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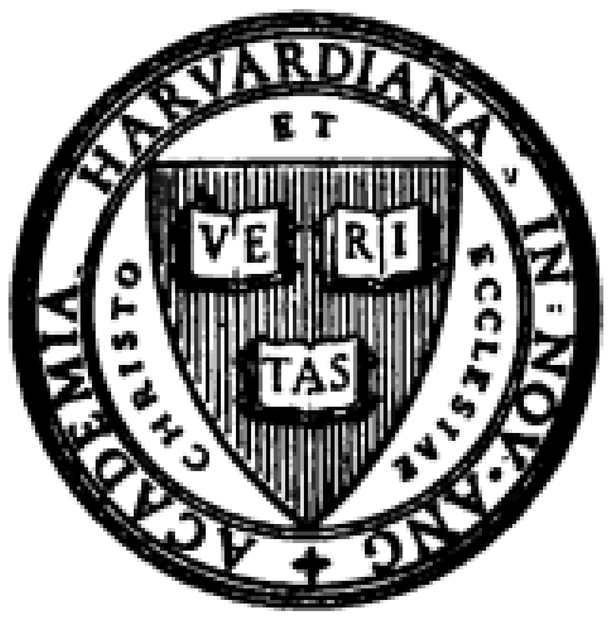

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In Ghostly Japan

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THE MOUNT

IN GHOSTLY JAPAN

By LAFCADIO HEARN

LECTURER ON ENGLISH LITERATURE
IN THE IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY, TŌKYŌ

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BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

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TO

MRS. ALICE VON BEHRENS

For Auld Lang Syne

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Contents

	PAGE
FRAGMENT	3
FURISODE	11
INCENSE	19
A STORY OF DIVINATION	49
SILKWORMS	59
A PASSIONAL KARMA	73
FOOTPRINTS OF THE BUDDHA	117
ULULATION	133
BITS OF POETRY	149
JAPANESE BUDDHIST PROVERBS	167
SUGGESTION	197
INGWA-BANASHI	205
STORY OF A TENGU	215
AT YAIDZU	225

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List of Illustrations

Full Page

THE MOUNTAIN OF SKULLS . . . . . *Frontispiece*

THE MAGICAL INCENSE . . . . . *To face page* 43

THE PEONY LANTERN . . . . . „ „ 80

THE LIGHTS OF THE DEAD . . . . . „ „ 230

Illustrations in the Text

S'RÎPADÂ-TRACING AT DENTSU-IN, KOISHIKAWA, TŌKYŌ 121

SHŌ-EKŌ-HŌ-KWAN 124

SQUARE AND TRIANGLE 164

JIZŌ 178

EMMA DAI-Ō 179

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IN GHOSTLY JAPAN

Yoru bakari
Miru mono nari to
Omou-nayo !
Hiru saë yumé no
Ukiyo nari-kéri.

Think not that dreams appear to the dreamer only at night : the dream of this world of pain appears to us even by day.

JAPANESE POEM.

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In Ghostly Japan

Fragment

. . . . . .

AND it was at the hour of sunset that they came to the foot of the mountain. There was in that place no sign of life, — neither token of water, nor trace of plant, nor shadow of flying bird, — nothing but desolation rising to desolation. And the summit was lost in heaven.

Then the Bodhisattva said to his young companion: — "What you have asked to see will be shown to you. But the place of the Vision is far; and the way is rude. Follow after me, and do not fear: strength will be given you."

Twilight gloomed about them as they climbed. There was no beaten path, nor any mark of former human visitation; and the way was over an endless heaping of tumbled fragments that rolled

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or turned beneath the foot. Sometimes a mass dislodged would clatter down with hollow echoings; — sometimes the substance trodden would burst like an empty shell. . . . Stars pointed and thrilled; — and the darkness deepened.

"Do not fear, my son," said the Bodhisattva, guiding: "danger there is none, though the way be grim."

Under the stars they climbed, — fast, fast, — mounting by help of power superhuman. High zones of mist they passed; and they saw below them, ever widening as they climbed, a soundless flood of cloud, like the tide of a milky sea.

Hour after hour they climbed; — and forms invisible yielded to their tread with dull soft crashings; — and faint cold fires lighted and died at every breaking.

And once the pilgrim-youth laid hand on a something smooth that was not stone, — and lifted it, — and dimly saw the cheekless gibe of death.

"Linger not thus, my son!" urged the voice of the teacher; — "the summit that we must gain is very far away!"

On through the dark they climbed, — and felt continually beneath them the soft strange break-

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ings, — and saw the icy fires worm and die, — till the rim of the night turned grey, and the stars began to fail, and the east began to bloom.

Yet still they climbed, — fast, fast, — mounting by help of power superhuman. About them now was frigidness of death, — and silence tremendous. . . . A gold flame kindled in the east.

Then first to the pilgrim's gaze the steeps revealed their nakedness ; — and a trembling seized him, — and a ghastly fear. For there was not any ground, — neither beneath him nor about him nor above him, — but a heaping only, monstrous and measureless, of skulls and fragments of skulls and dust of bone, — with a shimmer of shed teeth strown through the drift of it, like the shimmer of scrags of shell in the wrack of a tide.

"Do not fear, my son !" cried the voice of the Bodhisattva ; — "only the strong of heart can win to the place of the Vision !"

Behind them the world had vanished. Nothing remained but the clouds beneath, and the sky above, and the heaping of skulls between, — upslanting out of sight.

Then the sun climbed with the climbers ; and there was no warmth in the light of him, but

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coldness sharp as a sword. And the horror of stupendous height, and the nightmare of stupendous depth, and the terror of silence, ever grew and grew, and weighed upon the pilgrim, and held his feet, — so that suddenly all power departed from him, and he moaned like a sleeper in dreams.

"Hasten, hasten, my son!" cried the Bodhisattva: "the day is brief, and the summit is very far away."

But the pilgrim shrieked, —

"I fear! I fear unspeakably! — and the power has departed from me!"

"The power will return, my son," made answer the Bodhisattva. . . . "Look now below you and above you and about you, and tell me what you see."

"I cannot," cried the pilgrim, trembling and clinging; — "I dare not look beneath! Before me and about me there is nothing but skulls of men."

"And yet, my son," said the Bodhisattva, laughing softly, — "and yet you do not know of what this mountain is made."

The other, shuddering, repeated: —

"I fear! — unutterably I fear! . . . there is nothing but skulls of men!"

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"A mountain of skulls it is," responded the Bodhisattva. "But know, my son, that all of them ARE YOUR OWN! Each has at some time been the nest of your dreams and delusions and desires. Not even one of them is the skull of any other being. All,—all without exception,—have been yours, in the billions of your former lives."

. . . . . .

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Furisodé

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Furisodé

RECENTLY, while passing through a little street tenanted chiefly by dealers in old wares, I noticed a *furisodė*, or long-sleeved robe, of the rich purple tint called *murasaki*, hanging before one of the shops. It was a robe such as might have been worn by a lady of rank in the time of the Tokugawa. I stopped to look at the five crests upon it; and in the same moment there came to my recollection this legend of a similar robe said to have once caused the destruction of Yedo.

Nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, the daughter of a rich merchant of the city of the Shōguns, while attending some temple-festival, perceived in the crowd a young samurai of remarkable beauty, and immediately fell in love with him. Unhappily for her, he disappeared in the press before she could learn through her attendants who he was or whence he had come.

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