



Smithsonian Institution

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Set of Underwood & Underwood stereographs of Japan

Extracted on Apr-20-2024 12:26:42

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You are looking from the deck of a boat. Kobe and Osaka lie behind you at the east; these waters are part of a great, irregular arm of the Pacific that reaches in here among the islands of the Mikado's Empire and makes a highway for the ships of the nations. Over beyond those hills that stand dark against the sky lie miles of open country and hill-villages with their humble rice fields and picturesque little temples, then the sea-shore province of the Izumo which Lafcadio Hearn made known to the rest of the world in his "Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan."

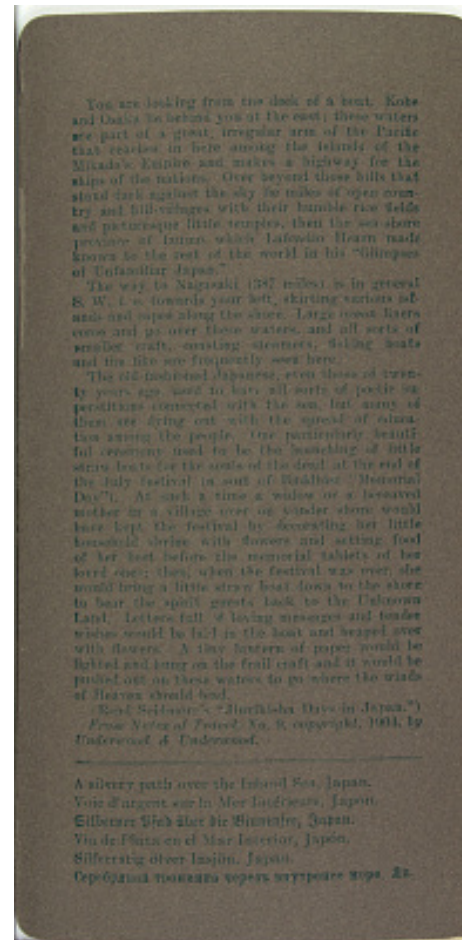
The way to Nagasaki (387 miles) is in general S. W., i. e. towards your left, skirting various islands and capes along the shore. Large ocean liners come and go over these waters, and all sorts of smaller craft, coasting steamers, fishing boats and the like are frequently seen here.

The old fashioned Japanese, even those of twenty years ago, used to have all sorts of poetic superstitions connected with the sea, but many of them are dying out with the spread of education among the people. One particularly beautiful ceremony used to be the launching of little straw boats for the souls of the dead at the end of the July festival (a sort of Buddhist "Memorial Day"). At such a time a widow or a bereaved mother in a village over on yonder shore would have kept the festival by decorating her little household shrine with flowers and setting food of her best before the memorial tablets of her loved ones; then, when the festival was over, she would bring a little straw boat down to the shore to bear the spirit guests back to the Unknown Land. Letters full of loving messages and tender wishes would be laid in the boat and heaped over with flowers. A tiny lantern of paper would be lighted and hung on the frail craft and it would be pushed out on these waters to go where the winds of Heaven should lead.

(Read Seidmore's "Jinrikisha Days in Japan.")

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A silvery path over the Inland Sea, Japan.
Voie d'argent sur la Mer Intérieure, Japon.
Silberner Pfad über die Binnensee, Japan.
Via de Plata en el Mar interior, Japón.
Silfverstig öfver Insjön, Japan.



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