We have made toil an ugly thing in our Western civilization; particularly true is this in America. We have let ourselves grow to despise work, and so we have come to disfigure it. We speak of beauty and labor as though there could be no association between the two. Just as we speak of the ornamental as remote from the practical, a workroom means to us a bare, unbeautiful place, often unsanitary, a place to hurry from and dislike. Work clothes are the garments of disgrace, inartistic, to be cast off in our moment of release from toil. And so though much, nay most, of the life of the average person is spent in working for a living, it is lived in sordid or tawdry or squalid surroundings, absolutely unnecessary, and the combined result of lack of thought, Puritanism and the kind of civilization built up on commercial standards.

For all work may be so beautifully done that its immediate environment must be beautiful. Where a nation of people express their highest spiritual attainment through an art or craft, the workman will inevitably achieve fitting surroundings for his toil, and all unconsciously the laborer himself and his workroom will illustrate the beauty he finds in his own soul and seeks to express in his work. Japan has been doing this for centuries, ages. So saturated has the nation become with beauty that in every workshop, prior to the last decade, in every group of workers, there was beauty of composition, color and detail. There was no material expression that was not interesting. The people, the humblest and simplest, had become so accustomed to beauty that they loved it inevitably. If an artist today paints workmen in our factories, department shops, sweatshops, it is the implicit understanding of his art which makes the scenes interesting and significant; but every painting of Japanese life has charm in two ways, because of the artist and because of the life.

Before Western civilization touched Japan, one did not find the workmen secluded inevitably in workshops. A man did his exquisite daily task wherever it was most interesting, most pleasant for him to do it,—on the porch of his home, out in his little miniature garden, in the room where he lived. The daily toil of life was not shut away from the daily joy of life. Labor and beauty thus became completely interwoven in the lives of the people, until men, women and children found a serene, sincere joy in work for the production of art. In the old Japanese houses we do not find workrooms and playrooms,
BEAUTY WITH LABOR IN JAPAN’S DAILY LIFE

we do not even find schoolrooms, separate and apart from life. There seemed to be one purpose which welded every phase of life together, and that was the expression of the soul of man, what we nowadays call individuality, in whatever labor his life was given to, and the painting of pictures, the writing of poems, the building of houses, the embroidering of tapestries, all expressed the interest of the individual in his own life.

By far the greatest charm of Japan and her people lies not only in the fact that the artists know the secret of the most wonderful carvings, castings, wood and metal work, silken brocades and tapestries, exquisite cloisonnés and porcelains, things for the fortunate few, but also in the further and more important fact that the daily life of the poor is surrounded, permeated, interfused by taste and refinement. Even the workmen in their gardens and homes are daily using tasteful domestic implements which are the outgrowth of the thought and needs of the people.

The design and proportions of the humblest houses, exteriors and interiors, are settled for all time by certain rules of harmony; the dress of the peasant is not left to possibly hideous individual caprice, but follows established canons of color, cut and usage; the garden, however small, the fence or paling that walls it in, the roof over the well, over the gate, the great lantern that hangs by the door, the bucket in which water is fetched and the bamboo dipper from which it is poured, the bronze brazier for coals, the tea service; all these and a thousand more details of daily life are arranged according to a pattern which may be very old, but which was the fruit of an art spirit both instinctive and painstaking, and which, as a result, adds immeasurably to the satisfaction of life.

And yet Japanese craftsmen, while holding hard by tradition, have not failed to add to their work the subtle touch of personality. In the motifs of their delicately impressionistic and symbolical designs are constantly seen their reverence for the early masters, and as constantly is perceived the individual variation which prevents each piece of work from having a duplicate.

UP TO the time when the Japanese began to be evilly influenced by our Western commercial civilization, the innate taste of the Japanese worker, no matter what the medium in which he wrought, seemed to be unerring. But since he has listened to the distracting, imperative voice from over seas and consented to adopt the factory method, his standards have become confused, and one finds him less often absorbed in his own poetical thoughts of The Jewel in the Clouds, The Spray of the Sea, The Wind among the
"A JAPANESE DESIGNER": BY HOKUSAI.

"WHEN THE TWILIGHT BATS ARE FLITTING": BY HOKUSAI.
In the old Japanese houses we do not find workrooms and playrooms separate; whatever labor a man's life was given up to, whether the painting of pictures, writing of poems or the embroidering of tapestries, it was usually done most happily and interestingly in some room of the home. Apparently in this old life of Japan work was an essential part of the existence of every member of the family; as soon as a child could toddle about the house he was taught to work.

Formerly the daily toil of life was not shut away from the daily joy of life; labor and beauty thus became completely interwoven in the lives of the people, until men, women and children found a serene, sincere joy in work for the production of art, and where work becomes an expression of interest in life it can never take on the aspect of sordidness or ugliness, which is seen so frequently in the modern phases of our Western civilization.

Before Western civilization touched Japan one did not find the workmen secluded inevitably in workshops; men did their exquisite daily task wherever it was most interesting, most pleasant for them to do it, possibly in the rooms where they lived; to work in the right sense is to create, and to create is to express the utmost knowledge of truth; this is what we feel in the working lives of the Japanese people.

WORKERS IN WOOD AND IN BAMBOO OFTEN ACCOMPLISH THE ENTIRE PROCESS OF THEIR CRAFT IN TINY ROOMS OPEN TO THE STREET, AND TO THE PASSERBY THE EFFECT IN COLOR AND COMPOSITION IS OF A BEAUTIFUL OLD JAPANESE PRINT THOUGHT OUT AND DREAMED OF BY SOME ARTISTIC DESIGNER. IT IS BECAUSE THESE PEOPLE DO NOT DESPISE WORK THAT THEY HAVE NEVER DISFIGURED IT: WORK IS TO THEM A MEANS TO A BEAUTIFUL END, AND THEY MAKE THE PATHWAY TO THE END ALSO BEAUTIFUL.

IN WANDERING OVER JAPAN EVERYWHERE ONE STUMBLIES UPON SOME DELIGHTFUL ARTISAN, A FEW APPRENTICES SURROUNDING HIM IN HIS PLAIN, STRAW-THATCHED TOY HOUSE, WORKING HAPPLY IN THE OLD WAY, THE TOY HOUSE, BEAUTIFUL IN ITS WAY, PERFECT IN ITS SCHEME OF ARCHITECTURE, THE COSTUMES OF THE MEN INTERESTING IN LINE AND COLOR AND SUITED TO THEIR OCCUPATION, THE VERY METHOD OF THEIR WORK EXPRESSING A DISTINCT BEAUTY OF MOTION.
WHEREVER A MAN DESIRES TO WORK IN JAPAN, THERE HE ERECTS HIS APPARATUS; A MANUFACTURER OF SILK OFTEN SETS UP HIS LOOM OUT IN THE STREET AND MAKES OF HIMSELF AND THE PROCESS OF REELING A MOST PICTURESQUE AND ARTISTIC SCENE; AND EVERYWHERE STILL THE DAILY LIFE OF THE POOR IS SURROUNDED, PERMEATED AND INTERFUSED BY TASTE AND REFINEMENT BECAUSE OF THE BEAUTY OF DAILY LABOR.

THE JAPANESE CRAFTSMEN WHILE HOLDING HARD BY TRADITION DO NOT FAIL TO ADD TO THEIR WORK THE SUBTLE TOUCH OF PERSONALITY: THIS IS TRUE EVEN IN SO SIMPLE AN OCCUPATION AS PIPE-MAKING: ONE FINDS REVERENCE FOR THE OLD MASTERS AND INDIVIDUAL VARIATION. ALSO IN OLD JAPAN THERE WAS NEVER ANY SEPARATION OF THE FINE ARTS AND THE INDUSTRIAL ARTS: THE ARTISTS THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM WERE CRAFTSMEN, AND THE CRAFTSMEN, CREATORS.

A MOST INTERESTING SCENE IN JAPAN IS A SAWMILL RUN BY MAN POWER, THE MEN PRACTICALLY STRIPPED, REVEALING SPLENDID BODIES, FINELY ATHLETIC, WITH INTERESTING NOTES OF COLOR IN THE SASHES ABOUT THE WAIST AND THE BANDAGES ABOUT THE HEAD: SO THOROUGHLY ARE THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF BEAUTY UNDERSTOOD IN JAPAN THAT ONE IS CONSCIOUS OF GRACE OF MOTION IN THE MOST "COMMON" PEOPLE AT THEIR TASKS.
Grasses, The Insect that Laughs, expressed in a rare combination of the gently illusive with the vividly realistic.

The underlying harmonies which have in the past surrounded the Japanese in landscape, architecture, dress or homeliest domestic furniture, must have contributed more than the Occidental mind may guess to the fastidious taste and exquisite facility which have come down from a line of forefathers, each of whom spent his life in the same practice and endeavor, until the hand of the craftsman was able to work intuitively and without model. In that land of poets is still the wondering reproach: “I showed the Westerner my treasures, but he does not even know what to admire!”

The instant, instinctive taste, as well as the profound love of beauty, is not likely to die immediately among those workmen, whose blood-heritage it is, although, certainly, we have long been doing all we know how to destroy it. In so commercial and non-artistic a porcelain district as Nagoya I saw a big roomful of men working in clay, hastily copying in quantities pieces that were to go, in a shipload, to fill an order in England. I paused beside a man who was finishing soap dishes. On each cover, before it went to be baked, he was adding the knob by which it could be lifted, that on the European model before him was utterly without sentiment, less gracious of shape than a freshly dug onion or potato. With a few slight, quick touches, seemingly as unthinking as a machine, he was yet doing more than was required—he was causing each knob, as it passed under his hands, to take the look of a half-opened bud, a faint hint of a leaf being also quickly modeled in the “biscuit” beneath it.

Fortunately, the factory method has not yet become universal. In wandering over the country, everywhere one stumbles upon some delightful artisan, a few apprentices surrounding him in his plain, straw-thatched toy house, who, with an unspoiled, two-centuries-ago mind, still works happily in the old way, much more intent on the mode of his fashioning than on the probable financial results. In the outskirts of Yokohama I found a gold-lacquerer who was a master of his craft. I crossed his tiny garden, set thick with bamboo and blossoming camelias, went through the bare, scrupulously clean lower room, climbed the steep, narrow stairway, and found above, in several rooms wide open to the balcony and to the garden, the whole family at work.

They brought out for my appreciation in various stages of completion several treasures from the drying room, and explained the whole process. In those immaculate rooms, set in that leafy greenery, there was no dust to mar the work. It took months of polishing, of
BEAUTY WITH LABOR IN JAPAN'S DAILY LIFE
drying and repolishing, over and over, to finish any piece; in the old
days, still more time was given. At the time the family were at work
on a pair of sumptuous doors, about five feet high, done to order for
a wall cabinet in the house of an American millionaire, facsimiles
of some of the beautiful old work in one of the temples at Nikko,
the old father drawing the designs on a set of trays, the youngest son,
three years old, gravely, patiently rubbing and polishing with his
silken baby palm some work just at that stage where no other known
process could give it the same perfection.

The designs on the trays, eight or ten of the latter, were simply
the vigorous, resourceful tai fish, so admired for the sturdy virtues it
typifies. The original drawing of that design was a tai perfectly
done two hundred years ago by an old master. The gold-laquerer
knew it by heart, every line, every curve, every expression of it, so
that he drew from memory, without model or copy, a certain,
particular swimming fish, with just a hint of wave, river current, float-
ing water-weed; yet was there no set, machinelike work, for the mar-
vel of it was, while there seemed no perceptible deviation from the
original, perfect fish of the old master, there were subtle touches,
urances of atmosphere, by which every tray was made fresh and
individual. Surely it took a master of his craft to vary so much in
expression while he varied so little in thought!

Just outside the same town, in a house which preserves and re-
veres the history and traditions of the art, I saw cloisonné being made
in the same patient, painstaking way. Two little residences had been
thrown together behind the one bamboo palings, that the more ap-
prentices and workmen might be gathered there, for this was really
a "factory," or called itself so, and a large output must be constantly
hastened along. In a tiny workshop a few men hammered out by
hand the copper vases and plaques which were to receive the enamel.
In a pleasant room, its outer wall pushed away so that one whole side
was open to the pine and cherry-blossom garden, sat two artists, a
man and a woman, drawing, in India ink, free hand and without
model, beautiful, flowery designs upon the finished copper vases.
One design, it was explained, was called "The Three Seasons" and
represented, with its glad profusion of birds and blossoms, the joyous
spirit of out-of-door life during spring, summer and autumn.

In the next room, a large one, a number of young men were
arranging, with their delicate, taper finger tips, with pincers and with
the help of glue, a raised outline of silver wire along every India ink
line the artists had traced on the copper vases, plates, buckles and
parasol handles. Other men, at the next step, took the articles, and
with an enamel paste made of finely ground stones and other sub-

524
stances, filled each little cell thus outlined by silver wire; then a little dab of color, red, maybe, where a peony petal was to be, green where the leaf was, black in the shadow, white in the high light, pale yellow, possibly, or dark blue, for the body of the vase. When this thin, first coat had been applied, the piece was sent away for a slow firing, a careful, prolonged manipulating taking days to finish. After came a second coating of enamel, each cell receiving its own right color, and a second firing. This must be repeated again and again for weeks and even months, until the final firing and cooling have been completed.

When the last firing is safely over still remain weeks of polishing with pumice and under running water, for the vase now has a rough, uneven surface, blotched here and there with dull colors, the silver wires being buried and hidden in the bulging mass that is as yet the surface. But that long, patient polishing! By it nothing less than a miracle is wrought.

I SAW in wood carving done by those nature lovers, so difficult and nice an achievement as the portrayal of a waterfall, with little birds flying through the mist and spray that arose from it. In one shop was a tray or plaque of wood the dark color of bog oak, with a great moon and the reflection of the moon on a carven river, wonderfully done in silver inlay. The felicitous symbolism that, once fully appreciated, in a few touches gives you a swift river current with maple leaves floating adown, or a storm wave breaking in foam and spray against a rocky shore, or a garden with the movement, sound and color as well as the flowers and tree-forms of midsummer, adds an enjoyment beyond words to the possibilities of decorative and domestic art. The perpetual exhibition that is Japan leaves one in doubt as to just where the line is drawn between the artist’s thought and the craftsman’s hand, or one becomes convinced that the craftsmen are themselves all artists.

In one village I saw an ordinary little boy sitting in a doorway, not whistling a stick, as he might have been doing with us, but embroiderying chrysanthemums on a great square of satin. True, the outlines were stamped on the fabric, stretched in its frame before him, but without supervision or model he was filling them in according to his own sweet will, all in exquisitely shaded golds and browns and pinks. As I stood and stared he laughed at me, looking perfectly happy. I went away thinking:

“In a country of unheard-of things, where babies contentedly work at polishing lacquer, where little boys can embroider party frocks, where a workman gratuitously adds beautifying touches to the task
BEAUTY WITH LABOR IN JAPAN'S DAILY LIFE

he accomplishes—is it not heartrending that, instead of trying to
catch the spirit of such toilers as these, we should do so much to vitiate
and spoil it?"

Left to themselves, these workers are so patient, they have so
much time! In a furniture factory, near the door, I saw a lad sitting
with fine emery cloths, industriously smoothing the corner of a box
or coffer. Duly dyed on the back of his coat was the sea-horse
which is the trade-symbol of workers in wood. When I came back
that way, half an hour later, he was still carefully at work on the same
corner of the same coffer. I did not wonder it was as near perfection
as the hand of man could make it.

Practically every village in Japan is the seat of some special,
characteristic industry, each carried on in an individual way by
separate families in their simple and narrow homes, and each
family and each member working in some little touch of indi-
viduality. The town may be famous only for a tupenny, coarse straw
work; for a particular sort of wood-inlay; for a queer little orna-
mental owl dangling from a stick and made of the thistles that grow
by the wayside; for a white enamel work done with powdered egg-
shells,—whatever it is, it is sure to be a tasteful trifle, and ever
after it is pleasant to the collector to hear from the knowing ones:
"Ah, you have been in Kawasaki, for you have its fan with a
whistle in the handle," or, "How long were you in Nikko? I see
you have a cherry lacquer tray with the bark on," or, "When did you
make the pilgrimage to Nara, to get the little Buddha-shrine and the
ivory deer?" and so on.

A LONG chapter would be needed to describe Japan’s modern
work in dyed, painted, embroidered and brocaded silks and
crepes. Past all praise is the boldness of design, with the
finish and delicacy of her needlework "pictures." One house in the
outskirts of Kyoto, to appearance a villager’s plain dwelling, turns
out marvels in tapestry and woven sketches, often historical scenes,
charmingly colored. Yet in exhibiting, this craftsman cares noth-
ing about his—or rather, her—name, sinks all under the label,
"Silk Weavers’ Guild of Kyoto," and if you had never gone in a fly-
ing 'rik'sha to that quaint little farmhouse, you might think these
things—which you instantly recognize—were made in some great
place noisy with much whirring machinery.

Many of these workers have names worthy to be known in every
land, yet they seem to go their several and glorious ways—with only
one or two exceptions—in the most complete carelessness of that con-
consideration. At least, I have found many rare things shown under a
label in the Japanese tongue and character, and when I have gone, keenly expectant, for an interpreter and a pencil, have discovered myself confronted by such reading as, “This is the work of the Weavers’ Guild of Kyoto-fu,” or “This is exhibited by the Lacquer Guild of Kanagawa-ken.” It is a country where the guild idea is far older and better understood than is the thought of individualism. The difficulty I encountered in getting a list of those of her sons to whom the Island Kingdom herself had awarded first and second medals was exceedingly interesting, for it illustrated a fundamental difference in point of view between the East and the West, and showed some artists largely content to do their work for the joy in it.

It cannot be doubted that full appreciation of the meaning and beauty of things Japanese comes only to him who is in the secret as to how those things have been made. If one has looked at the gentle, poetical old silversmith, absorbed in his deft creations; if one has seen the sunny little rooms, set in leafy gardens silent and remote, where painters and designers love to work; if one has stood by the wheel of the potter to mark miracles as they grow; if one has wandered where care and labor, step by step, week after week, are expended on each separate effort and attempt; if one has noticed everywhere the simple pleasure as well as the sound taste of the craftsman,—both bequeathed him by a long line of ancestors,—one comes to understand and value the individual character not yet gone out of the handiwork in country village and in city suburb and by-street.

 Courtesy of G. T. Marsh, Esq.

“THE PLOWMAN”: CARVING ON AN IVORY TUSK: BY NAKAGAWA RINYAI.