HOUSE AT HONMOKU IN JAPAN.

The photograph from which our illustration was drawn seemed to us of especial interest as displaying a Japanese solution of a problem very similar to that which often confronts a builder on the rocky shores of New England, especially north of Cape Cod, and on the borders of many of our inland lakes. This problem is to place a country-house on a rugged shore to the best advantage, while preserving, as far as possible, the natural character of the spot. It is only of very recent years that it has been so much as considered in this country. We have been much too anxious to imitate, under wholly different conditions, the country homes of Europe, and, in particular, of England. We have wanted to surround our houses with green lawns, well-kept flower-beds and trees symmetrical in shape and planted in accordance with the supposed laws of landscape gardening as practiced in countries all parts of which have long been subjected to cultivation. And we have too often tried to secure all this in actual defiance of natural conditions, and at the sacrifice of natural beauties which, to a really cultivated eye, would have seemed of priceless value. We have too often sacrificed the chance for a beautiful, wide outlook over the water by placing the house so far from the brink that lawns and drives could encircle it; have cut away the native growth of tree and shrubs—rough and straggling, perhaps, but picturesque and precious for that very reason—and replaced them by nursery specimens; have planted gardeners' flowers in the stead of nature's beautiful wild products, and in
the end, after a vast expenditure of time, pains and money, have succeeded in
producing merely a bad imitation of an English villa, unattractive in itself, and
utterly out of keeping with the landscape environing it.

Fortunately, tastes are changing, and one of the chief facts to be placed to the
credit of the architectural profession in America to-day is the fact that it has
developed a keen sense for the diverse natural beauties of our country, and an
admirable power of adapting its constructions to the site and the surroundings at
the moment in question. It is getting to be recognized as a binding aesthetic rule
that a house shall conform itself to site and surroundings, and that these shall
not be defaced to suit the character of a design abstractly evolved on paper, or
tortured into the semblance of something which foreign hands had created
under very different conditions. Many American homes exist, built within the
last ten years, which are as worthy of praise from the point of view of appropri-
ateness and picturesque charm as the Japanese house in our present picture... It
will be noted that this house is placed quite at the edge of the cliff, so that the
most extended possible view is obtained, that every tree which could be pre-
served in building it has been preserved; that the wild aspect of the spot has not
been interfered with, and that the construction of man, alike in the house itself,
and in the fences, steps and other surroundings, have been kept as simple and
unobtrusive as possible. Picturesqueness is not the only quality to be prized,
either in architectural or in gardening art; and it is a quality which, if forced into
life where it does not naturally belong, is distressing to every cultivated eye. But
when nature gives us picturesqueness in so clear and pronounced a form as here,
the architect must accept her leading or ruin the effect both of her work and of
his own. And spots quite as distinctively picturesque as this, and very similar in
character, abound, as we have said, in many parts of our pine-grown, rocky
coasts, and demand analogous architectural treatment. Naturally, to advise direct
imitation of a Japanese house in America is no part of our desire, yet it may be
said that the general architectural idea embodied in this house is far better fitted
to adaptation in this country than most of those European models upon which
we have so largely drawn in the past.


Each of us is constituted with a special idiosyncrasy related in some mysteri-
ous way to certain ideas of natural scenery, and when we find ourselves in a scene
answering to our idiosyncrasy the mind feels itself at home there and rapidly
attaches itself by affection. The influence of scenery upon happiness is far greater
than is generally believed. There is a nostalgia which is not exactly a longing for
one's birthplace, but a weary dissatisfaction with the nature that lies around us,
and a hopeless desire for the nature that we were born to enjoy.

—Philip Gilbert Hamerton.

A sunset, a forest, a snow-storm, a certain river-view, are more to me than
many friends, and do ordinarily divide my days with my books.

—Emerson.