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HIROSHIGE

by

Yone Noguchi

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HIROSHIGE



BY

YONE NOGUCHI

Author of

“The Spirit of Japanese Art” etc., etc.

WITH 19 COLLOTYPE ILLUSTRATIONS AND A COLOURED
FRONTISPIECE



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TO
ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

LOVER OF JAPANESE ART

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The sketches are reproduced from Hiroshige's illustrated books called "Ehon". And the design on the case is also Hiroshige's work.

HIROSHIGE



*What a lover of Nature's emphasis, what a strange
creator of beauty,*

What a master in reshaping of world and life,

*What rainbow-audacity of thine art, what a swing,
what movement,*

What ecstasy, what a magician, what a romanticist !

*Thine art is no challenge, but the march of the mind
into life.*

And into truth and open air ;

*Not feared to be too exposed and risky, thou refusest
to surrender thine art ;*

*Thou blowest the bugle, takest the kingdom of art by
force,*

Breakest faith to gain the new greater faith ;

With thy blood thou drawest thy song of triumph.

*I feel I see thy face from the picture's back, beaming
like that of God,*

*Who stretched His tired arm with the first week's
work perfectly done.*

*Thou mightest say to me, "What wilt thou say,
suppose I make the sun set there,*

*Or shall I make here the billows rise to swallow a
ship?"*

What a discoverer of Nature's eccentricity,

Oh, what an assault upon the unknown !

*Thou mightest say again, "let us stand in Imagina-
tion's summit,*

Once more think where to cast our fly of art !"

HIROSHIGE



The time was late afternoon of a day in April some fourteen or fifteen years ago (I wonder if anywhere in the world but in Japan in spring one could have such a feeling as if drinking sadness from the cup of joy), when I, greatly troubled by the modern life in the West—I was only just returned from America where I lived for quite a long time—from an eager desire to gain a true sense of perspective toward Nature, glided down the flower-reflecting water by Mukojima with two or three souls like myself, carried by a “cherry-blossom-viewing boat.” I confess that I used then to see anything and everything through my westernized “blue eyes” and even cursed the degenerated Japan in meaningless foolish imitation of the West; but now seeing the calmly-settled deep blue of this Sumida River whereon we were gliding, and thinking that it was the very blue like that of an old Japanese colour-print, my westernized “blue eyes” suddenly changed, I felt, into Japanese black eyes. The blue of the Japanese colour-prints up to the time of Hokusai and Hiroshige is, unlike the

western blue pigment which is glad to mix with another colour to make life active, a thing highly homogeneous, therefore a colour as it was before it knew any other colour to mix with. Thus baptised under the blue of the Sumida River in late afternoon of one spring day, I ceased at once to be a westerner, and my mind entered slowly into a pictorial domain of Hiroshige, and smiled upon myself that I was certainly affected like Mr. Happer who cried, "Hiro — Hiro — Hiroshige the Great!" How many pictures Hiroshige drew with the Sumida River as subject! Before my imaginary eyes, several horizontal pictures of "Toto Meisho" depicting the sight of Mukojima, appeared as if a revolving lantern; when thinking about the particular one entitled Sumidagawa Hanazakari or the "Sumida River in Glory of Blossom," this very Mukojima beautifully coloured by the cherry-blossoms began to look to me just like that picture of Hiroshige. I could not help exclaiming, in spite of myself, "Why, Nature imitates Art as Wilde once exclaimed,—the Mukojima of to-day imitates Hiroshige's picture of olden time!"

I and my friends, now gliding through the delightful sights of the Sumida River which Hiroshige loved so dearly and drew in his many pictures, argued, discussed and again expanded on how the human mind has been advancing lately artistically. There is no doubt that our minds (yours as well as mine) are glad to imitate a rare respectable art whenever they see it. You will

think, I am sure, it is nothing so strange that my mind so full of Hiroshige's pictures could not help seeing the views right before myself as nothing but pictures of Hiroshige. It is not true that the "Mukojima of to-day imitated Hiroshige's picture of olden time"; the fact is that my own poor mind was imitating the art of Hiroshige. To say differently, Hiroshige awakened suddenly in my mind; and again to use another expression, we (you as well as I) are all an artist called Hiroshige at least for landscape art,—just as it is said, we are all Hamlet, men and women. As we are already all Hiroshige, we can naturally be moved by him and feel with his art as if our own creation. A Hiroshige hidden in our own minds found our representative artist in the real Hiroshige who was born in 1797 and died in 1858; he is, in truth, the only one native and national artist of Japan.

I said just now that we, as Japanese, are all Hiroshige; and there even in the West are many persons who would be pleased to call themselves a Hiroshige like ourselves. Whistler, for example, the most famous among them. George Moore once remarked that art is born in parochialism and dies in universalism; though it is a striking expression quite natural to his literary fibre, such language should be taken, I think, only as an emphasis upon the value of true parochialism. The stars, flowers and moon, real in Japan, are equally real stars, flowers and moon in the West; the

pictures of Hiroshige true in Japan would be equally true even when brought into the very centres of London and Paris, — I mean that among the landscapes of London and Paris will be found this native artist of Japan, Hiroshige, hidden under the surface. And a great western artist who happened to touch first with the hidden Hiroshige in the West was Whistler himself; just like us Japanese, he was also a Hiroshige, and with Hiroshige's eye, Whistler looked and gazed on the views by the Thames. As a result that he saw Nature through Hiroshige's eye for his own western landscape art, he, this great Whistler, created the rare, peculiar pictorial effect of his own.

The western landscape art, from that of Constable and Corot to that of the late Sir Alfred East, would be called the product of an environment, because of its lack of a certain dash in abstraction or quintessences. However splendidly it is drawn, it will never escape from the details of incidental phenomena, since it is always too closely attached to reality. The general landscape painting of the West, I dare say, follows usually after the path or so-called stock-in-trade (large well-balanced masses of trees in the undulating foreground, and a long stretch of stream near by, and then a vista of sky and some disturbed clouds beyond, something of a view like that), which was justified for many years; it is not like Hiroshige's picture where the individuality of Nature is suddenly seen isolated from

the entire; the art that a Herculean artistic arm grasped in a moment of rare special gesticulation of Nature, to use Whistler's classic remark, is "creeping up a bit." The word "composition" the western artists fondly use, just like "harmony" for musicians and "meter" for poets, is uncertain, vague and often neutral in its own meaning; it always betrays the real individual expression of Nature. It is my opinion that a true landscape artist should respect the word "isolation" but not "composition;" by that I mean that he must see the natural phenomena in a striking special moment when, being isolated, it flatly refuses to move and act in uniformity with the other phenomena. Such an artist was our Hiroshige. His now famous pictures, all of them are the things that transmit and convey the rare individuality that Nature revealed in her blessed isolation. His art, following after a cardinal principle of architecture, that is "concentration," discarded off-hand all the extraneous small details which were apt to blur and weaken the important vividness; his handling of this secret of "concentration" (of course it was never Hiroshige's alone in our world of Oriental art) was quite marvelous. Therefore he was extremely suggestive at his very best. The western landscape art, whether it be above photograph or beneath photograph, attempts usually to imitate Nature or to take her copy; the artist may become a soft-voiced lover toward Nature, but not a conqueror wildly waging an artistic battle

against her is he. The better landscape artist of the West might become a theoriser of pigments or something of a metaphysician or, as Alfred East was, a writer of prose-poems; but since he is often bound by the common circumspect knowledge, and seldom escapes from such an old habit in expressing some meaning or purpose, it is natural that he fails to create a poetical landscape picture whose life is nothing but suggestion. Enter into Nature, and forget her. Again, depict Nature, and transcend her. I like to interpret such phrases by saying that one should be like Hiroshige himself who paid no attention to the small inessential details, when he grasped firmly the most important point of Nature which he had wished before to see, hold and draw. To transfer such a moment one has only to depend on the power of suggestion; surely there is no other method than that. It was Whistler who saw clearly this point first in the West; his distinguished service in becoming a great believer in Hiroshige (using him to advantage from his whole-hearted appreciation) at an early day when the Japanese colour-prints were practically unknown, should be recognised along with those wise critics who already recognised Wagner and Whitman in the day when the former was ridiculed as a musician without music, the latter as a poet without poetry. It seems that my imagination's eyes see this wonderful Jimmy Whistler with Hiroshige's colour-prints right before him, now straightening up his

"Okame San," Woman of merriment



famous spectacles on his nose, then exclaiming, "How amazing! Oh, how amazing!" I was told in London that he saw first something of Hiroshige's at a dirty Chinese tea-house by London Bridge, and again that he came in touch first with Hiroshige from a wrapper on a pound of tea; but both stories may be wrong, the truth being that Hiroshige's landscapes were sent by an insignificant western missionary strayed into old Japan, to show him some specimens of a barbarous life. At any rate, it sounds more true and real when the story is more striking and amusing. There is nothing more interesting and mysterious in the world's annals of art than how Hiroshige entered into Europe. It is common enough to say that the real art will become the final conqueror; but Hiroshige is the best and greatest example of it. And when I muse on the phrase that life is short but art is long, I cannot help feeling choked under its sad reality.

Any suggestive art should have the idiom of expression at once vivid and simple. Every picture of Hiroshige at his best that I see, indeed, seems to be so new and impressive; and the last one is even so surprising as to leave my mind incapable for the time being of apprehension of his other pictures. One picture of his is quite enough as just one picture of any other great master of the world is enough for us; that is, is it not, the sure proof of his artistic greatness. I hear recently something about "polyphonic prose" from the

American literary world ; it is but a new movement to break away from the old wearied habit and inspire into letters a living freedom, the taste and feeling of an author being its only law. Such is, I dare say, another proof that our Japanese literature is far ahead of the literature of the West ; or to say differently, it hints the point that the western literature is speedily approaching the Japanese literature. Here we have Heike Monogatari or the "Epic of the Heike Clan." There we have the Noh plays. They are nothing but "polyphonic prose" which is supposed to be new in the West. To put aside the question of literature, and return to that of Hiroshige. It was he that fully practised amid the pigments the theory of "polyphonic prose"; he arranged and rearranged and then unified by his own special taste the realism and idealism or the reality and imagination to perfection. I might be blamed as a vague critic, if I say that any artist, whatever he be, idealist or realist or what not, is always good when he is true to his own art ; but it is true, I think, that even the seeming realistic picture of Japanese art, when it is splendidly executed, is always subjective. I will say that the good picture, although it might appear idealistic superficially, is surely a work which never forgets the part of realistic expression. Hiroshige's landscapes are exactly like that. Perhaps he might be called a realist or objective artist from the point that our artistic mood is slowly but steadily led into trees,

sky, rivers and mountains through his just expression of the relation between Nature and men ; but who can declare that he was an artist who only and realistically followed after superficial Nature? The realistic elements of his art played successfully the most important service to bring out more distinctly the indefinable quality, which, as I have no better word, I will call atmosphere or pictorial personality ; I think that it is more true to call him an idealist or subjective artist. He is the most national landscape artist of Japan ; and it seems that he learned this secret from Chinese landscape art—how to avoid femineity and confusion. And then Whistler, on the other hand, learning from Hiroshige how to cut off the confused feminine reality, created here a new phase of western landscape art which combined reality and imagination with rhythmic harmony. See the picture, for instance, “ Old Battersea Bridge ” at the Tate Gallery, that famous nocturnal arrangement of blue and gold, of which I wrote :

“ A voice of the rockets

To break the sky ;

Then the flash

Only to make the darkness intense.

“ Might I ever become that voice ?

The light precious, of a moment and death, is it not
that of our lives ?

To face only the sky, even for a moment, and for-

get the land,
And become a rider of the winds ;
What a joy in parting from life's confusion,
To find a greater song amid the clouds.

“ The voice of the rocket :
Then the flash—
Is it not that of my soul born to please the people
below,
And to take pain of death in her keeping alone ? ”

One will easily see how this picture soars out of the superficial reality, and that again by the lovely support of realistic technique the inner poetical note heightens gracefully and rhythmically.

When we think that this particular picture was a thing which inspired Ruskin to call him a conceited wilful impostor or charlatan, we have only to wonder how blind a large majority of critics of those days were to our Oriental art ; and again we cannot help wondering how speedily the western art as well as literature are, ever since, coming nearer to ours. While Ruskin sadly missed grasping a prophet's fame, Whistler presented a living instance that art only sends out his sparkling life from a struggle against vulgarity. The faithful followers of Whistler may say anything they please ; but they will be unable to deny the fact that he owes many things to our Hiroshige. Now apart from

the central artistic question, turn your attention to a small point in the placing of the signature. The signature for a western artist means only a sign, nothing else; how to place the signature for our Japanese artists is a serious matter, since, it is thought, it keeps an important relation with the whole picture; therefore it has been studied carefully. Whistler whose sharp tasteful curiosity saw this point, hastened to devise his own signature in the shape of a butterfly. When you see "Arrangement in Black: Portrait of Senor Pablo de Serasate," or "Portrait of Monsieur Theodore Duret," or "Portrait of the Artist" or "Arrangement in Black: Portrait of Mr. Louis Huth," it will be plain what a serious value is given by his written seal of a butterfly. Certainly it is never a question of mere signing for Whistler's picture, but quite an important part of his own art.

There are many cases in which our Japanese art or literature or what not, when seen through a westerner's blue eye, comes out suddenly revealing a strange meaning or what we never before had expected to exist. I have one instance in the words that generally pass as Hiroshige's farewell verse, saying: "I leave my brush at Azuma, and go on the journey to the Holy West to view the famous scenery there." I cannot accept it innocently, and even doubt its origin, as it is more prosaic than poetical. It is only that he followed perhaps after a common fashion of his day if he really left it when he

died, as the verse itself is poor and at best only humorous ; but when it is taken by the western seriousness, translated into English, the words grow to carry another strong effect. Thus Hiroshige, since discovered in the West, was interpreted and reconstructed by a decidedly new understanding ; so he is to a certain great degree, a discovery or creation of the westerners. I think, therefore, it is proper (and even a courtesy) to look upon him with the western point of criticism ; and Hiroshige seen through the Japanese eye would be more or less different from the "Hiroshige in the West." It goes without saying that our recent criticism of Hiroshige is pleased to put its foundation on the western opinion.

I said before that Hiroshige owes much to Chinese landscape art ; and I like now to think of him as a Chinese poet. Upon my little desk here I see an old book of Chinese prosody ; there is a popular Chinese verse, Hichigon Zekku, or "Four Lines with Seven Words in Each," which is almost as rigid as the English sonnet ; and the theory of the sonnet can be applied to that Hichigon Zekku without any modification. We generally attach an importance to the third line, calling it the line "for change," and the fourth is the conclusion ; the first line is, of course, the commencing of the subject, and the second is "to receive and develop." It seems that Hiroshige's good pictures very well pass this test of Hichigon Zekku qualification.



Fuji Mountain seen at Miho no Matsubara.

三條の松原



Let me pick out the pictures at random to prove my words. Here is the "Bright Sky after Storm at Awazu," one of the series called "Eight Views of the Lake Biwa"; in it the white sails ready to hoist in the fair breeze might be the "change" of the versification. That picture was commenced and developed with the trees and rising hills by the lake, and the conclusion is the sails now visible and then invisible far away. Now take the picture of a rain-storm on the Tokaido. Two peasants under a half-opened paper umbrella, and the Kago-bearers naked and hasty, are the "third line" of the picture; the drenched bamboo dipping all one way and the cottage roofs shivering under the threat of Nature would be the first and second lines, while this picture-poem concludes itself with the sound of the harsh oblique fall of rain upon the ground. You will see that Hiroshige's good pictures have always such a theory of composition; and he gained it, I think, from the Chinese prosody. In the East, more than in the West, art is allied to verse-making.

A certain critic of modern English poetry who believes that the unit of the true poem is not the foot, number of the syllables, the quantity, or the line, talks on the Greek word "strophe," from the point of emphasising the necessary element of circular swing or return; and if we can interpret this strophe as obvious effort at balance or prizing of the sense of contrast, I think that Hiroshige fully and truly practised it in all

the pictures of his landscape. Now take a little vertical print entitled the "Bow-Moon," one of twenty-eight moon sceneries, where the slender moon, white in tranced ecstasy, climbs up from between the crags, as Arthur Davison Ficke writes, "straying like some lonely bride through the halls of Kubla Khan." How well-balanced is the bow-moon with the leaping torrent below in the picture. And what a pictorial contrast in these walled caags on either side, with the ghostly pilgrim of heaven between. . And again how the poem inscribed on the top keeps a balance with Hiroshige's signature below on the left. This lovely rhythmic performance in art of balance is so old in the pictorial kingdom of the East; our Japanese artists, indeed all of them, have the secret of it in their blood hereditarily. But it will give certainly a valuable suggestion to the western artists.

"Hiroshige in the West" is entering, I think, into his third period, that is to mean the period of adjustment or real criticism, when his pictures hitherto unknown, what a fragment they be, will receive full justice from their artistic merits alone. The first period when he was a mere curiosity, and the second period when he suffered, as Hokusai once suffered, from an indiscriminating foolish reception, are now, I hope at least, a past story. But I feel ashamed to say that he is only entering into his second period in Japan where he was born and worked.

And I should like to say, by the way, what use is there to talk on Hiroshige the Second or Third. I like to understand the word "Hiroshige" not personally, but as a very synonym or title of artistic merit in landscape pictures. If there are pieces, as in fact there are many examples, much below the Hiroshige merit, while bearing his own signature, I shall never care (who will care?) whether they are called the work of the Second or Third.

Often guided by my personal taste, naive, impulsive, capricious, sometimes irresponsible (though I know there is nothing more dangerous than a criticism centered in that personal taste), I open Hiroshige's landscapes which I love particularly, and straining my imagination, hear their lyrical music. Now let me spread out Kisoji no Yamakawa or "Kiso Mountains and Rivers in Snow," which is said to be a masterpiece of his last years, with the other tryptyches in Awano Naruto and Buyo Kanazawa Hatsho Yakei. I would suggest to you that, as in the case when you see Whistler's landscape, you have to step back some ten steps, and slowly raise your face, and then listen to the music in which the white in the mountains and the blue in the waters sing in chorus. I should like to know indeed where there is such clear silver-like poetical music as that

which we hear in the arrangement in white and blue that Hiroshige's simple technique, awkward and coarse in the most cases, creates accidentally. Like the pictures to which Whistler gave such a superficial name as "Arrangement in White and Black" or "Harmony in Grey and Green," Hiroshige's numerous landscapes are merely arrangements of a limited number of colours, but their real value is understood for the first time by the owner of the ears which can hear their inner music; when I see his work which invites my artistic mood, my imagination opens at once to his lyrical voice that will never die. I myself am one who would never hesitate to admire this "Kiso Mountains and Rivers in Snow." But wait a minute! If this piece had such an artistic significance as that expressed in his works of the early Tempo (1830-1843) like "Kambara" or "Mishima" or "Shono" in "Fifty Three Stations on the Tokaido," in which the artist paid painful attention to his handling of black, vermilion, purple, blue and particularly of indigo which almost looked like ultramarine, it will increase its value ten times over.

There is no artist like Hiroshige, not only in Japan but in the whole world, who sings the various moods of rain by his different subjects. Let us see Koizumi no Yau or "Evening Rain at Koizumi" among "Eight Views of Kanazawa." While the rain falling obliquely from right to left and the farm-houses and farmers

painted in red ochre and yellow complete the unity of colours, the picture gives us at the same time a strangely light feeling of evening; the black trees, here high and there low, make such a delightful contrast to the grey hills in the background. Oh, what a tranquil mood in the picture, and what a tranquil evening rain! Now turn your eye to the picture in "Famous Views of Yedo" (published by Kikakudo), called Nihonbashi no Haku-u or "White Rain at Nihonbashi," in which the white rain—in fact, such a rain often falls—intermixing right and left, becomes almost invisible before it reaches the ground. In the foreground there is the large Nihonbashi bridge where six persons with paper umbrellas open or half-shut are seen hurrying on; in the background we have the white walls of five or six warehouses, and further off, Fuji Mountain floating out as if in a dream. As some Japanese critic says, this piece has no strong savour of the so-called floating picture style (ukiye) like "Nihonbashi" drawn by Hokusai or Hokuju; from the relative harmony of pale black and indigo the city of Yedo is wrapped up in a certain warm atmosphere. And again look at Karasaki no Yau or "Evening Rain at Karasaki" among "Eight Views of Omi," created from his best art of maturity on composition and colouring. What a splendour in the music sung by the straight heavy downpour that is expressed by the mica spread on the light Indian ink! Look at the gigantic pine-tree squatting in it! And

again look at the lake water in darkest indigo blue underneath the tree. Certainly one will seldom see such wonderful beauty of decoration in any art in the world.

But when the music stops suddenly in Hiroshige's pictures, you would see another strange surprise in them; this surprise which gives us neither voice nor sound is strong enough to make us suffocate, and as if caught by grief and resentment, we are only too glad to swoon. Here is a picture, also one of "Eight Views of Omi," called Hira no Bosetsu or "Evening Snow at Mount Hira." Where is a man who is not surprised at such an audacious drawing like this in which only the two colours of black and grey work magic or mystery. Or see "Kameyama" in the famous Tokaido series, or "Kambara" in the same series. Whenever I see them, I feel like the figure in the picture, almost buried under the heavy snow. Really Hiroshige is an artist of snow as well as rain.

And now let us hear the chorus sung by Hiroshige's landscapes. Shall we open first the piece called "Miya no Koshi" from the Kisokaido series? What a chorus two or three trees in the foreground, painted faintly in green, and the grey trees and moon in the background, are singing! Although some critic might speak about the incomplete arrangement in colours and the discord in drawing of this "Miya no Koshi," we, at least I myself, cannot help recognising Hiroshige's artistic



立齋廣重



spirit here, whose audacity rushed toward a new attempt; and I think that the partial flaws in it would never spoil the genial mood permeating through the canvas. And then let us hear the chorus that is sung by some twenty cryptomerias standing parallel on the winding yellow hill in the piece named "Ashida" also in the Kisokaido series. Hiroshige's mystery lies, I always think, in his wonderful management of the most complete, beautifully contrasted balance in pigments as well as composition; shortly, Hiroshige's beauty is in his arrangement. Here is Ryogoku no Yoizuki or "Twilight Moon at Ryogoku" issued by Kawaguchi; I am always delighted with it, because I feel as if hearing how gradually the chorus falls into silence. Hiroshige's method of composition here, in which a part of the bridge is hugely drawn in the foreground, making a strange contrast to the distant view that is particularly small, might suggest the vigorous audacity of Hokusai or Yeisen; but the general tone of colour and composition is a thing seldom created from the most patient gazing on Nature. This piece belongs to the artist's earliest day; I should like to know, however, how often through his whole life he succeeded in creating such an artistic effect. Among the works belonging to the same period there is also the piece called Shibaura Shiohigari no Zu ("Shell Gathering at Shibaura").

Even admitting that the unscrupulous spirit of his own time sometimes forced him to produce a careless

work, I cannot help wondering with what a fresh vigorous spirit that might be compared with a gushing spring, he always worked. Oh, what an artistic energy in Hiroshige! (There is reason perhaps to believe that if his force might have been used proportionally, he would have become an artist still more remarkable.) Oh, where is an artist like Hiroshige, who thinks little of the waste of art? Again there is no artist like Hiroshige, who treated the same subjects repeatedly and produced new strange effect on each occasion; certainly Hiroshige's greatness lies in it. I can well imagine that to put out his lyrical enthusiasm, when it rose up in his mind, was for him a prior question, and thought about the subject-matters only secondary; or another way of saying, when he was moved by a mood, even the same scenery appealed to him differently, according to its situation. It was not that he drew his pictures at random on the same subject with a different attitude; but he only used the same subject to diffuse his different lyrical moods or emotions. So there are in his pictures such various differences, and such poetical atmosphere that is beyond explanation; what we see in them is his artistic personality, but not a scenic photograph.

Beside, since they are the colour-prints made by hands, you cannot expect them, even when they are on the same subject, to be uniform; it is sometimes the press-man's choice to use a pigment light or heavy, and the pictorial effect depends more or less on chance. I

see, for instance, two or three varieties in "Miya no Koshi" of the Kisokaido series, the trees in the foreground of the same picture painted sometimes in pale black and sometimes in green. And I have seen almost five different colourings for the piece called Ryogoku no Hanabi or "Fire-works at Ryogoku" (published by Sen Ichi). Like any other artist of this Ukiyoye school, Hiroshige too has his excellent works among the productions of his early age; and there is no comparison, as far as the printing is concerned, between the pieces he produced in the early Tempo and those belonging to the Koka period and afterward. The Hiroshige of the Koka period became irresponsible and even slovenly, and did not superintend minutely his carvers and pressmen who were apt to grow careless and inartistic.

People agree in saying that "Eight Views of Omi" (published by Hoeido and Eisendo) and "Eight Views of Kanazawa" (published by Koshihei) and also "Eight Views of Environs of Yedo" (published by Kikakudo) are the three best series of Hiroshige's. Among the last series Tamagawa Shugetsu or "Autumn Moon at Tamagawa" where a tenderly swinging willow tree sings a soft melody with the calmest river, and Azuma no Mori Yau or "Evening Rain at Azuma no Mori" where the soft slanting rain falls on a sad grey scenery, are far superior artistically to the others. Although the famous Tokaido series published by Hoeido is perhaps his highest watermark, it is foolish to think that all the

pieces in it keep the artistic merit as we find in "Shono" or "Kameyama" or "Kambara" or "Mishima." It may not be too severe to say that the others, except some seven or eight pieces, are not up to his mark in Rokuju Yoshu Meisho Zuye or "Views of Over Sixty Provinces." The majority of Meisho Yedo Hyakukei ("Famous Hundred Views of Yedo") do not call out a critical admiration; the piece called "Evening Shower at Ohashi," however, can be quite well compared, in the point of bold composition and delicate colouring, with the other masterpieces on which we are happy to pour our admiration.

He left us many beautiful pictures of flowers and birds. Although his women are not highly prized in general, I see often the pictures whose excellence would not make Utamaro or Yeizan feel ashamed to own them. My conjecture may not be wrong, I think, that if his landscapes did not give him a name and popularity, he did strike out in a new way in the Japanese pictorial world as an artist of women.

Some years ago at the Togakuji Temple in Asakusa where a special exhibition of Hiroshige's works was held, I saw a picture scroll, "Procession of the Loochoo Islanders," which was drawn in November of the third of Bunkwa (1806), when Hiroshige was only eleven years old; it was a remarkable piece that explained amply the fire of artistic temperament already burning in his youngest days. Also I saw his random sketches

Of the above signatures to read from left to right, those from I to VIII are dated 1818. IX 1840. X and XI 1846. XII 1848. XIII 1850. XIV 1851.

of the faces of his friends (including his master Toyohiro), where his efforts for breaking a romantic tradition of art is also seen in figure drawing. It is already known that his famous Tokaido series was based on the sketches which he drew when he journeyed along the Tokaido highway as a member of the suite in the presentation of a horse to the Imperial House from the Shogun. His other famous pieces belonging to his Tempo period were also the result of his actual observation. His illustrated travelling books dated April, the twelveth of Tempo (1841) and the fifteenth of Tempo (1844), that are treasured to-day by Mr. Kobayashi of Tokyo, when they are properly translated, will be valuable material for the students of Hiroshige in the West.

The hyper-æsthetic Utamaro, as Von Seidlitz writes somewhere, with his insistence on exaggeration, even impossibility, in the pliant, almost supernatural figures, might be called the beginning of the decadence of Ukiyoye art; but Sharaku, a colossal and tragic genius of graphic characterisation and devastating contempt, or even Toyokuni, of course the First Toyokuni in a splendid triptych, "The Journey of Narihira" or "The Ladies and Cherry Blossoms in the Wind," will often make the severe critic sit up, who inclines to think that with Kiyonaga of beautiful technique (which comes, as somebody remarked, nearer to the Greek sentiment toward the nude than any other artist except Toyonobu)

this Ukiyoye art had already reached the zenith of its development. If Hokusai, a marvellous encyclopædic Japanese mind of art, had never made his appearance upon the horizon, how much should we have lost! It was this Hokusai, "the old man mad about drawing," who as a chief propagandist created the most permeating atmosphere of the landscape prints period, into whose enchantment many Ukiyoye artists of his age were called in spite of themselves. It is nothing surprising to find them in one way or another indebted to his free enthusiastic art; and one who was once influenced by him, as in the case of Yeisen, burdened, to use Pater's words on Balzac, with "an excess of curiosity—curiosity not duly tempered with the desire of beauty," and often obliged to stay as his slave. But it was that greatness of Hiroshige that, although he was doubtless charmed by this wonderful debaucher of art, as proof may be seen in some pieces of "Tokaido Gojusan Tsugi," as others, his distinguished art more allied, as I said before, to a musical harmony born out of a temperament or inner vision soon came to develop independently. I agree with Mr. Usui Kojima, author of "Hiroshige and the Landscape Art," who said in his article, "Kisokaido Rokujuku Tsugi or "Sixty Nine Stations of the Kisokaido" in Mita Bungaku, that this series of sixty-nine Kisokaido pictures might be called a challenge or flag of revolt against Hokusai. It is said that Hiroshige, when he was asked to criticise somebody

else's pictures used to make his standard of appraisal out of the point whether they were influenced by Hokusai or not; that shows what a high, awe-inspiring pedestal this creator of "The Thirty Six Views of Fuji," "The Bridges," "The Waterfalls" and other landscape pictures occupied in his contemporary's estimate.

A. Davison Ficke writes on the Hokusai Mangwa, a fifteen-volume series of miscellaneous drawings: "All existence thrilled him as it did Walt Whitman; and each object on which he turned his eyes stirred him with the desire to record it in his pages. Though we grant our admiration to the enthusiasm, sharp vision, and clever draughtsmanship of these sheets, we may still find in this indiscriminating passion a quality incompatible with the highest reaches of artistic greatness. It is a vast and dull enthusiasm; a celebration of the victory of the will to live over the will to perfect; a triumph of meaningless sensation over the just judgments of the discriminating mind." And Mr. Ficke then hails Hokusai as a great master in the landscape prints above mentioned, because, he says, being then no longer the dupe of realism, he brings us his dreams. The whole series of the "Thirty Six Views of Fuji" and the "Bridges" having been published, Hokusai was temporarily resting from his productive greed, and, accepting Mr. Kojima's reasonable supposition, was perhaps hiding-himself at Yokosuka, from his ill-principled licentious grandson, when Hiroshige with Yeisen as a

collaborator brought out the "Kisokaido Rokujuku Tsugi," and attempted to emphasise the success he had already earned from his Tokaido series. It seems that he was making much out of the occasion when Hokusai was silent.

This Kisokaido, although not blessed by the flowery procession of a powerful lord or the snowy peak of Fuji above the serpentine coils of clouds, had many poetical aspects, saddened by the occasional bells around a horse's neck; unlike the Tokaido where a cheerful life was lyrically endorsed by the humanised Nature, here, as is well expressed in *Kisoji no Tabi* or "the Journey by the Kiso Road," by Yekken Kaibara, the overwhelming cold power of Nature seems faintly but unmistakably smiling, touched by the warm pulses of the human heart which echo to the water of a valley or snow-covered stones of a mountain side. This lonely Nature, wild but still human, certainly appealed to the poetical sympathy of Hiroshige whose subtle renderings of aerial perspective and poetical atmosphere had already conquered people's minds; he with Yeisen's collaboration, attempted, sometimes successfully (and admitting that among those forty-six pieces Hiroshige drew for this series "Mochizuki," "Ashida," "Senba," "Miya no Koshi" and few others are only worthy of his great name) to evoke the characteristic mood of the scenes. Mr. Kojima writes: "The village life of the Kisokaido gradually formed on traditions and customs that had

fermented through many centuries, for the reason that this highway joined two great cities, Yedo and Kyoto, could not help feeling a touch of new fashion or civilisation perhaps in popular songs or perhaps in girl's flowery hairpins, that blew in as if a spring breeze; and when Hiroshige and Yeisen brought out the series, the Nature of the Kisokaido seemed at once harmoniously tintured with the somewhat uncouth but lovely humanity peculiar to the region."

One year before his death, Hiroshige again brought out a scene of Kiso in Kisoji no Yama Kawa or "Kiso Mountains and Rivers in Snow," in which this great master of the Ukiyoye school expressed his marvellous adaptability to the limitation of the colour-print technique; the triptych is a most wonderful specimen simply and felicitously executed, the greater part of the sheets being left blank to represent the snows. Mr. Kojima reasons that such a simple graceful art came into existence, because the general taste of the people in Yedo when the time advanced toward the Grand Restoration, had become tired of ostentatious gaiety and sought its ideal of refinement in the divine precincts of simplicity where the soul's highest rhythm was thought to be singing. The Tokugawa civilisation most naturally had her downfall when she reached her highest development; again Hiroshige died most happily at the time when he had mastered his highest art, that is, the purest art of simplicity.



ERAS COVERING THE LIFE OF HIROSHIGE I.

A.D.	Era.	Twelve Zodiacal Signs	Hiroshige's Ages	A.D.	Era.	Twelve Zodiacal Signs	Hiroshige's Ages
1797	Kansei 9	Snake 巳	1	1831	Tenpo 2	Hare 卯	35
1798	" 10	Horse 午	2	1832	" 3	Dragon 辰	36
1799	" 11	Sheep 未	3	1833	" 4	Snake 巳	37
1800	" 12	Monkey 申	4	1834	" 5	Horse 午	38
1801	Kyowa 1	Cock 酉	5	1835	" 6	Sheep 未	39
1802	" 2	Dog 戌	6	1836	" 7	Monkey 申	40
1803	" 3	Boar 亥	7	1837	" 8	Cock 酉	41
1804	Bunkei 1	Rat 子	8	1838	" 9	Dog 戌	42
1805	" 2	Ox 丑	9	1839	" 10	Boar 亥	43
1806	" 3	Tiger 寅	10	1840	" 11	Rat 子	44
1807	" 4	Hare 卯	11	1841	" 12	Ox 丑	45
1808	" 5	Dragon 辰	12	1842	" 13	Tiger 寅	46
1809	" 6	Snake 巳	13	1843	" 14	Hare 卯	47
1810	" 7	Horse 午	14	1844	Koka 1	Dragon 辰	48
1811	" 8	Sheep 未	15	1845	" 2	Snake 巳	49
1812	" 9	Monkey 申	16	1846	" 3	Horse 午	50
1813	" 10	Cock 酉	17	1847	" 4	Sheep 未	51
1814	" 11	Dog 戌	18	1848	Kayei 1	Monkey 申	52
1815	" 12	Boar 亥	19	1849	" 2	Cock 酉	53
1816	" 13	Rat 子	20	1850	" 3	Dog 戌	54
1817	" 14	Ox 丑	21	1851	" 4	Boar 亥	55
1818	Bunsei 1	Tiger 寅	22	1852	" 5	Rat 子	56
1819	" 2	Hare 卯	23	1853	" 6	Ox 丑	57
1820	" 3	Dragon 辰	24	1854	Ansei 1	Tiger 寅	58
1821	" 4	Snake 巳	25	1855	" 2	Hare 卯	59
1822	" 5	Horse 午	26	1856	" 3	Dragon 辰	60
1823	" 6	Sheep 未	27	1857	" 4	Snake 巳	61
1824	" 7	Monkey 申	28	1858	" 5	Horse 午	62
1825	" 8	Cock 酉	29				
1826	" 9	Dog 戌	30				
1827	" 10	Boar 亥	31				
1828	" 11	Rat 子	32				
1829	" 12	Ox 丑	33				
1830	Tenpo 1	Tiger 寅	34				

Hiroshige II or Shigenobu died at the age of 44 in 1860.

Hiroshige III or Shigemasa died at the age 53 in 1894.

SUBJECTS

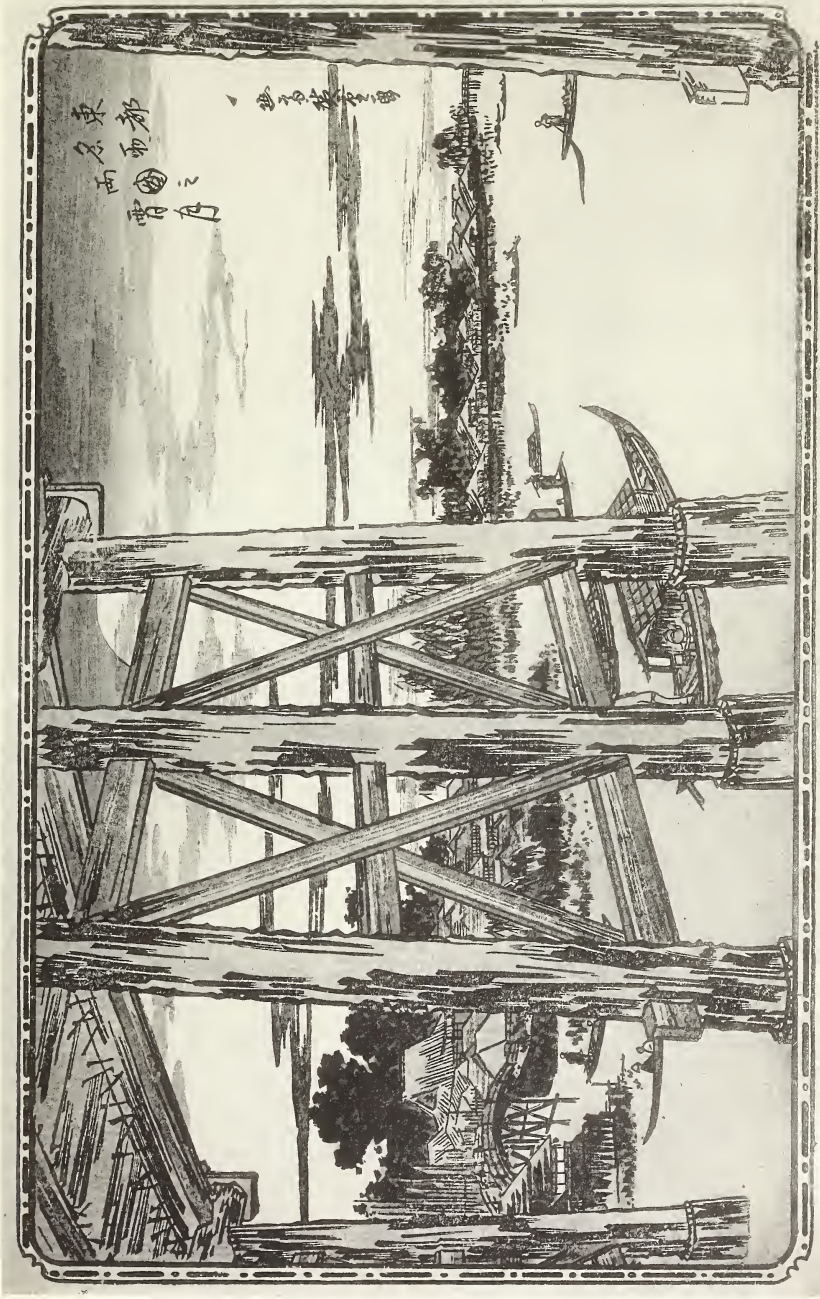


- FRONTISPIECE—**Karasaki no Yau.** Evening Rain at Karasaki. (Eight Views of Omi.)
- I. **Tsuki no Yube.** Three Beauties Moon-Viewing in a Garden.
 - II. **Ryogoku no Yoizuki.** Twilight Moon at Ryogoku. (Famous Views of the Eastern Capital.)
 - III. **Susaki Yuki no Hatsuhi.** Susaki, New Year's Sunrise after Snow. (Famous Views of the Eastern Capital.)
 - IV. **Shono.** (Fifty Three Stations on the Tokaido.)
 - V. **Nissaka.** (Fifty Three Stations on the Tokaido.)
 - VI. **Futagawa.** (Fifty Three Stations on the Tokaido.)
 - VII. **Nagakubo.** (Sixty Nine Stations on the Kiso-kaido.)
 - VIII. **Ashida.** (Sixty Nine Stations on the Kiso-kaido.)
 - IX. **Okute.** (Sixty Nine Stations on the Kiso-kaido.)
 - X. **Azuma no Mori Yau.** Evening Rain at Azuma no Mori. (Eight Views of Environs of Yedo.)

- XI. **Nihonbashi Haku-u.** White Rain at Nihonbashi. (Famous Views of Yedo.)
- XII. **Arashiyama Manka.** Cherry Blossoms at Arashiyama. (Views of Kyoto.)
- XIII. **Flower and Bird.**
- XIV. **Shinyoshiwara Nihonzutsumi.** (Famous Views of Yedo.)
- XV. **Hida.** (Views of Over Sixty Provinces.)
- XVI. **Ryogoku.** (Famous Hundred Views of Yedo.)
- XVII. **Sumidagawa.** (Famous Hundred Views of Yedo.)
- XVIII. **Kisoji no Yama Kawa.** Kiso Mountains and Rivers in Snow.
- XIX. **Awa no Naruto.** Whirlpools at Awa.



I. Tsuki no Yube. Three Beauties Moon-Viewing in a Garden.



II. Ryogoku no Yoizuki. Twilight Moon at Ryogoku. (Famous Views of the Eastern Capital.)

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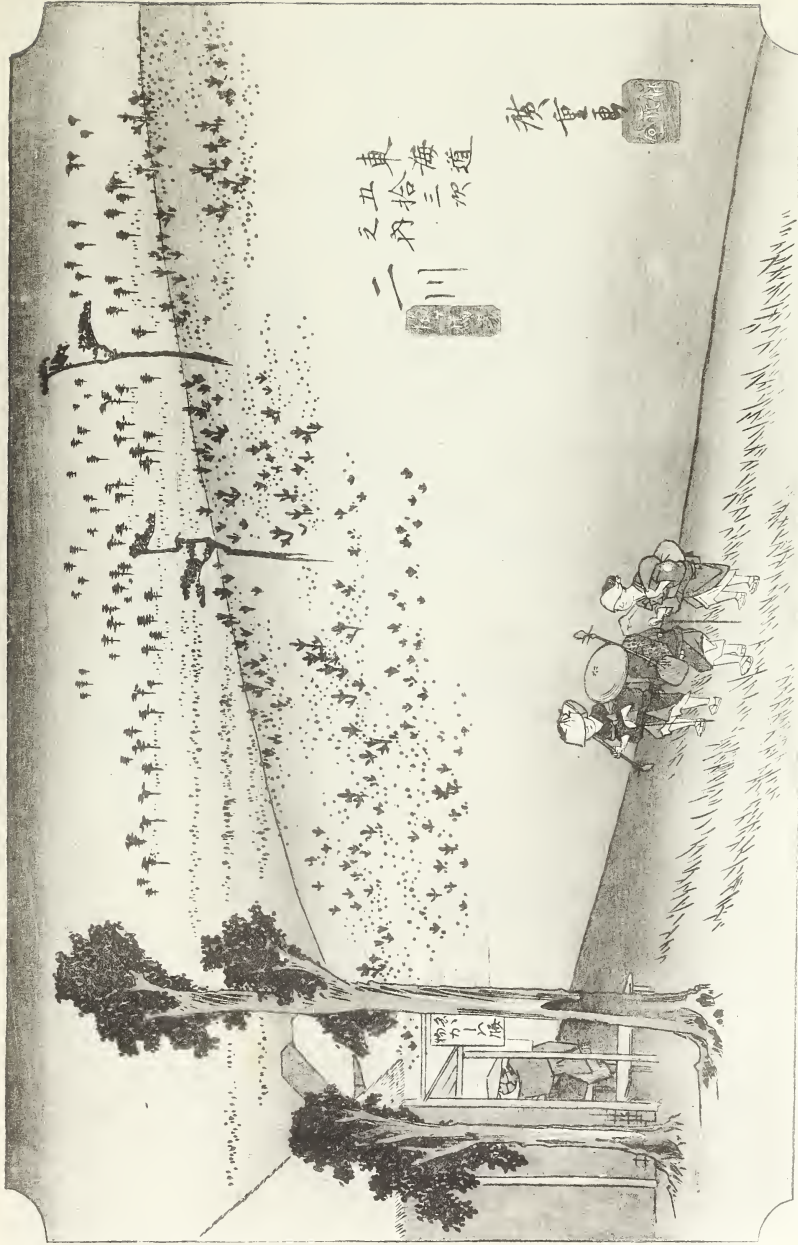
III. Susaki Yukino Hatsuhi. Susaki, New Year's Sunrise after Snow. (Famous Views of the Eastern Capital.)



IV. Shono. (Fifty Three Stations on the Tokaido.)



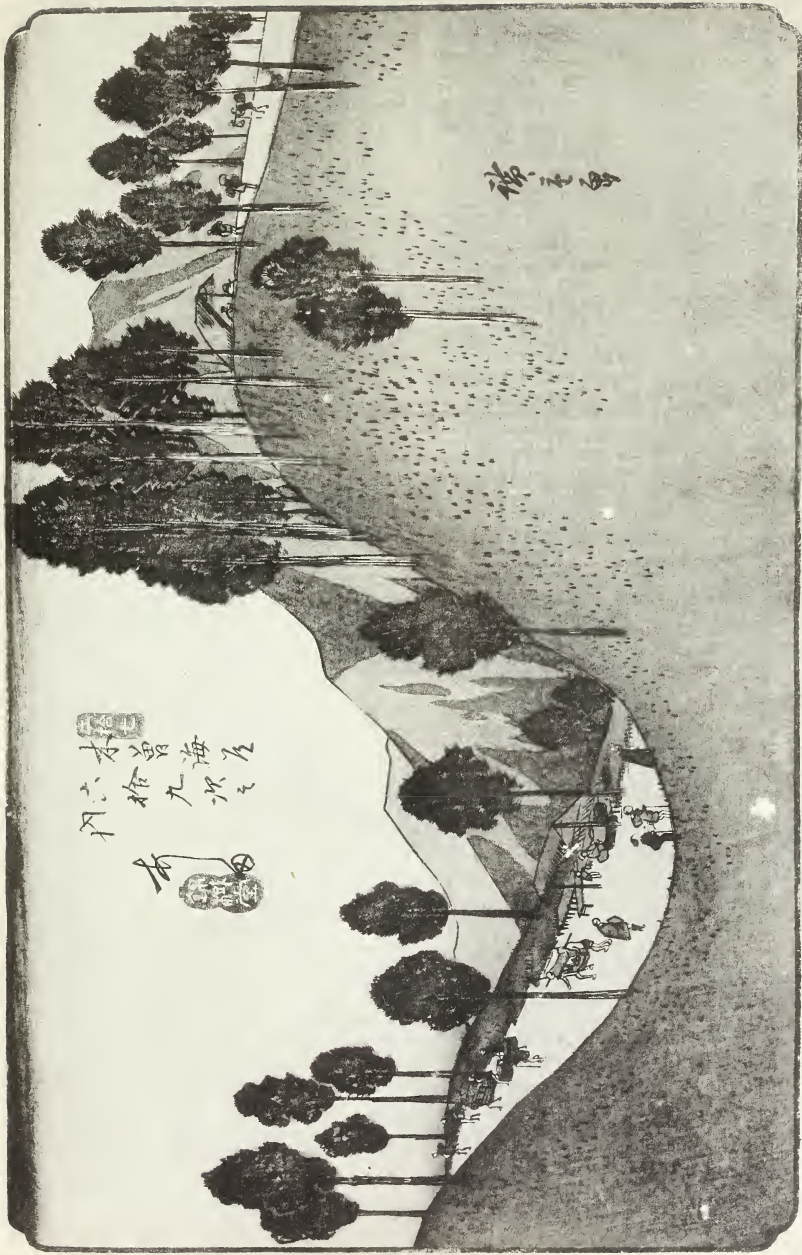
V. Nissaka. (Fifty Three Stations on the Tokaido.)



VI. Futagawa. (Fifty Three Stations on the Tokaido.)



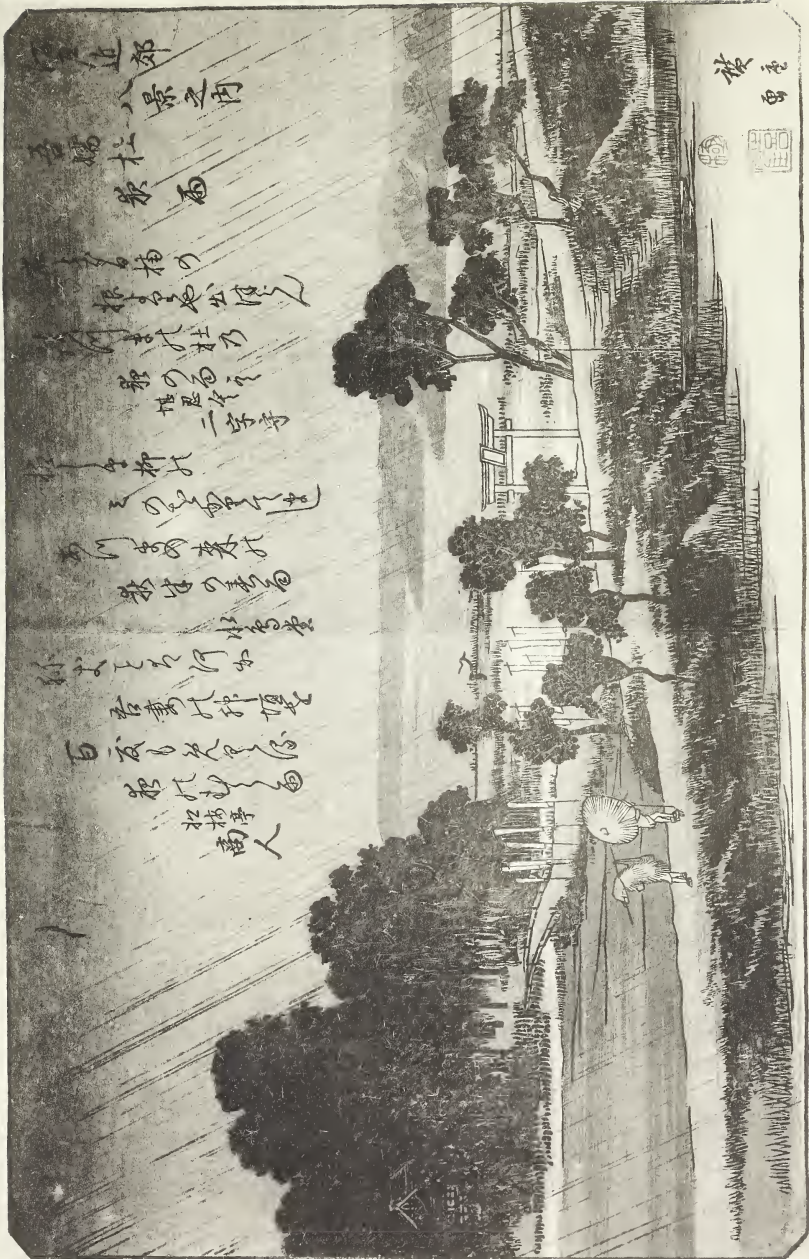
VII. Nagakubo. (Sixty Nine Stations on the Kiso Kaido.)



VIII. Ashida. (Sixty Nine Stations on the Kisokaido.)



IX. Okute. (Sixty Nine Stations on the Kisokaido.)



X. Azuma no Mori Yau. Evening Rain at Azuma no Mori. (Eight Views of Environs of Yedo.)

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XI. Nihonbashi Haku-u. White Rain at Nihonbashi. (Famous Views of Yedo.)



XII. Arashiyama Manka. Cherry Blossoms at Arashiyama. (Views of Kyoto.)



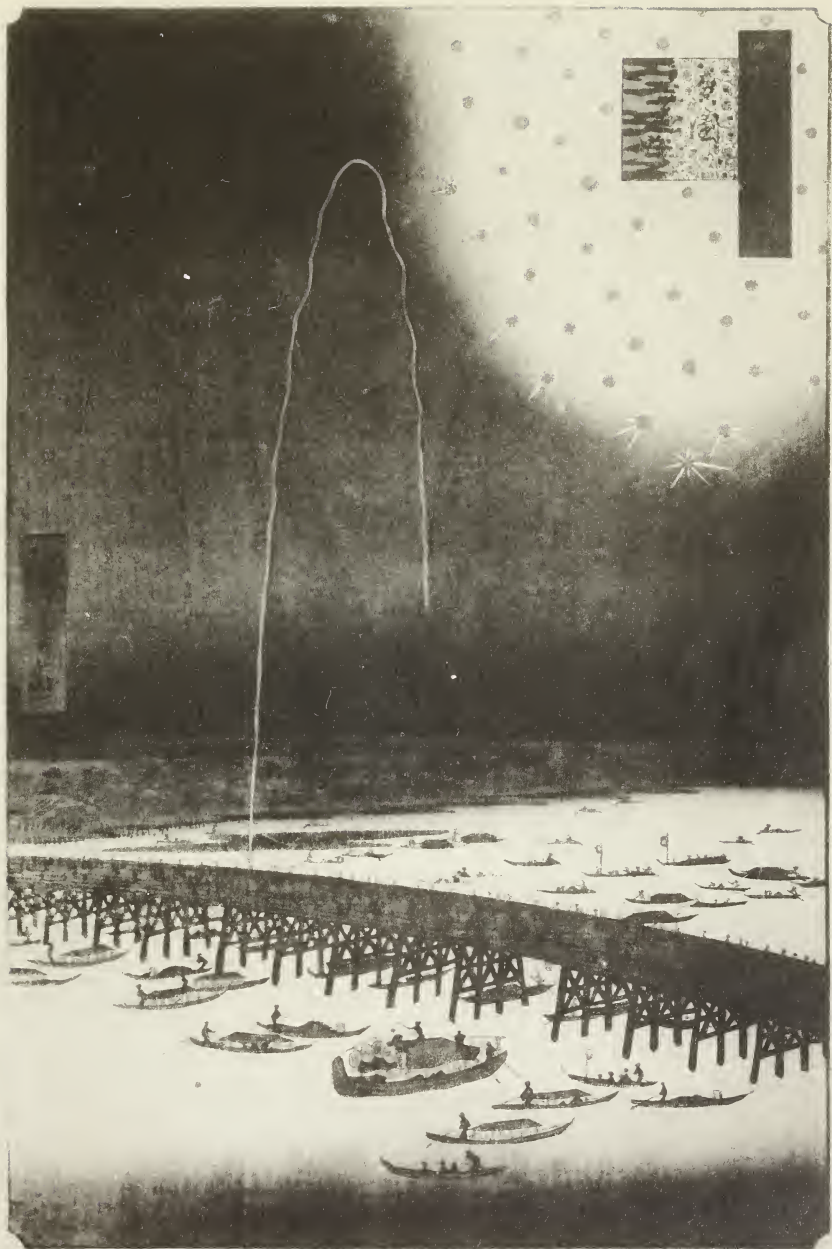
XIII. Flower and Bird.



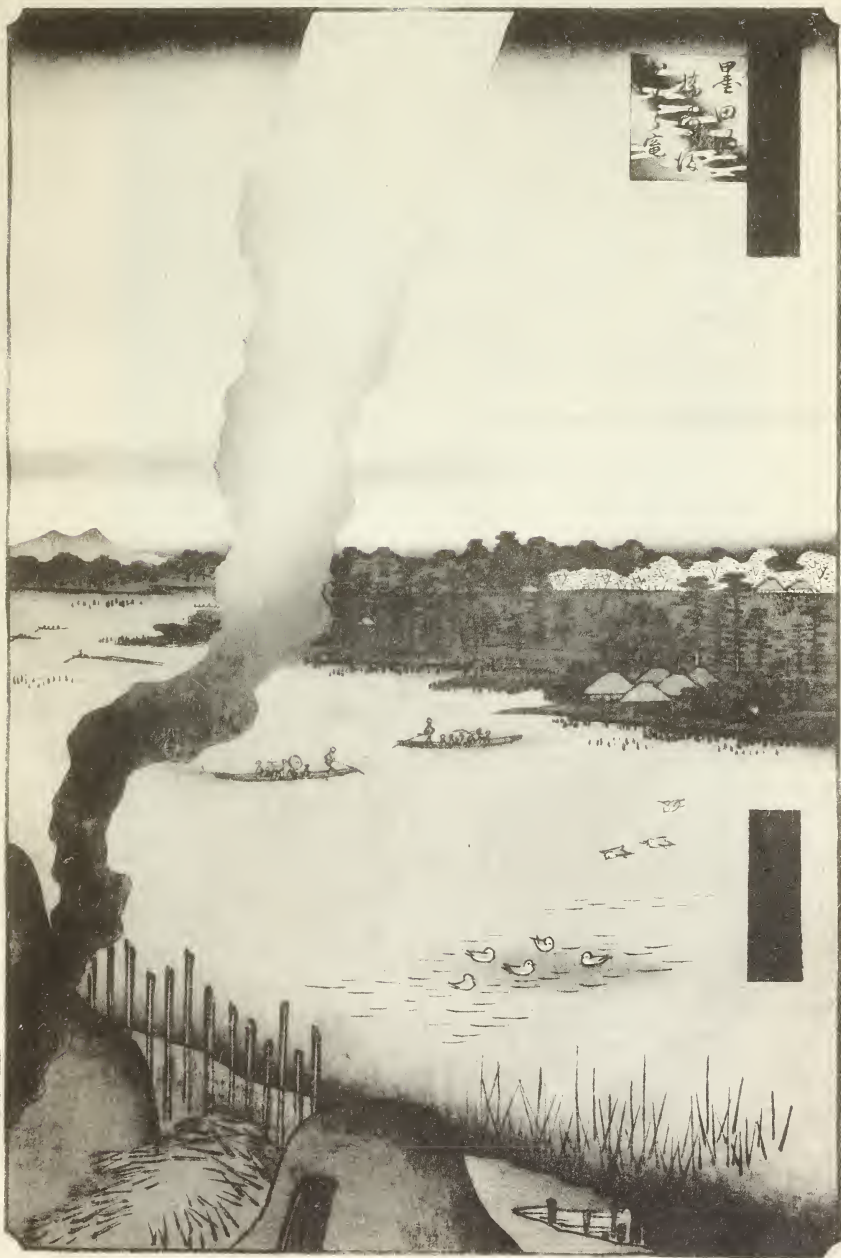
XIV. Shinyoshiwara Nihonzutsumi. (Famous Views of Yedo.)



XV. Hida. (Views of Over Sixty Provinces.)



XVI. **Ryogoku.** (Famous Hundred Views of Yedo.)



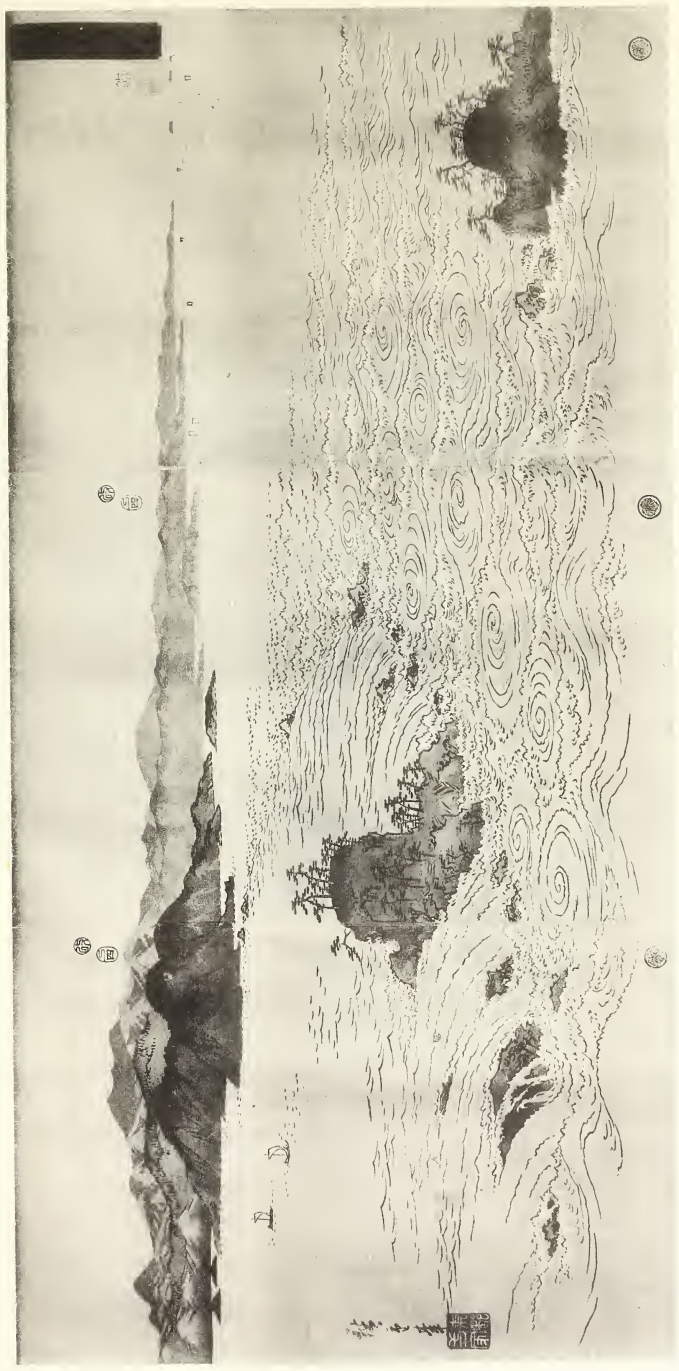
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XVII. Sumidagawa. (Famous Hundred Views of Yedo.)



XVIII. Kisoji no Yama Kawa. Kiso Mountains and Rivers in Snow.



XIX. Awa no Naruto. Whirlpools at Awa.

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