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**VISIT NIKKO ON
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Dr. and Mrs. Wolcott Leave Tok-
yo for Nikko. Will Visit
Miyanoshta and Fu-
ji Region

Nikko, August 27, 1921
The heat and humidity in Yokohama was so unendurable that we hastily packed up our belongings last Monday, and leaving our trunks and a large part of our hand luggage at the hotel came up here to Nikko in the mountains. The journey takes about six hours, including the forty minute trip by electric cars to Tokyo and the long taxi ride across Tokyo to the Ueno station. We were four and a half hours in the train in a second class carriage which was very comfortable and not at all crowded—much more comfortable in fact than a day coach on an American railway.

We reached Nikko at 9:35 at night in the midst of a rain storm and took a taxi to this very comfortable hotel, the Nikko, where we have a large airy room with a white tiled bath and a veranda looking across the river to beautiful mountains. The service and food here are excellent. There are a great many quaintly attired Japanese girls who do the housework and wait on table, there were four of them setting our room to rights a little while ago. They remind me of butterflies, with their pretty gowns, bright red obis and gay hair ornaments. They are excessively polite and greet us with smiles and low bows whenever we pass.

There are not more than a dozen or so guests in the hotel, tourists are few this year and the rates are so high that residents who have to go to the expensive places. I felt, however, that we could not afford to miss Nikko, for a visit to Japan without seeing it would be very incomplete.

I have always believed that this is the most beautiful place in the world and this second visit after the lapse of so many years, makes me more convinced of it than ever.

There may be other places in other lands as beautiful by nature as Nikko, but I doubt it. There may be places where men have built as exquisite temples and shrines as are grouped here, but I do not know of any such place. But for the combined beauty of nature and art Nikko is absolutely unique, and I feel utterly helpless when I attempt to express its loveliness in words.

The Japanese have a saying, "Do not say kekko (magnificent) until you have seen Nikko," and I believe that the saying is justified.

In the first place, Nikko is the name not of the village alone, but of a considerable mountain region of very unusual beauty. The village is two thousand feet above sea level and consists chiefly of a single long street along the banks of the Daiyo, a mountain torrent which comes tumbling down over the rocks from Lake Chuzenji, ten miles away and twenty four hundred feet higher up. The stream is spanned by several bridges, the chief of which is the sacred red lacquer bridge which is opened only on ceremonial occasions for the Emperor to pass over. There are many cascades and waterfalls along the river, one of them, Kagon, having a fall of 330 feet. The highest mountain in the district is Nantai-san, which rears its perfect cone to a height of more than eight thousand feet. There are many higher mountains in Japan but few more beautiful. Like all the other mountains in this region it is clothed with verdure to the very top. Nantai-san is a volcano and at present quiescent but not many years ago, since my last visit, it burst into activity and overwhelmed a part of the village near its base.

The most beautiful of the many trees which abound here is the cryptomeria, a conifer which resembles the California redwood, which grows to a great height and lifts its smooth and massive trunk for a hundred feet or more in the air before it puts forth its branches. These trees have been planted in avenues and groves upon the mountain side where the two great groups of mortuary temples have been built in honor of the great Shoguns of the Tokugawa dynasty, Shoguns of Iyemitsu who lived in the sixteenth century. They are about three hundred years old but many of the lesser shrines and temples are much older, for Nikko from the earliest has been one of the sacred places of the empire.

The Japanese, as everyone knows, are very skillful gardeners and their landscape art applied to this country has produced results which are unequalled elsewhere. The whole region, while preserving its natural beauty, has been so humanized and subdued to the hand of man that the effect is delightful beyond description. The greatest care is bestowed upon its preservation, not a fallen twig or leaf being allowed to remain upon the paths. There are almost retaining walls of stone and endless flights of stone steps leading to the shrines kept in perfect order, and nature everywhere has carpeted the rocks and hillsides with ferns and mosses.

The avenues of giant cryptomerias are magnificent and there is in particular which extends from onia, twenty-five miles away, to

temple area, the great trunks are like a wall on either side and overhead the branches meet in a leafy canopy.

No photographs and no description can do justice to the temples themselves, they are like jewel caskets delicately carved and decorated in exquisite taste with gold and blue and green and white enamels. The amount of treasure and labor expended upon them staggers the imagination.

At the entrance to the Ieyasu temple group stands a great stone torii and a five storied pagoda, which in itself is worth a journey to see. About the four sides of the first story are carved in high relief the twelve signs of the zodiac, and to the very top, which is crowned in a gilded pinnacle, the whole structure is a mass of intricate carving and cunning workmanship, with its projecting beams and eaves, and it is resplendent with gold and delicate coloring.

Within the temple there are courts within courts, each more beautiful than the other, and each entered by a gateway which in itself would be a world's wonder. One of these gateways is called the Yoemei-mon, or the "Morning to night gateway," because one may spend the whole day studying its beauties.

Besides the great temples themselves with their gilded ceilings, their pillars overlaid with pure gold and the treasures enshrined in them, there are many lesser shrines, pavilions and storehouses. There are stone tanks fed by water from the mountain streams and covered with exquisite stone canopies. There are hundreds of native offerings of lanterns of stone and bronze. Bell towers richly decorated, containing great bronze bells. Long stretches of panels along the sides of the enclosing courts carved with brilliantly colored birds and flowers and heraldic beasts. It is a riot of color and intricate design but all in exquisite taste, with nothing crude or garish or offensive.

There is one pavilion open to the courtyard in which there sits a priestess quaintly coiffed and clad in voluminous garments of white and blue and scarlet. She has in her right hand a gilded rod from which hang little bells and in her left a brilliant fan. When pilgrims approach and toss their offerings upon the platform before her, she slowly rises, first bowing low, and then executes a dance, so stately and solemn that it impresses one as a religious ceremonial. She moves with stately dignity, waving the fan and jingling the bells in time to her slow steps. She postures with her arms, turns about once, and then sinks back to her cushion and bows her head to the floor. It is a quaint and impressive performance which I have seen many times and never tire of watching.

Up the mountain side, two hundred steps above the temple court, approached by long and beautiful paths, overshadowed by great trees is the tomb of Shogun. A small bronze pagoda impressive in its simplicity and surrounded by a wall, and a shrine through which the enclosure may be entered. One may see the mausoleum but the guardian priests permit no one to approach too closely. It is the most impressive and dignified tomb I ever saw.

All that I have said about this one group of temple buildings may be said with almost equal propriety about the other, and beside these there are many lesser holy places. The visitor comes away almost impressed by the beauty and magnificence of it all, and when he has seen it he has seen the best that the art and religion of Japan has produced.

There are two imperial villas here at Nikko. In one, which is near our hotel, the emperor and empress are spending the summer; in the other distinguished guests are entertained. The emperor, they say, is a very sick man and never appears in public but the empress occasionally drives through the village without ceremony. The palace motor cars may be seen going and coming at almost any time of day. Motor cars seem strangely out of place in such a place as this but the roads are so steep and narrow that their use is greatly limited. The gates of the imperial villa are guarded by smart looking policemen in white uniforms with swords at their sides, and a battalion of the imperial guard is quartered near by. The villa itself is a simple Japanese wooden house, larger than most but apparently as simple as any.

Nikko is a comparatively small village with one long street and shops and two foreign hotels and many native inns to accommodate the constant stream of visitors who come from all over Japan. It is interesting to watch them in the temple courts, whole families, with babies on the backs of the mothers or fathers, or of the older brothers and sisters. We have seen groups of boy scouts and school children, guided by their teachers, people of every sort and condition. Today I saw a Korean embassy who were received with marked ceremony. They approach the shrines, clasp their hands before them and bow almost to the ground before the sacred symbols, which in the Shinto shrines are the sacred mirror and the gohei or curiously cut strips of white paper which are said to symbolize the endless procession of events. In the Buddhist temples are the images of the gods and altars which closely resemble those in the Roman churches, with their statues, ornaments, candlesticks, vases of flowers and sanctus gongs.

At the entrance to every temple are long rows of wooden sandals as well as hats and umbrellas, for all these must be left outside when one

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