-eight bridges, and with embankments sometimes forty or fifty feet deep; some of the blocks of granite in the battlements of Osaka Castle measure twenty to forty-two feet in length by fifteen to twenty in width and six or eight in thickness.

Occasionally a foudal keep appears, not on the middle of a plain, but high on a rock among the forest heights, where the waterfalls glance like spears, and the mountain stream marches to its perennial music far beneath. And marvellously picturesque are the monasteries that we pass in our wanderings among the hills. A rush into the ears of the trilling of insects, a deepened flavour of the incense of pine, a dappling of the path