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the Literatures of
the World : VI.**

Edited by Edmund Gosse

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LATE JAPANESE SECRETARY TO H.M. LEGATION, TOKIO



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P R E F A C E

THE Japanese have a voluminous literature, extending over twelve centuries, which to this day has been very imperfectly explored by European students. Forty years ago no Englishman had read a page of a Japanese book, and although some Continental scholars had a useful acquaintance with the language, their contributions to our knowledge are unimportant. Much has been done in the interval, by writers of grammars and dictionaries, to facilitate the acquirement of this most difficult language, and translations by Sir E. Satow, Messrs. Mitford, Chamberlain, Dickins, and others, have given us interesting glimpses of certain phases of the literature. But the wider field has hitherto remained untouched. Beyond a few brief detached notices, there is no body of critical opinion on Japanese books in any European language, and although the Japanese themselves have done more in this direction, their labours are for various reasons in a great measure unserviceable.

The historian of their literature is therefore thrown mainly upon his own resources, and must do his best, by a direct examination of those works which the verdict of posterity has marked out as most worthy of notice, to ascertain their character and place in literature, and to grasp as far as possible the ideas which inspired them. In the following pages comparatively little space has

been devoted to what is necessarily a record of personal impressions and opinions, the outcome of rough pioneer work, and having little claim to be considered as mature literary criticism. It seemed preferable, especially in the case of a literature so little known to the English public as that of Japan, to allot ample room to translated extracts, and to such biographical notices as are necessary to show what manner of men the authors were.

The general plan, however, of this series has not been lost sight of. Important writers have been treated at comparatively greater length, to the neglect of many lesser notabilities, and an attempt has been made, in so far as the state of our knowledge permits, to follow the movement of the literature, and to trace the causes which determined its character at particular periods.

Writers on European literatures are entitled to take for granted, on the part of their readers, a previous acquaintance with the leading facts of the political and religious history of the country with which they are dealing. In the case of Japan, however, it has been thought not superfluous to add a few data of this kind, without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the course of the literary development.

In justice to Japanese literature, it is right to draw attention to some obstacles which prevent any translations from giving an adequate idea of its merits. The Italian adage is particularly applicable to translators from the Japanese. Even when they have a competent knowledge of the language they cannot possibly reproduce all the metaphors, allusions, quotations, and illustrations which form the stock of the Japanese author, and which are in great part unintelligible without a profusion of explanatory notes intolerable to the reader.

Another difficulty arises from the fact that a Japanese word frequently covers a meaning which is only approximately the same as that of the corresponding English term, or calls up quite different associations. The *karasu*, for example, is not exactly a crow, but a *corvus Japonensis*, a larger bird than our species, with different cries and habits. The cherry is, in Japan, the queen of flowers, and is not valued for its fruit, while the rose is regarded as a mere thorny bush. Valerian, which to us is suggestive principally of cats, takes the place of the rosebud as the recognised metaphor for the early bloom of womanhood. And what is the translator to do with the names of flowers as familiar to the Japanese as daisy or daffodil to ourselves, but for which he can offer no better equivalents than such clumsy inventions as *Lespedeza*, *Platycodon grandiflorum*, and *Deutzia scabra*?

In the world of thought and sentiment, the differences, though less tangible, are even more important. Take the Japanese word for conscience, namely, *honshin*. It means "original heart," and implies a theory that man's heart is originally good, and that conscience is its voice speaking within him. The words for justice, virtue, chastity, honour, love, and many more ideas of this class, although meaning substantially the same as with ourselves, must yet be taken with differences which are necessarily lost in a translation.

When to these are added the ordinary difficulties which beset the task of rendering thought from one language into another, and which are incomparably greater in the case of an idiom so different from our own, it will be seen that it is not possible to do justice to Japanese literature by translation. In the present volume it has often been necessary to pass over the best and most charac-

teristic passages of an author in favour of others which lent themselves more readily to presentation in an English form.

With one or two stated exceptions the translations are my own.

My best thanks are due to Sir Ernest Satow, Her Majesty's Minister to Japan, for lending me most of his extensive library of Japanese books, and also for supplying me from time to time with recent native publications, which have been of much service to me.

I cordially associate myself with previous contributors to this series of histories, by acknowledging the benefit which the present volume has derived from the editorial care of Mr. Edmund Gosse.

Japanese words and proper names have been introduced as sparingly as possible. The system of spelling adopted is that of the Royal Geographical Society. It may be described briefly as "Consonants as in English, vowels as in Italian ; no silent letters."

W. G. ASTON.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

IN regard to bibliography, the writer of the present volume of this series finds himself in a very different position from his predecessors. He has no *embarras de richesses* to contend with. The only survey of the whole field of Japanese literature which has hitherto appeared in any European language is an article by Sir E. Satow, in vol. ix. pp. 551-565 of *Appleton's American Cyclopædia* (New York, 1874), excellent as far as it goes, but owing to the brevity inseparable from such a form of publication, more fitted to excite than to satisfy the reader's curiosity. It will be found useful by any one who wishes to extend his knowledge of the subject, as it mentions a large number of Japanese books which have been entirely passed over in the preceding pages.

Mr. B. H. Chamberlain's *Classical Poetry of the Japanese* (1880) contains translations into English verse of a number of poems from the *Manyōshū* and *Kokinshū*, with selections from the *Nō* and *Kiōgen*, and an appendix of very short biographical notices of the more ancient Japanese poets. There is a similar work in French by M. Léon de Rosny.

Some interesting glimpses of the popular literature and folk-lore of the Yedo period are given in Mr. A. B. Mitford's *Tales of Old Japan* (1871).

Mr. William Anderson's *Catalogue of Japanese and Chinese Pictures in the British Museum* (1886) deals with the literature of Japan viewed as a source of supply of subjects for the artist.

The *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* contain a number of translations and notices of Japanese books, by Sir E. Satow, Mr. B. H. Chamberlain, and others; and Dr. K. Florenz's contributions to the *Journal of the German Asiatic Society of Japan* should also be mentioned.

In addition to the above, there exists in various European languages a considerable mass of translations from the Japanese, published either separately or in magazines and journals of learned societies, of which it may be said—

“Sunt bona, sunt quædam mediocria, sunt mala plura.”

The more important have been indicated in the body of this work, and it is believed that little inconvenience will be caused by the omission of all reference to the remainder. Those who wish to prosecute their researches further in this direction will find the means of doing so in Mr. Fr. von Wenckstern's comprehensive and useful, though not particularly accurate, *Bibliography of the Japanese Empire* (1895). A *Catalogue of Japanese Books and Manuscripts in the British Museum*, by Mr. R. K. Douglas, is also useful for reference.

The contributions of the Japanese themselves to the materials for a history of their literature are naturally much more important than anything which has been written by Europeans. The labours of Mabuchi and his greater pupil Motoōri have been already noticed, and good work has been done by a multitude of native editors and commentators towards clearing up the obscurity which even to Japanese surrounds many of their older authors. Nothing, however, which deserves the name of a History of Literature appeared until 1890, when Messrs. Mikami Sanji and Takatsu Kuwasaburo, of the Imperial University of Tokio, brought out their *Nippon Bungakushi*, which is by far the most valuable work on this subject. The critical judgments of the authors may not always commend themselves to Europeans, but they have succeeded in setting forth the leading facts of the history of their literature in a clear, methodical manner. I gladly acknowledge my very considerable obligations to their work.

A history of fiction, entitled *Shōsetsu Shikō*, by Sekine Masanao (1890), should also be mentioned.

The most useful bibliography in the Japanese language is the *Gunsho Ichiran*, by Ozaki Masayoshi, six volumes (1801), and the best biographical dictionary is a bulky work by a number of authors, entitled *Dai Nippon Jimmei Jisho* (1886). A list of other works of this class may be found in the article in *Appleton's Cyclopædia* already referred to.

Monographs on Hakuseki, Sorai, Chikamatsu, and other eminent authors, have been lately published, and a good deal is being done at

the present time in the way of re-editing and annotating the monuments of the older literature.

The Hakubunkan publishing house of Tokio have reprinted most of the fiction and drama of the Yedo period under the description *Teikoku Bunko* or "Imperial Library." As an illustration of the cheapness of books in Japan, it may be mentioned that each volume of this series contains about one thousand octavo pages of reasonably good print, on tolerable paper, in neat binding, and is sold for the equivalent of about one shilling of our money.

A LIST OF DICTIONARIES, GRAMMARS, AND OTHER
WORKS OF REFERENCE USEFUL TO STUDENTS
OF JAPANESE

A Japanese-English and English-Japanese Dictionary, by J. C. Hepburn (fourth edition, 1888).

A Dictionary of Chinese-Japanese Words, by J. H. Gubbins (1889).

A Chinese-English Dictionary, by H. A. Giles (1892).

A Native Chinese-Japanese Dictionary, such as the *Gioku-hen*.

One of the following native dictionaries of the Japanese language: *Nippon Daijirin*; *Genkai*; *Nippon Daijisho*. Of these, the first-named is the fullest and most elaborate. But even in the best dictionaries, whether by Japanese or foreigners, vast numbers of words are not to be found.

A Grammar of the Japanese Written Language, by W. G. Aston (second edition, 1877).

A Grammar of the Japanese Spoken Language, by W. G. Aston (fourth edition, 1888).

Or, *A Handbook of Colloquial Japanese*, by B. H. Chamberlain (third edition, 1898).

A Romanised Japanese Reader, by B. H. Chamberlain (1886).

A Manual of Japanese Writing, by the same author, is in preparation.

Japanese Chronological Tables, by E. M. S. (Sir Ernest Satow), (1874), or a similar work by W. Bramsen (1880), will be found necessary.

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