

**JAPANESE LETTERS: EASTERN
IMPRESSIONS OF WESTERN MEN
AND MANNERS, AS CONTAINED
IN THE CORRESPONDENCE OF
TOKIWARA AND YASHIRL**

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Japanese Letters: Eastern Impressions of Western Men and Manners, as Contained in the
Correspondence of Tokiware and Yashirl by Hastings Berkeley

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JAPANESE LETTERS.

JAPANESE LETTERS:

EASTERN IMPRESSIONS

OF

WESTERN MEN AND MANNERS,

AS CONTAINED IN THE CORRESPONDENCE OF

TOKIWARA AND YASHIRI.

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P R E F A C E.

IN the past few years much has been written by Europeans, especially by Englishmen, concerning Japan and the Japanese. Moreover, that which has been written has been eagerly read. There is in this nothing surprising. The originality and excellence of Japanese art—particularly of Japanese decorative design—copied, disseminated, and, as usual in parallel cases, now vulgarised among us, have stimulated the slow curiosity of the public concerning this people,—a curiosity which, in inquiring minds, has grown the more lively on account of the remarkable experiment which the Japanese nation has so thoroughly, and, thus far, so successfully conducted: nothing less than that of breaking up its ancient civilisation and recasting the fragments thereof in a European mould.

After having heard and read so much about Japan and its people from Europeans, it may prove interesting to hear what Japanese themselves

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have to say about Europe and Europeans in relation to this metamorphosis of the laws, customs and political institutions of their country.

It must be admitted that a collection of private letters, written by persons who do not stand prominently in the public eye, should possess intrinsic merit, or unusual interest of some kind, in order to deserve publication. Some interest there almost always is in the impressions, appreciations and judgments of individuals whose manner of life and ways of thought are not ours: perhaps no less, indeed, in those of individuals whose persistent endeavour it has been to adapt themselves to this manner and walk in these ways. Whether there is in these letters interest sufficient to engage and retain the reader's attention is matter for him or his "taster"—detestable but expressive word—to determine.

As a mere translator and editor of others' work, I might have permitted myself, without incurring the charge of fatuity or vanity, to say a few words in its praise, to touch on its points of utility, interest, humour or other excellence. I have not done so: for reasons which the intelligent reader will not find it difficult to guess, and with which the unintelligent reader need not be troubled.

Matters which are merely of domestic interest to the writers of these letters, or which relate to their

private affairs, have been excluded from the translation ; that only has been retained which appeared to possess general interest. In the process of translation certain surface peculiarities have disappeared of themselves, others have been toned down purposely. If something of the flavour of the original has thus been lost, a more than countervailing advantage has been gained, for peculiarities which are entertaining merely because they are strange or uncommon become tiresome by repetition. But for this word of explanation the ingenious reader might almost have suspected the writers of the following letters to be children of the editor's imagination.

H. B.



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