

Yase and Ohara.

These are two villages along the River Takano, north of Kyoto. The people of these villages retain ancient customs and manners of their own.

The people of Yase had served as imperial carriage bearers. In an ancient civil war they carried the emperor up to Mt. Hiei in order to keep him safe. So they were exempted from taxation until the Meiji Restoration.

Ohara is noted for cherry blossoms and maples. There are two famous temples in this village. One is called the Sanzenin. The main hall of this temple was built in 883 with old materials of an ancient Imperial Palace, containing beautiful images and paintings in the hall. The other is called Jakkōin, which is supposed to have been founded by Kōbō, the founder of Koyasan monastery. The present edifice, which has two pictures of ancient emperors and a famous wooden statue in this temple, was built in 1604.

The women of Yase and Ohara are called Oharame. Many of them come into the city every day in their peculiar attire and sell flowers, tea and fuel, often carrying their goods on their heads.

Many a time in the past, certain of the villagers have been entrusted with the care of an infant of noble blood, and even today preference is given to the village people when work has to be done at the Kyoto Imperial Palace.



Kuramadera.

This is a Buddhist temple on a hill called Kurama about five miles north of Kyoto. It was built by the Priest Kantei in 770, and in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries it was much enlarged: but later it was almost completely ruined by repeated fires. The present edifice was built in 1871, and it has charming surroundings.

Between the Niō-mon, the main gate, and the Hondō, the main sanctum, there is laid Tsuzuraori-Zaka, a slope with nine turns.

The slope is five chō in the distance at several turns and then up the stone steps, we will reach the Hondō.

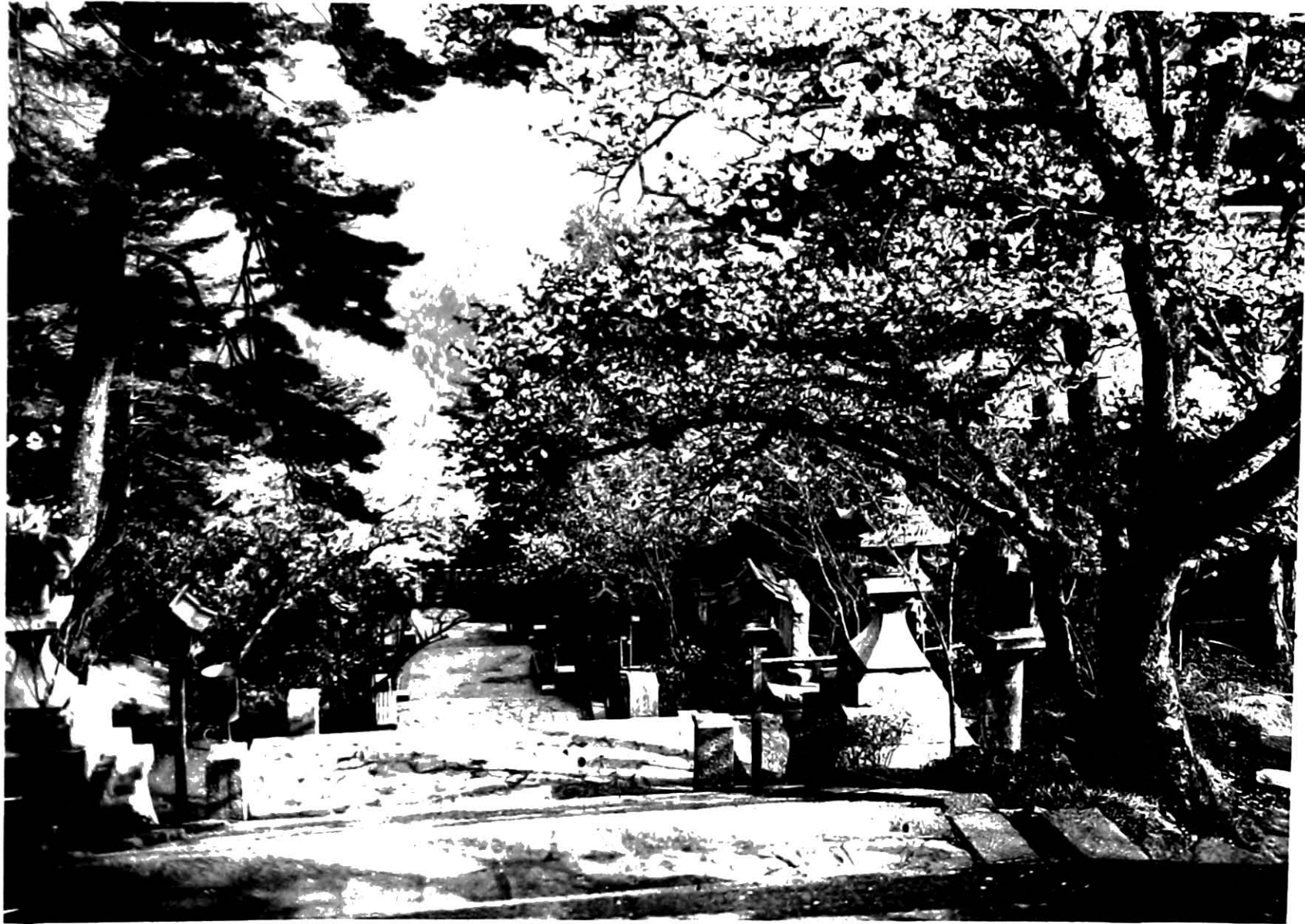
Close to the Hondō, there are Tahō-tō, Kannon-dō, Yakushidō, Akai, etc.

Sōjō-dani is a dell situated about half a mile north-west from the Hondō.

It is deep in shrubs and trees, extremely cool and contains many curious stones.

It is told that Ushiwaka-maru, Minamoto-Yoshitsune in his childhood, learnt an art of fencing.

At the north of the Niō-mon stands Yuki Jinsha, a Shinto shrine, worshipped as the guardian god of the village.



Yasaka Jinsha.

This shrine, commonly called Gion is dedicated to Susanoō-no-Mikoto, Inadahime-no-Mikoto, and their eight sons.

Tradition says that the Gion Shrine was erected in 660 A.D. It was certain that early in the period between 877 and 884 buildings were established upon the present site by Fujiwara Mototsune, and from that time until the Meiji Restoration it was called Gion-kanjin. The present buildings were rebuilt in 1654.

The letters on the tablet of Yasaka Jinsha are the autograph of Prince Kotohito Arisugawa.

The huge stone "Torii," which is 36 feet high, 22½ feet long and 10 feet around the pillar is one of the largest stone torii in Japan (built in 1646).

Western storied gate—a national treasure, is a structure of the Ashikaga age.

The Honden is a building with single Jerkin-head cypress roof, called Gion Zukuri, established in Shōhō 3rd (1646).

The Emadō contains many well-known votive offerings of pictures.

Other buildings are the hall for sacred music, the branch shrines, and the minor shrines.

Okera festival is held from the evening of 31st December to the morning of the 1st of the New Year.



Wooden Statue of Hermit Sage, Basō.

One of 28 Bushū statues.

Owned by San-in-sengen-Dō.

Carved and painted in the Kamakura age.

1.315 m. high.

28 Bushū images are the Buddhist servants to the Senju-kannon eleven-faced goddess of mercy, of which the statue of the Hermit Sage is the most famous.

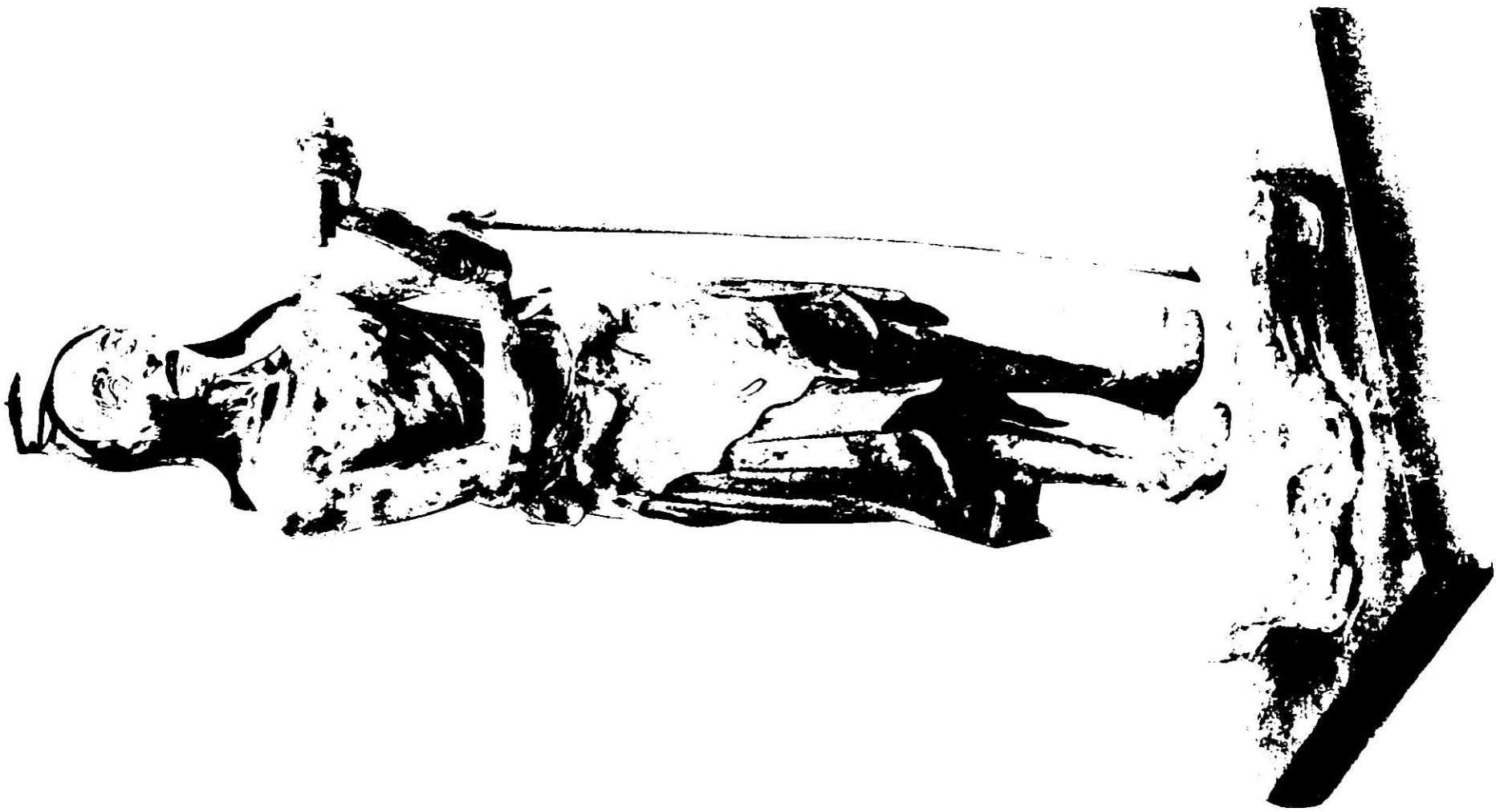
This is the statue leaning on a staff in its right hand, and holding a sutra in its left hand.

The 28 Bushū images in the temple are a collection of the carvings successively expressing realism and activity, and especially the statue of the Hermit Sage is the masterpiece.

The bony and emaciated appearance is, in fact, highly realistic.

The attitude walking slowly holding a sutra and grasping a cane represents vividly the old man's figure basing in Buddha's favours.

It is said that the image, made by the famed sculptor Unkei at the beginning of the Kamakura age, is a most excellent and representative work of which Japan is justly proud.



The Gion Festival.

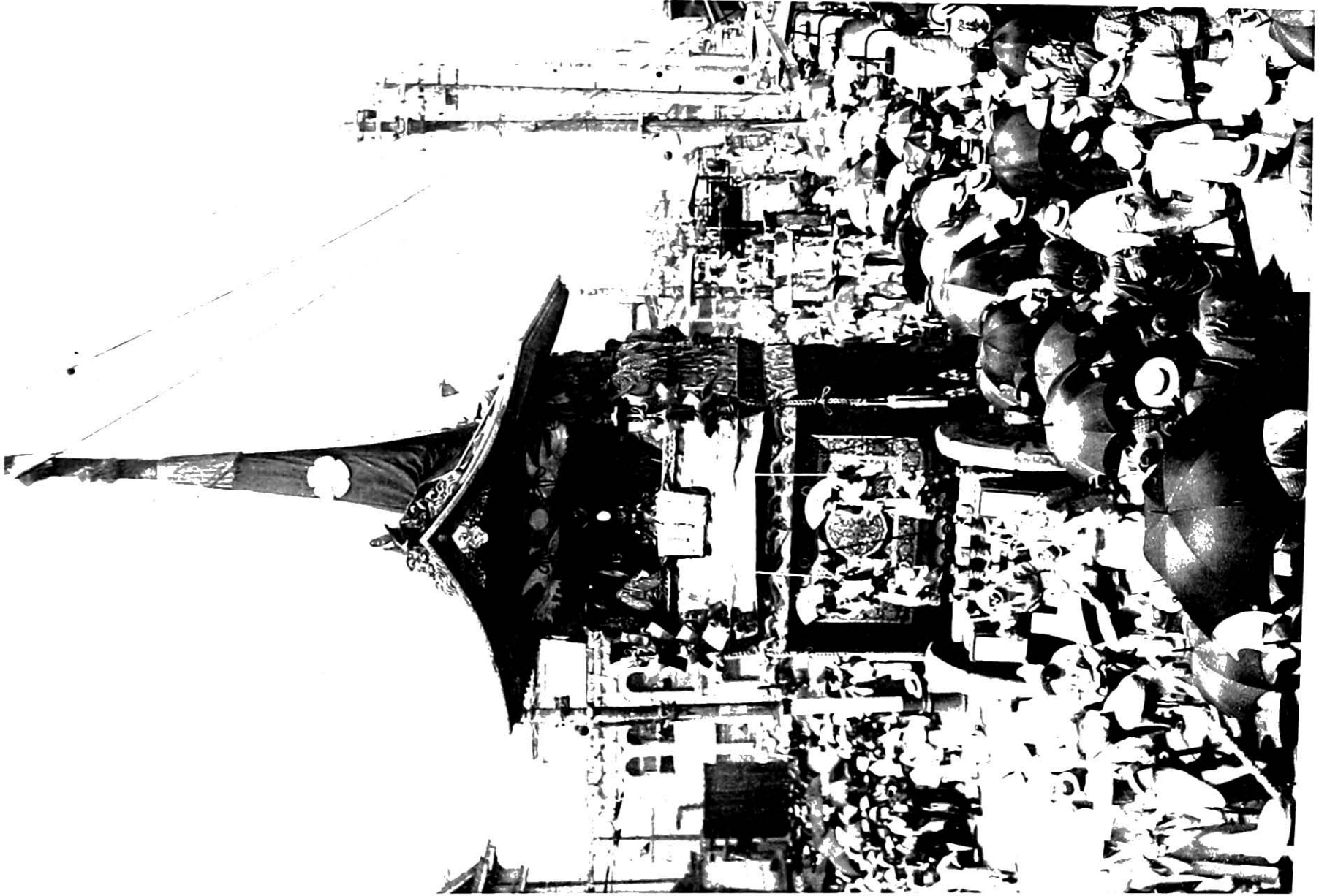
We cannot deny that the Gion Festival is one of the most interesting fêtes in Japan.

The festival has been held since 876 A. D. on the 17th and 24th of July. In that year the city was ravaged by an epidemic, and many thousands were carried off by the plague.

One day Urabe-no-Hiramaro, a veteran Shintoist, was summoned to the Imperial Palace and ordered to save people from the horrible calamity.

He determined to hold an extraordinary service to stamp out the pestilence. So the festival was meant originally to drive away the god of the plague. This feature, however, cannot be seen in the present festival. The washing of the ark may be a faint survival. The main feature of the festival is the procession of the golden ark, floats and carts gorgeously decorated with carvings and tapestries, holding the preliminary exercise of Gion Bayashi, a charming musical band. All the houses along the streets through which the procession marches are kept wide open, and beautiful screens can be seen from the street.

This is one of the three great festivals of Japan. The others are the Tenmā Festival in Osaka and the Kanda Festival in Tokyo. We trust that you will try to get the best opportunity of studying old things Japanese.



The "Night Cherry" of Maruyama Park.

In old poems we get a glimpse of the former barrenness of the locality, when it is spoken of as "Makuzu-ga-hara," the unsown plain.

Though several temples were later erected here, most of them have been destroyed.

In 1872 the grounds were appropriated for a public park, covering an area of 25 acres.

The views enjoyed in the park vary with the seasons, but each season brings something of special beauty and interest.

In cherry-blossom time thousands of people find their way to the Park, which, with an adequate number of tea-houses and restaurants, is almost ideal for pleasure-seekers.

There is a gigantic cherry-tree in the Park. Its innumerable slender branches hang down gracefully like those of a willow-tree. When in full bloom in spring the tree looks like a pink cloud. It is admired especially at night when hundreds of red lanterns and small watch fires are lit all around. So it has come to be called the "Night Cherry", one of Kyoto's peculiar charms.

