

## Lake Biwa.

By CHARLES S. LEAVENWORTH, M.A.

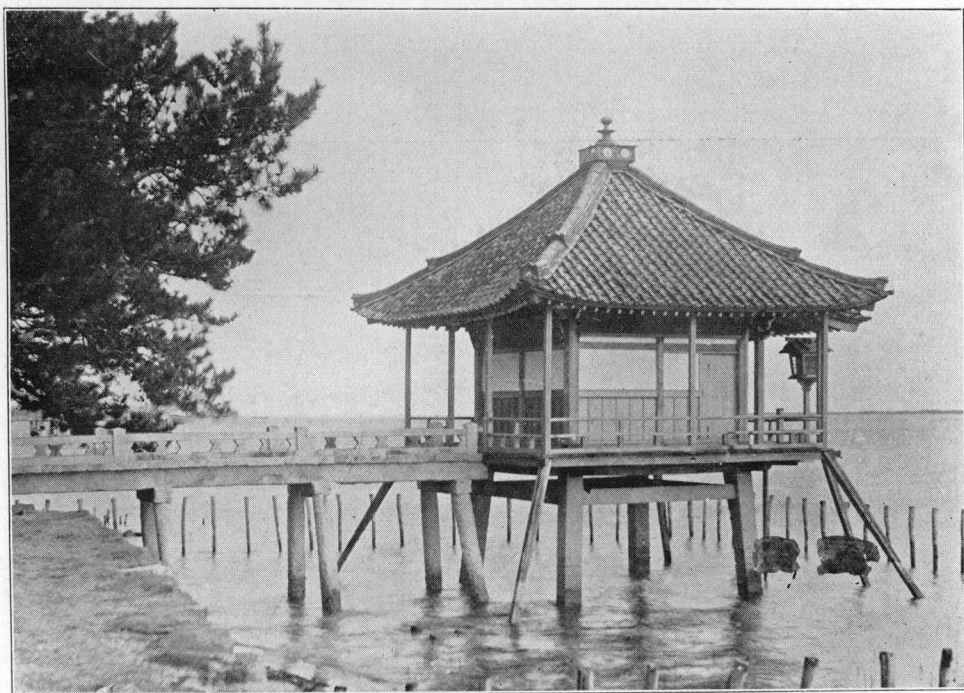
**T**HERE is a story, possibly apocryphal, that a certain tourist in Japan, wishing to be courteous to the people whom he met, and remembering that it was the name of one of the States of the American Union which he must use when he said "good morning" in Japanese, kept continually saluting the passers-by with "Wisconsin," "Wisconsin." He could not understand the rather surprised looks on the



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faces of the bright-eyed Japanese thus addressed, for, of course, he ought to have said, "Ohio," "Ohio" (*Ohayo*). The principle, however, which our traveller followed was correct enough. Politeness, as someone has said, is

like an air cushion; there may be nothing in it, but it does ease things wonderfully. Any traveller in the interior of Japan, far away from the foreign settlements, who is provided with the passport of courtesy toward those he meets, visèd with the willingness to "rough it" a little, is sure to find the country a land in which it is delightful to travel. For instance, it is as impolite, in the eyes of a Japanese, not to take off one's boots when entering the house, as it is for a European to omit wiping his boots on the door-mat when the day is muddy. Or a still better analogy to going shod in a Japanese interior, as someone has said, would be for a European to walk with dirty boots on top of the sofas and chairs in a foreign house, for the Japanese mats are the equivalents of articles of foreign furniture.



KATATA, LAKE BIWA.

Among the charming regions of Nippon which are off the beaten lines of travel, there in one gem of the first water to be found in the vicinity of Kyoto. This is Lake Biwa. If one will turn to a map of Japan he will find, lying near the ancient capital, the largest lake in the islands. It receives the name of Biwa because of its supposed resemblance to a Japanese guitar. It is about 36 miles long and 12 miles wide and is thus about the size of the Lake of Geneva. "A long time ago" (as a fairy story is wont to begin)

Mount Fuji, it is said, suddenly reared its head above the plains and, at the same instant, Lake Biwa was hollowed out by an earthquake, many miles away. Whoever the subterranean juggler was who thus played ducks and drakes with geographical features he, at any rate, made Lake Biwa a treasury of scenic effect, which only needs an up-to-date and advertising hotel manager to make a centre of attraction for foreigners in the Far East. Many dwellers on the vast China plains, for instance, can here feast their eyes on those two elements of a pleasing landscape, water and hills, like the Median wife of the Babylonian king of ancient times, for whom her spouse made the great artificial mountain, covered with verdure like Media's hills which she longed to see, and which history names "The Hanging Gardens of Babylon."



ISHIYAMA, LAKE BIWA.

One can make a trip to the lower part of Lake Biwa and return on the same day to his fleshpots of Egypt at his foreign-style hotel in Kyoto, but if he wishes to drink in the full beauty of the Lake he ought to tear himself away from all restraints of knives, forks, chairs and tables, and travel in native fashion for several days through its fascinating scenery. But by drinking in the beauty of the Lake, please do not think that the writer is urging the traveller to be like the romantic young lady in Venice, who wrote

to a friend, "I am in a gondola on the far-famed Grand Canal of Venice. I am drinking it all in. Life never seemed so full before."

The writer was fortunate enough to be told on the steamer, while travelling from China to Japan, by one who knew the interior, not to take along a great paraphernalia of cooking utensils and tins of corned beef, stores of bread and biscuit, and a moving caravan of the accessories of European life. This old traveller's advice was simply, "Don't take anything."



AWATSU, NEAR THE ISHIYAMA, LAKE BIWA.

The writer did not take anything, except the ordinary necessities of travel. He simply went and lived on the country. The bill of fare became a trifle monotonous, it is true, for it consisted of: Monday—fish, eggs, rice; Tuesday—eggs, rice, fish; Wednesday—rice, fish, eggs; and so on, to the end of the calendar. However, the food was well cooked, sustaining, and palatable. The fish was a dish to set before crowned heads. It is a very curious fact, whether psychological or physical, the writer does not know, in truth, a very difficult fact to analyze, but it was noticed that, while at first the prospect of bowls of rice as the *pièce de résistance* was not very alluring, yet after a few days of experience, as the tiffin or dinner hour approached, the writer found that he could gulp down his two or more bowls of rice, with



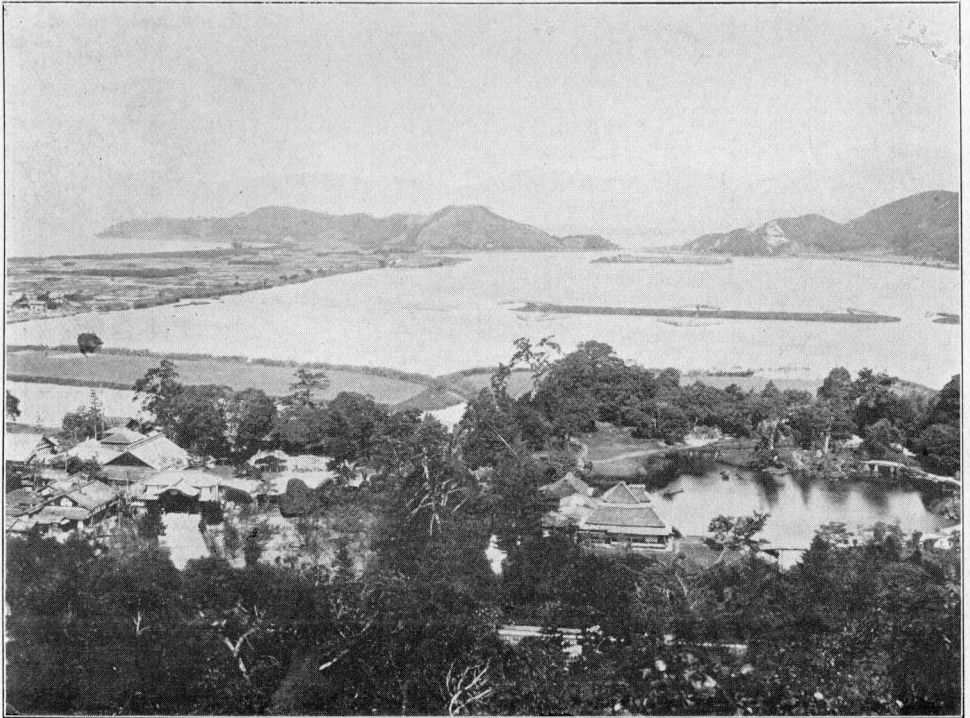
the aid of the dainty little pair of chopsticks always furnished, with as good a gusto as his Chinese "boy." In reality, he could do so with a better grace, for the "boy" longed for Chinese rice again at Shanghai and looked rather with disdain on its Japanese counterpart. One thing the writer thinks he would do, next time, however, and that is take a camp-stool to sit on, for sitting cross-legged, hours at a time, rather strains the muscles. Of course, someone else may follow the writer's example and "take nothing," and when he returns from his trip to the interior may feel a little like bringing a suit for damages. However, each one according to his preference. One person may



GOLDEN PAVILION, NEAR KYOTO.

like to carry a travelling kitchen, dining-room, and parlour with him, and take a host of retainers, until he looks like one of Napoleon's generals coming out of Italy with a load of loot, while another may go to the other extreme and prefer to follow Thoreau's advice that "the perfection of travelling is to travel without luggage," and yet another may choose the happy mean of taking only the things absolutely necessary for comfort. Each one according to his taste, only if one is at all fastidious or not feeling in the pink of health, it would be better to go to Nikko or Unzen and keep away from the globe-trotter's *terra incognita* of the interior.

From Kobe to Kyoto the road is well known, nor do I need to delay with my readers a long time at Kyoto, with its wonderful wealth of temple and palaces, pagoda, Golden Pavilion, Daibutsu, and torii. There are three routes by which Lake Biwa can be reached from the latter city. One is by railway. Another is by jinrickshaw on the famous highway called the Tokaido. The third is by the Lake Biwa Canal. By rail you can travel speedily, but by the Tokaido you can journey romantically. You can take a guide from the hotel, but you may prefer, instead of a guide, a guidebook, and in place of an interpreter, a small manual of the Japanese language. As we pursue our way along the Tokaido, visions of the Old Japan rise before us and the road is peopled with the apparitions of samurai of the ancient time with their panoply of swords. But the visions vanish and their places are taken by the quick-witted, progressive, brave and martial Japanese of the



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twentieth century. The third route, the Lake Biwa Canal, is a triumph of Japanese engineering skill. Murray's Handbook tells how a student, named Tanabe Sakuro, of the College of Engineering at Tokyo, made the design of the Canal and presented it as a graduation essay. He was later given

the chance to execute the scheme. While engaged in the work, he lost the use of the fingers of his right hand and for about two years was obliged to make all the writings and drawings with his left hand. A ride in a boat on the canal is an interesting journey for the traveller. It abounds in tunnels under the hills. It is best taken when one returns from the lake for, coming up, the progress made is slower, as the mode of locomotion is by means of men pulling at the ropes along the sides of the tunnels. As one plunges into the darkness of these underground passages, along this subterranean canal, the weird echoes, the fitful shadows thrown by the lamp of the boat, the far-off cries of the boatmen, and the rushing speed of the descending water, contribute to make a scene which only needs a few gnomes and elves to be completely transformed into an enchanted river under the earth.



BRIDGE OF SETA, NEAR OTSU.

Otsu is a town at the nearer end of the lake and we can make it a rendezvous for various excursions to places of interest in the vicinity. Be careful to pronounce it "oats," for that at least approximates the sound of its name, and if you say "otsu" your rickshawman may think you are asking him to take you to some city in the United States or England, for he has never heard of such a place.

We may go to the southern end of the lake where its waters empty into the Setagawa. On the way we traverse the common of Awasu, the scene of a battle of former times, but beautiful to-day with its view of the distant lake and with its pine trees lining the road. The Setagawa, under the name of the Yodogawa, is the river which finally flows past the great commercial city of Osaka. Here, at the extremity of the lake, is situated the Long Bridge of Seta. It was at this place that a famous hero of ancient times slew the Giant Centipede. Professor Chamberlain tells the tale in English, in that number of the Japanese Fairy Tale Series, entitled "My Lord Bag O'Rice." We read how, one day,

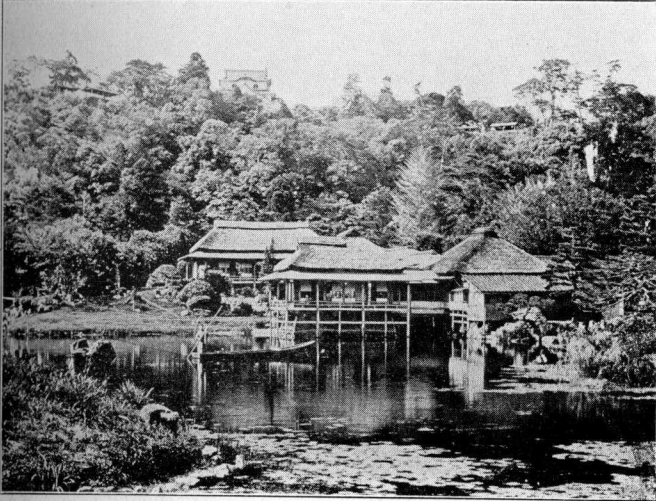


MIIDERA, NEAR OSTU.

the hero, seeking adventures, found a terrible serpent on the Long Bridge of Seta. When he boldly trod on it, the snake was metamorphosed into a dwarf, who conducted the warrior to a wonderful house under the Lake and told him of his frightful enemy, the Giant Centipede, which walked like a regiment with chilblains and from whose many pedal extremities oozed horrible poison. But "My Lord Bag O'Rice" dispatched the fearful monster and "lived happy ever after," enjoying the elegant gifts which the submarine dwarf presented to him. And the Giant Centipede still lies there, cold and dead, in this very year of grace, for that mass of hills in the hazy distance,



shimmering in the sun, is the body of the great monster, which was killed by the brave warrior. After passing over the Long Bridge of Seta and visiting the little Shinto to the memory of the celebrated hero, we can return and, going down the shores of the river a space, can rest under the shade of the temple at Ishiyama. The appearance of this fane reminds us most vividly of Indian architecture and for the moment we can fancy ourselves surrounded with all the mystery of the Moonstone which Wilkie Collins describes.



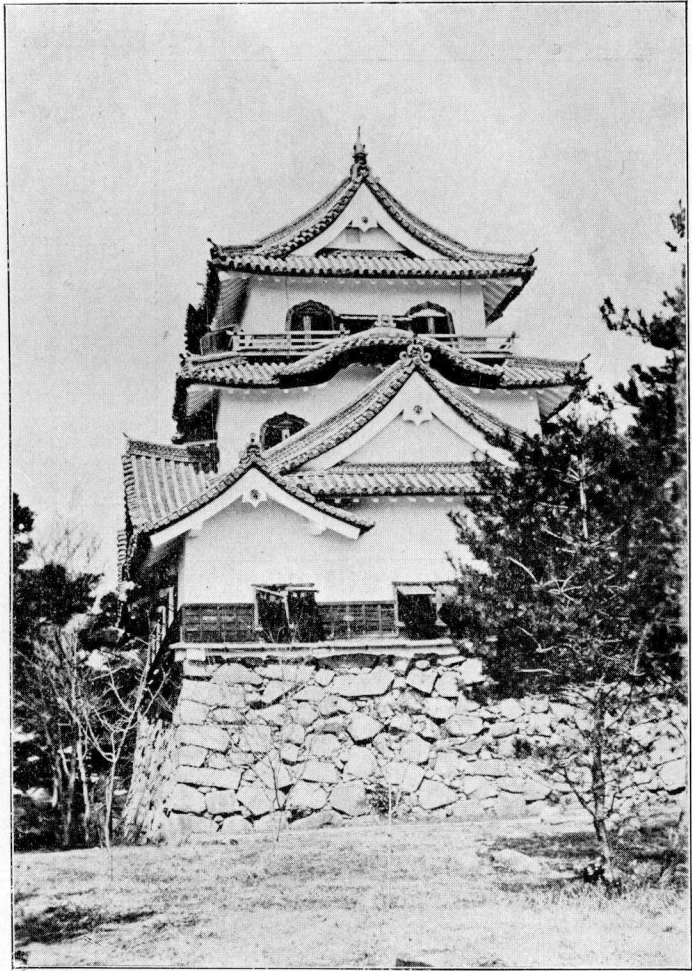
RAKU RAKU YEN HOTEL GARDEN, HIKONE.

Returning to Otsu, we can climb up the hill back of the town and inspect the temple of Miidera. Here is a celebrated bell of which the following anecdote is related. When, once upon a time, it was stolen, upon being beaten it continually made the sound, "I want to return to Miidera." In anger, the thieves threw it down the side of the mountain, which fact explains the scratches on its exterior which are still shown to visitors. At Miidera, and all these interesting spots, one can take away innumerable souvenirs, in the shape of rough sketches of the celebrated "lions of the place," or groups of views with explanations in Japanese, or reproductions on paper fans of noteworthy sights.

Further on lies Karasaki with its gigantic pine tree, said to have been planted in the year 1581, whose branches spread downward like a great dinner-bell or tremendous brush-broom. Thoughts of classic Greece with its tales of the nymphs of the water and the wood come to one, as he notices the reverent care taken of this patriarch of pines and the little shrine near this prince of the forest. Going a little more afield, one can reach the temple of Sanno, with its fine trees and little streamlets and beautiful scenery.

A celebrated writer on Japan has said that no popular resorts in that country are more lovely than "the hill groves and temples of Miidera and of Ishiyama-no-dera—scenes which Japanese art and literature are perpetually reproducing in painting and poetry." This is true of these places which

have just been described on the southern shores, but to my mind there are also scenes of a somewhat more varied type of beauty on the eastern shore of the upper and larger portion of the lake. Taking one of the little steamers which ply on these waters and, passing Yabase with its fine view of the boats sailing on the lake, which is a celebrated subject in Japanese



THE CASTLE, HIKONE.

poetry and art, and Katata with its "Floating Temple" built on a jetty in the lake, we can reach Hikone in a few hours. This is Hikone and not Hakone, an entirely different place. Hikone has a loveliness of its own which no camera can catch. It must be partly due to the light, soft folds of haze which clothe the hills in the background. In no other place has the writer seen the same peculiar charm in the landscape, except in Italy, where

the "very weeds are beautiful" and the "waste more rich than other climes' fertility," as Byron sings. There is the same appearance of range after range of rolling hills, fading off one behind the other, until their outlines are lost in the mellow distance. This same feature can be seen alike in the "garden of the world" and in this corner of the "England of the East." And we do not need to compare Hikone with Italy alone, but can find an analogy in it also to the storied and castled shores of the Rhine, for here is the ancient castle of a daimio of former times. The leading inn of Hikone is the Raku Raku Yen, which has a beautiful garden. The proprietor will give you a photograph of it, when you present the usual *chadai*, or tea-money on leaving.

This *chadai* is, by the way, an "extra" which it is well for the foreign traveller to know about when he pushes his way into the interior, where he wishes to follow the fashion of the country. It is the custom for a Japanese traveller to present during his stay at an inn, or at the termination of his visit, a small present in money to the proprietor, besides his regular bill and the tips to the waiters. Only a small amount is necessary and in return "mine host" gives his parting guest a fan or a photograph or some little product of the deft fingers of Japanese workmen. So at Hikone you can get a photograph of the beautiful garden at the inn. The writer was told afterwards, by a Japanese, that an association for the abolition of *chadai* had been formed. It seemed a harmless enough custom, but very likely it would become a bore to a commercial traveller, for instance, who may have to spend most of his life in passing from one hotel to another.

Further up the shore of the lake lies the important town of Nagahama. This place is a good starting point to make a trip to the sacred island of Chikubushima, or the Bamboo Island. This is something like Pootoo, in the number of shrines which one finds everywhere among its leafy shades. It is said that, since the priests, as at Pootoo, do not allow anything to be killed on the island, thousands of cormorants and herons can be seen at evening time flying to its welcome refuge, from all sides over the lake. From the northern terminus of our journey we can return to Kyoto by rail or by the same way we came.

Thus, if anyone cares to travel for a short period without the requisites of European style, he can enjoy a journey round Lake Biwa, through bits of charming scenery and pretty glimpses of lake and wood and hill. The Japanese have their "Eight Beauties of Omi" located in various parts of this region, which are the celebrated vistas from the Oriental standpoint. Besides these eight noteworthy views (following, in the number eight, the classic Chinese model) there are many nooks which surprise the traveller by their

vividness of verdure and charm of colour. Anyone, hearing the name Biwa for the first time, might imagine it to be in the wilds of Turkestan or some equally remote quarter of the Far East but, on the contrary, it is near at hand and forms a delightful place to spend a few days in exploring new and varied scenes.

### Gems from the Tao Teh King of Lao Tszé.

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FAVOUR and disgrace are alike a cause of fear. Honours bring great calamity upon the body.

THOSE who talk too much will often come to an end of their words. It is better to maintain rectitude (inwardly).

WHERE there is insufficiency of faith on the part of one, there will result an entire absence of faith on the part of others.

HE who says himself that he can see is not enlightened. He who says himself that he is right is not manifested to others. He who praises himself has no merit.

He who is self-conceited will not increase (in knowledge).

TAOIST TEXTS