THE INFLUENCE OF JAPAN ON ENGLISH LITERATURE

By E. V. Gatenby

Some idea of the number of books written by Europeans and Americans on or about Japan may be gained by consulting the bibliographies compiled by Wenckstern and Nachod, and even these are not complete. Japan was very much of a mystery to Western nations until the Meiji Restoration, and it was natural that there should be a great demand for information when it was possible to study the facts at first-hand. Almost every visitor, including diplomats and business-men, seemed unable to resist the impulse to write an account of his experiences, with the result that a large proportion of the literary output was mere trash. Without a knowledge of the language it was difficult for strangers to get an insight into the nature of Japan and the Japanese, and consequently descriptions tended to be superficial and inaccurate. After scholars like Chamberlain, Sir Ernest Satow, Brinkley, Murdoch, and Aston had published the results of their researches, there was less excuse for ignorance on the part of other writers, but it is still true that English people know much less of Japan than Japanese know of England.

In this paper, however, I wish to consider the influence which Japan has had, directly or indirectly, on English men of letters. To what extent have Japanese poetry, history, philosophy, or religion affected our literature? It may be said at once that they have done little beyond producing that class of books known as standard works, of a scientific rather than a literary interest. There has been much translation of poetry and prose, the pioneer work being undertaken at the instigation of learned Japan Societies, and that of more recent times by experts like Arthur Waley, who has done a good deal to make tanka and No-drama accessible to
English readers. But poetic and dramatic forms have not been imitated to any great extent, though English critics take an interest in them, e.g. Gosse compares Swinburne's "Bothwell" to a "Yizaimono" (Life of Swinburne, p. 216); and Waley's translation of the Genji Monogatari has had no visible influence on English novelists. Modern novels with a Japanese background are increasing in numbers, but only because authors are trying to satisfy the demand for out-of-the-way or sensational material. The Japanese novel itself does not interest them. Old stories are becoming more widely known, especially that of Urashima Taro, which is found, with others about Japanese heroes and legends, in English elementary school readers. As regards poetry, one cannot expect foreign poets to be influenced by alien landscapes as they are by their own countryside. Yet Japan is as beautiful as Italy, which arouses so much emotion in the hearts of English writers; in sheer loveliness the Bay of Naples is surpassed over and over again by the inlets of Japan, and it seems strange that those of our poets who have visited these shores, or lived for a term in the country, have not succumbed to the charm. One would have thought that the West would have been more eager to avail itself of the best in the new Eastern world opened up to it, and not remained content with collection of curios. Distance has not prevented Japan from studying England minutely.

It will be more satisfactory, perhaps, to take authors in rough chronological order. The earliest narrations by traders and travellers are worthy of mention here because they are important in their own branch of literature. Such are "The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies and other Countreys ... as ... China in Cathayo and Giapan", by Richard Eden (1577); the various accounts in Hakluyt's "Principal Navigations, Voyages, etc." (1599); and "Purchas his Pilgrimes," (1625), together with the complete diary of Richard Cocks and the voyage of Capt. John Saris. These last two are published by the Hakluyt Society. John Dryden, the poet, deserves mention because of his translation of "The Life of St. Francis Xavier ..." (1688) from the French of Father Domi-
nick Bouhours, a work\textsuperscript{1} which contains mention of the great missionary's labours in Japan.

Daniel Defoe had evidently read about Japan, or heard sailors talk about the country, for he has a number of references to it in the sequel to the first part of "Robinson Crusoe" (1720).\textsuperscript{2}

Crusoe, at the time when he was suspected of being a pirate, was advised by a friend to take his ship into the Chinese port of Quinchang (Vol. 2, p. 243), where he would be safe from his enemies. It was not "a place for merchants, except that at some certain times they had a kind of fair there, when the merchants from Japan came over to buy the Chinese merchandises." After the fair (p. 249) "There were three or four junks in the river, and two Japanners (I mean ships from Japan), with goods which they had bought in China, and were not gone away, having Japanese merchants on shore." (P. 252) "... a Japan merchant bought all our opium, and gave us a very good price for it, paying us in gold by weight, some in small pieces of their own coin, and some in small wedges..." Crusoe offered to sell his ship to the Japanese merchant, who "shrank up his shoulders at it when it was first proposed to him." Finally the Japanese merchant hired the vessel to go to Japan with the intention of buying it from the profits of the voyage. He offered to take Crusoe to Japan, and the latter was on the point of accepting (p. 253) "but my partner, wiser than myself, persuaded me from it, representing the dangers as well of the seas as of the Japanese, who are a false, cruel, and treacherous people." However, Crusoe's young companion (not the partner) went to Japan, and "The Japan merchant proved a very punctual honest man to him, protected him at Japan, and got him a licence to come on shore, which the Europeans in general have not lately obtained." Later, (p. 313) when Crusoe was returning home in our modern manner \textit{via} Siberia, he wished to present to a Russian nobleman, an exile at Tobolsk, "four little

\textsuperscript{1} The catalogue price for the first edition is £5:10:0.

\textsuperscript{2} The following quotations are from the 3-volume edition published by David Nickerson & Co.
wedges of Japan gold," amongst other things. The Russian accepted only one piece, "which had a fine stamp upon it of the Japan coinage, which I found he took for the rarity of it."

Crusoe’s attitude towards Japan in the third volume is most amusing. In the chapter or essay on "The Proportion between the Christian and Pagan World", he discusses the possibility of Christianizing the world by force. As a preliminary step he suggests the conquest of Madagascar, Ceylon, Borneo, or Japan "... because the Japanese are said to be a most sensible, sagacious people, under excellent forms of government, and capable more than ordinarily of receiving impressions, supported by the argument and example of a virtuous and religious conqueror." He had evidently forgotten the reason he had given in the earlier volume for not visiting Japan. Continuing, he outlines the establishment of government after the conquest! "No quarter should be given to Satan’s administration." All the pagodas and temples were to be burnt, and the priests removed, "if not destroyed." One interesting point is that Crusoe did not propose that the all-conquering missionaries should learn Japanese, but that the Japanese should learn English. There is one other reference in "A Vision of the Angelic World" (p. 278) where the devil is reported to have agents whom he sends to various disciples on earth, including "the devil-makers of China and Japan." These perfectly serious proposals put forward by Defoe support the view that the Japanese were wise in stamping out Christianity within their borders at a time when it was politically dangerous.

Until the country was opened to foreign intercourse no other English writer of any note seems to have interested himself in Japan with the exception of ThomasPennant, whose "Tour in Scotland in 1769" (pub. 1771) had appealed to Johnson. He described the East in "View of Indostan" (2 vols.) and "India extra Gangem, China and Japan" (1 vol.) (pub. 1798–1800). George Psalmanazar’s "Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa, An Island Subject to the Emperor of Japan" (1704), was, of course, pure fiction, as may be seen from the title, for the
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island did not become Japanese until 1895, but it is worth recording here as showing how easy it was to impose upon the public with stories of unknown lands.

Laurence Oliphant (1829–88), a novelist and miscellaneous writer, was first in the field under the new régime—or rather, under the changed conditions obtaining after the arrival of Perry—with his ‘Narrative of the Earl of Elgin’s Mission to China and Japan in 1857–9.’ He was Secretary of Legation in Japan for a short period, and at various times contributed articles on Japan to journals and reviews. The ‘Narrative’, of which Vol. 2 deals mainly with Japan, makes very pleasant reading today, partly because of its excellent English, but also because of the author’s evident astonishment at the high state of civilisation prevailing.

The next important name is that of R. L. Stevenson. ‘In March (1879) . . . his ‘Yoshida Torajiro’ appeared in Cornhill, the story that had so impressed Stevenson when he heard it told by a Japanese official at Professor Jenkin’s dinner table in 1878.’ It is included among ‘Familiar Studies of Men and Books.’ The story brought home to Stevenson the fact that ‘only a few miles from us, to speak by the proportion of the universe’, men in a heroic age were ‘stepping to death with a noble sentence on their lips.’ For the details of Yoshida’s life he was indebted to a certain Taiso Masaki, the official referred to above.

Stevenson’s account, which he himself declared to be ‘an imperfect outline’, is said to be incorrect in certain points of fact; but he has caught the spirit. Not even Lafcadio Hearn could

2 The Preface gives March, 1880, as the date for its appearance in Cornhill. It is not easy to clear up discrepancies of this kind in Japan.
3 I am indebted to my colleague, Professor Okawara, for the following account of Taiso Masaki:—‘He was born in 1846; in his thirteenth year he became one of Yoshida Shōin’s pupils; in 1871 he went to England to study, but a few years later returned home and devoted himself to the cause of education. The Japanese Government sent him to England again in 1876, and it was during this visit that he met Stevenson, when he gave him the account of Yoshida’s life. It is not known how
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have done justice more fairly to this "great failure", who lived and laid down his life for an idea. Stevenson's pious wish that Yoshida's name should become a household word like that of Garibaldi or John Brown has not been fulfilled, for the West is slow to recognize careers along "paths of glory that lead but to the grave"; but now that Stevenson himself is numbered with the immortals in our literature, Yoshida's name will live among us too.

There is no need to repeat the facts of Yoshida's life. A few quotations will illustrate Stevenson's insight, and perhaps make us regret that he did not avail himself of other material from Japan. "The man had the tenacity of a Bruce or a Columbus, with a pliability that was all his own. He did not fight for what the world would call success; but for 'the wages of going-on.'" "He was of Thoreau's mind, that if you can 'make your failure tragical by courage, it will not differ from success.'" "It is hard to say which is the most remarkable—his capacity for command, which subdued his very jailors; his hot, unflagging zeal; or his stubborn superiority to defeat. He failed in each enterprise that he attempted; and yet we have only to look at his country to see how complete has been his general success."

The one point that Stevenson does not mention is Yoshida's simplicity. Leader though he was, with a magnetic personality, he had not sufficient knowledge of the world to carry out his enterprises successfully. The methods he employed to get out of

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long he stayed in England on this second visit, but soon after his return to Japan he was appointed President of the Tokyo Shokko Gakko (a technical school). Later he was transferred to the Dept. of Foreign Affairs, and made Consul-General at Hawaii. He retired from public life in 1893 and died in 1896. Mr. Yutaka Hiross, who wrote a study of Yoshida Shōin, visited Masaki's widow, who is still living in Tokyo. But she does not remember details of her husband's visit to England.

In a Times Literary Supplement (1. 6. 33) review of "An Engineer's Outlook", by Sir Alfred Ewing, we read: "The last meeting of Stevenson and Ewing was at Jenkins's table to meet Mr. Masaki, who had come from Japan to engage a professor of mechanical engineering. (He carried off Ewing.) Stevenson was deeply stirred by the lines Masaki quoted: 'It is better to be a crystal and to be broken than to remain perfect as a tile on the house-top.' Sir Alfred thinks now that they were appropriate to Stevenson."
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Japan—calmly boarding Perry's ship without warning—and his failure to prevent the discovery of his last plot against the Shōgun, reveal him as a man of childlike trust. But he had the longing, as Stevenson had, for the far horizons, and his name will not be forgotten.

Rudyard Kipling reached Japan in cherry-blossom time, 1889, landing at Nagasaki, then going through the Inland Sea to Kobe, and after sight-seeing in Osaka and Kyoto, travelling up to Yokohama on the recently opened Tokaido line. He visited Miyanoshita and Nikko, as well as places of interest in Tokyo, and then left for England by way of America, reaching home in September the same year. The account of his experiences is to be found in "From Sea to Sea", the collection of articles which he wrote for his newspaper. Those which deal with Japan are full of vivid description, for Kipling had a keen eye for externals, and though errors of fact creep in, they hardly detract from a valuable record of how the country appealed to an observant foreigner at that time. The poet in Kipling responded to the beauty of natural scenery, the charm and quietude of the temples, the perfection of artists' craftsmanship, and he confessed his inability to do justice in the columns of a newspaper to a land of peculiar fascination. Unfortunately Kipling was writing at a time when the Japanese had not shown their true mettle, and a note of superiority and condescension is only too apparent. He scoffed, in ignorance, at the new Constitution—knowing only too well the evils of democracy in his own country—and at the army, though it must be admitted that in his criticism of the latter he was yielding to the impulse to retaliate on a Japanese who had said "English army no use." But making allowances for his Anglo-Indian bias, one may say that no other traveller to Japan has observed so minutely and written so arrestingy of what he saw.

In Tokyo he visited the offices of a Japanese paper with an English title—"The Tokyo Public Opinion"—thinking to get "copy" from the editor. This man, however, as Kipling confesses, knew his business, and the traveller had himself to submit
to being interviewed. He was asked numerous questions as to his opinions on the American Revision Treaty and India, and gave as much information as he received, if not more. “I left very humbly, but cheered by the promise that the ‘Tokyo Public Opinion’ would contain an account of my words. Mercifully, that respectable journal is printed in Japanese, so the hash will not be served up to a large table. I would give a good deal to discover what meaning he attached to my forecast of Constitutional government in Japan.” Others besides Kipling would like to know, and I have tried to trace this paper, but without success. The librarian of the Imperial Library at Ueno kindly made a search, but there was no record of a journal with this English title. It may be that all copies were destroyed in the earthquake of 1923, or that there was a Japanese title under which it would be listed.1 If the files ever come to light, Kipling lovers will be eager to have a translation of the interview.

Three years later Kipling visited Japan again, on this occasion reaching Yokohama from America. Some account of his impressions is given in “Letters of Travel (1892–1913)” under the titles “The Edge of the East”, “Our Overseas Men”, “Some Earthquakes”, and “Half-a-Dozen Pictures.” In the last-mentioned the author yields to the influence of the unpainted pictures around him, and endeavours to set them down in rich words. His descriptions of a “Tokio bye-street after dark”, and children playing with goldfish, are followed by a protest against those artists who sit in studios and “by light that is not light . . . fake subjects from pots and pans.” Let then take a ticket to new worlds, he says, where there are new scenes worthy of being painted. He has another travel-sketch of Japan, “Griffiths the Safe Man”, in a collection entitled “Abaft the Funnel”, which is published only in an American edition. (Now out of print.) There seems to be only one poem by him dealing directly with Japan, the well-known

1 My friend professor Hara has provided me with a list of papers published in Tokyo at that time, and suggests that The Chiba Shim bun (朝野新聞) might be translated 'Public Opinion'.
"Buddha at Kamakura", containing the lines

"And whoso will, from Pride released,
Contemning neither creed nor priest,
May feel the Soul of all the East
About him at Kamakura."

This was written in 1892, and it suggests that the author himself, "from Pride released", had discovered something of the imperishable in Japan under the new garment of Western civilisation. One other poem, "The Rhyme of The Three Sealers", though not dealing with Japan, may be included here as the story is supposed to be told "Where the paper lanterns glow" in a seamen's tavern in Yokohama; and under another title, "The Undertaker's Horse" is a proverb stated to be Japanese: "To-tschiin-shu is condemned to death. How can he drink tea with the executioner?"—but up to the present I have not been able to identify the original of this.¹

Lafcadio Hearn (Koizumi Yakumo) needs no introduction to Japanese readers. He is the one writer in English who really yielded to the charm of Japan, and who made it almost his life's work to interpret his adopted country to the West. Probably no other man has played such a large part in making Japan known abroad, and there is no other author who, in dealing with Japan, has reached his standard of literary excellence. Hearn's books are much more than a traveller's or resident's descriptions: his imaginative prose is inspired by his surroundings. He is writing, as it were, from the inside, giving out some of the magic that has enveloped and penetrated him, not, like Masefield or Noyes, introducing into his work foreign novelties which have tickled his fancy. In Hearn there is identification of subject with creative impulse, and his books are easily first, in literary rank, among

¹ Kipling has a trick of supplying picturesque detail in order to add an Eastern flavour; e.g. in "A Friend's Friend" (Plain Tales from the Hills) there is a character whose "vocabulary of abuse was cosmopolitan, though mainly Japanese, which he had picked up in a low tea-house at Hakodate. It sounded like whistling."
those that treat of Japan. There is no need to give a list of the well-known titles here, or to make excuses for his slips of fact or exaggeration. He has become a classic, and it was Japan that brought forth his genius.

Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904), famous for his poem "The Light of Asia" (1879), found much material in Japan for miscellaneous works now all but forgotten. In 1891 appeared "Japonica", which contained three papers: Japan the country; Japanese people; and Japanese ways and thoughts. The same year his letters from the East to the Daily Telegraph were published under the title of "Seas and Lands", and he was also writing introductions to T. J. Larkin's catalogues of Japanese pictures. He lectured on Japan (see Phonographic Magazine, 1892, No. 4, Cincinnati) and wrote a play "Adzuma; or the Japanese Wife" (1892). "'Tis a true story of the old Japan", he claims in the Prologue. It recounts the love of Endō Moritō for Kesa Gozen, the wife of Watanabe Wataru, and the killing of Kesa, who had purposely occupied her husband's place, knowing that an attack would be made upon him by Endō. Much of the play is in blank verse, and the tragic story is well told, but the employment of Japanese words in the text serves no useful purpose, and one wonders why the name Kesa has been dropped in favour of Adzuma. As in Masefield's play—to be mentioned later—the Japanese spirit is Romanized, with the result that we get nothing like a true picture of the times of Yoritomo. It is as though Arnold were writing according to a Shakespearean recipe, with Endō a tragic hero driven on to his downfall by fate, Sakamune a lesser Iago, Watanabe Wataru a noble but passive Leonatus Posthumus, and Adzuma a Roman matron like Virgilia.

Old Japan came to W. E. Henley in a Toyokuni colour-print, which inspired him to write a ballade very much resembling in sentiment his better known

"Or ever the knightly years were gone
With the old world to the grave,
I was a King in Babylon"
And you were a Christian slave."

The "Ballade of a Toyokuni Colour-Print" begins

"Was I a Samurai renowned,
Two-sworded, fierce, immense of bow?
A histrion angular and profound?
A priest? a porter? Child, although
I have forgotten clean, I know
That in the shade of Fuji-san,
What time the cherry-orchards blow,
I loved you once in old Japan."

And he goes on lightly mentioning the details of the picture, addressing the "flowing-gowned and hugely-sashed" maiden, and insisting that "a dozen lives ago" he loved her "once—in old Japan."

Alfred Noyes published "The Flower of Old Japan" in 1903, and in the "Collected Poems" (1918) there are a number of titles which would lead one to suppose that the poet had found much inspiration in the Far East. In the first volume there are "A Triple Ballad of Old Japan", "Haunted in Old Japan", and "The Flower of Old Japan," the last of which, however, seems more Chinese than Japanese with its mention of willow-plate streets, dhows, pig-tailed mandarins, and opium houses. The scene of these poems is really a fairy-land of the imagination, with Japanese pirates flourishing "crooked ataghan", and chrysanthemums, plum-trees, and cherry-blossoms all blooming together in the same season. The only realistic feature is Mt. Fuji—

"A snow-peak in the silver skies
Beyond that magic world,
We saw the great volcano rise
With incense o'er it curled,
Whose tiny thread of rose and blue
Has risen since time began,
Before the first enchanter knew
The peak of Old Japan."

"Old Japan", whatever vision it may have conjured up in his mind, seems to have haunted Noyes's imagination, and he refers
to it again in the second volume in “The Dream-Child’s Invitation.” There is also “A Japanese Love-Song”, with the line “Though your wide eyes are blue!”—and the straightforward story in verse of “The Two Painters”, (with sub-title “A Tale of Old Japan”), Yoichi Tenko and Sawara. But Noyes is utterly careless of the scene. Once more the characters move in an elfin country, which may be “Illyria, lady”, but is certainly not Japan, where people do not ride on “milk-white mules”, where there are no “Eyes like the holy violets”, and cherries and peonies bloom at different seasons.

And so the influence of Japan on Noyes is rather disappointing: he has missed the marvellous beauty and real romance with which the land is overlaid, and given as false a picture as any which has found its way into comic opera. If we are content to believe ourselves in an enchanted island of dreams, then the poetry of “The Flower of Old Japan” takes possession of us; but we may ask how English readers would appreciate a poem by a Japanese, entitled, say, “A Ballad of Old England”, of which the background was French and Japanese.

The war with Russia brought wider recognition for Japan, with whose cause England was in full sympathy. “Old Japan”, it was realized, definitely belonged to the past, and the “New Japan” commanded the respect given to equals. The English newspapers and magazines were, of course, crammed with descriptions of everything connected with Japan, and books by Japanese writers were eagerly read. Such were Dr. Nitobe’s “Bushido” (1904); Kakuzo Okakura’s “The Ideals of the East with special reference to the Art of Japan” (1903), “Awakening of Japan” (1905), and “The Book of Tea” (1906); and Yoshisaburo Okakura’s “The Japanese Spirit” (1905), which had an Introduction by George Meredith. The famous novelist did not depart from the usual style of polite commendation of the subject, but he had evidently been reading—“We have had illuminating books upon Japan”—and he mentions Hearn and Brinkley. Probably he had read Nitobe also—“Bushido . . . has become almost an English word,
so greatly has it impressed us with the principle of renunciation on behalf of the Country’s welfare.”

In the preceding year there was an article in “The Spectator” (Jan. 23rd, 1904) with the title “Mr. Herbert Spencer on Japan.” The writer of this article, while awaiting definite news about the outbreak of war, preferred “to employ the interval in discussing the very remarkable opinions about Japan which Mr. Herbert Spencer had thought out. They are embodied in a letter to Baron Kaneko, a Japanese jurist and politician of high standing, dated Aug. 20th, 1892, which, however, was not to be published until after the philosopher’s death, as Mr. Spencer, he says ‘did not desire to rouse the animosity of his fellow countrymen.’” In this letter Spencer had advised his friend that there was danger of Japan’s being conquered by some Western nation, and he therefore wished the Japanese “to keep up, or rather rebuild, their ancient wall of exclusion, but to allow ingress freely to commodities and ideas.” The writer of the article pooh-poohs this, together with other suggestions made by Spencer, who urged that foreigners should not be allowed to hold land, or to occupy houses except in annual tenancy; that the law of extra-territoriality should never be repealed; and that inter-marriage between Japanese and Europeans should be forbidden. It was not difficult to point out the contradictions in these recommendations, and the remainder of the article is a gleeful rendering of Herbert Spencer and his political philosophy.

John Masefield, our Poet Laureate, wrote a play called “The Faithful”, which he describes as ‘a pageant showing the tragedy of the forty-seven Rōnin of Japan.” It was written, he tells us, in 1913, and he continues, in the Preface to his “Collected Plays”— ‘I had known the story of The Rōnin for many years, and had long hoped to make a play of it, but could not see a dramatic form for it. I planned it and began to write it (in 1912) as a tale in verse, but changed my mind on seeing Mr. Granville Barker’s productions of Twelfth Night and The Winter’s Tale. They showed me more clearly than any stage productions known to me
the power and sweep of Shakespeare’s construction of ‘scene undivided and passion unlimited.’ They helped me to construct The Faithful as a play with ‘continuous performance’ for a double or platform stage."

It would be interesting to know in what form the story of the Forty-Seven Rônin reached Mr. Masefield. Mitford’s account had appeared in The Fortnightly Review prior to its inclusion in his “Tales of Old Japan” (1871)¹. The Chiushingura has been in an English translation by F. V. Dickins since 1875, and a version which the author claimed to be historically correct was published in English by J. Murdoch in Tokyo (1891–93) as one of the Ogawa Collotype-Albums. At any rate, Mr. Masefield’s treatment differs in several points from the story as it is known in Japan, and it may be taken for granted that the Japanese drama did not influence him, however much he may have been impressed by the story. In place of Yamato Damashii we have the spirit of the “antique Roman”, for the play reads like a dramatization of material found in Plutarch’s “Lives”, and Japanese will hardly find in it the grim avengers they know so well. The playwright was, naturally, under no obligation to keep closely to Japanese ideas, and he did what he set out to do, namely, to write a good play based on a well-known Japanese story. To satisfy English sentiment much had to be altered; in particular, full justification had to be shown for the action of the Rônin, and therefore most of the first act is taken up in showing how insufferable “Lord Kira” was, and what terrible provocation “Lord Asano” had before the latter attacked his enemy. Asano is full of all the virtues, while Kira has none at all. “They told me you were a devil”, the Woman says to him in the last act. Kira is killed one year after Asano’s death, and there is no mention of the fact that he

¹ This book deserves mention here as it has established itself as a classic. Mitford (Lord Redesdale), an old schoolfellow of Swinburne’s, visited the poet after returning from Japan, but there is no record that Swinburne showed any curiosity about the East, although he took the trouble (in “Mr. Whistler’s Lecture on Art”, 1883) to satirize Whistler’s praise of Japanese art.
was an old man; to show Kira as being over sixty would take away all sympathy from the Rōnins’ cause. The little blemishes which so often appear in Western representations of things Japanese are to be found, e.g. hand-shaking, kissing farewell, and a girl’s lover with fair hair. But I am not criticising the play as a work of literature: I am merely pointing out deviations from the Japanese original.

W. B. Yeats published a collection of essays, with the title “The Cutting of an Agate”, in 1919, and included one written three years earlier on “Certain Noble Plays of Japan.” He begins:

“I am writing with my imagination stirred by a visit to the studio of Mr. Dulac, the distinguished illustrator of the Arabian Nights. I saw there the mask and head-dress to be worn in a play of mine by the player who will speak the part of Cuchulain, and who wearing this noble, half-Greek, half-Asiatic face will appear perhaps like an image seen in reverie by some Orphic worshipper. I hope to have attained the distance from life which can make credible strange events, elaborate words. I have written a little play that can be played in a room for so little money that forty or fifty readers of poetry can pay the price. There will be no scenery, for three musicians, whose seeming sun-burned faces will, I hope, suggest that they have wandered from village to village in some country of our dreams, can describe place and weather, and at moments action, and accompany it all by drum and gong or flute and dulcimer. Instead of the players working themselves into a violence of passion indecorous in our sitting-room, the music, the beauty of form and voice all come to climax in pantomimic dance.

In fact, with the help of Japanese plays ‘translated by Ernest Fenollosa and finished by Ezra Pound,’ I have invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect, and symbolic, and having no need of mob or press to pay its way—an aristocratic form. When this play and its performance run as smoothly as my skill can make them, I shall hope to write another of the same sort and so complete a dramatic celebration of the life of Cuchulain planned long ago. Then having given enough performances for I hope the pleasure of personal friends and a few score people of good taste, I shall record all discoveries of method and turn to something else. It is an advantage of this noble form that it need absorb no one’s life, that its few properties can be packed up in a box or hung upon the walls where they will be fine ornaments.”
The No plays appealed to Mr. Yeats as worthy of adaptation to Irish legend, and the remainder of the essay is a brief account of the impression they made upon him. Not being familiar with other forms of Japanese art or poetry he is led here and there to make strange comparisons, e.g. "...the painting of Japan, not having our European Moon to churn the wits, has understood that no styles that ever delighted noble imaginations have lost their importance, and chooses the style according to the subject." Finding European stage conventions unnatural, he looks to Asia for "more formal faces, for a chorus that has no part in the action, and perhaps for those movements of the body copied from the marionette shows of the fourteenth century." "It is now time to copy the East and live deliberately."

There are a few observations on the technique of the No dances which he had studied with the help of Japanese players. As for the stories of the plays, he compares them with Irish fairy-tales, likening Hagoromo's robe of feathers to the "red cap whose theft can keep our fairies of the sea upon dry land; and the ghost-lovers in Nishikigi remind me of the Aran boy and girl who in Lady Gregory's story come to the priest after death to be married." He thinks that the creators of certain conventions in the No "were more like ourselves than were the Greeks and Romans, more like us even than are Shakespeare and Corneille."

"Four Plays for Dancers" appeared in book form in 1921. His "Note on the First Performance of 'At The Hawk's Well'" describes how it was played for the first time in April, 1916, in a friend's drawing-room, only those who cared for poetry being invited. In as many details as possible the No setting and atmosphere were imitated, while "Mr. Ito's genius of movement" doubtless brought something of Japanese reality to the scene. The play itself is interesting as an experiment, but it seems that the emotion was in the dancing rather than in the wording, rhythm and meaning not being subtly blended as in the Japanese originals. However, one should not criticise a play one has never seen.
H. G. Wells has necessarily made himself familiar with the history of the peoples of the world, though perhaps he has been content in some cases with broad outlines from which to generalize. Thus, in his "Short History of the World" he speaks of the Japanese in 1899 as "a completely Westernized people", a charge which the Japanese themselves would be the first to deny even today. In "A Modern Utopia" the "voluntary nobility" are given the title of Samurai, though there is nothing Japanese about them except their name; but Wells had evidently been impressed by the Samurai code of honour, and the Samurai discipline, and conceived an order of high-principled men, not warriors, but thinkers, for his ideal state. He also wrote under the headings "What is Japan" and "The Future of Japan" in "Washington and the Hope of Peace." (Pub. Collins, 1922).

Of modern English poets who have lived in Japan or visited the country Edmund Blunden and Laurence Binyon must be mentioned. In "The Study of English" for Oct. 1st, 1930, a poem by the latter is reprinted from The London Mercury. It is entitled "Koya-San", and describes the poet's impressions in the cemetery surrounding the grave and shrine of Kobo Daishi. Apart from the reference to stone lanterns there is nothing beyond the title to show connexion with Japan. We gather that Mr. Binyon, whom "Earth had rolled onward into regions new", was moved by the scene, especially by a pilgrim praying motionless before the shrine, and that remembrance of other beauty came to him.

In "Poems, 1914–1930" Mr. Blunden includes a collection which he calls "Japanese Garland" written during his occupancy of the chair of English Literature at the Tokyo Imperial University. One of the most charming is "The Daimyo's Pond", with its lilies and swallows and "water-shapes", and the old man who sounds a gong to summon the carp.—

"Would that I might by means as plain as this
Bring many a mystery from life's shadowy pool,
Enchant the live gems from the unknown abyss,
And make them seen, the strangely beautiful."
All will appreciate the pathos of "A First Impression' (Tokyo)." One can readily imagine that first eager question from students—"What were your first impressions of Japan?"—which all newly-arrived foreigners must answer—and Blunden's polite reply. But the true answer was given in the lines

"No sooner was I come to this strange roof,
    Beyond broad seas, half round the weary world,
    Than came the pretty ghost, the sudden sweet
    And most sad spirit of my vanished child."

He hears the multitudes of children at play, and realizing that "still great childhood lords it all the way", finds solace... "I glittered with their light,
    And loved them, as if kindred of my own."

But his own loss cannot be forgotten—"I saw a ghost and lacked one child." English poets in exile have always been "sick for home", and those who stay for a while in Japan are no exception.

I should like to mention the name of the late Mrs. L. Adams Beck (E. Barrington), who in novels such as "The House of Fulfilment" and "The Garden of Vision" has tried to give Western readers some insight into the mysteries of Zen Buddhism. She also did much to encourage Japanese writers in the translation of Japanese classics, and contributed an introduction to Mrs. Nobuko Kobayashi's "Sketch Book of the Lady Sei Shônagon" in the Wisdom of the East Series. These little books, the best of which is perhaps Mr. Binyon's "Flight of the Dragon", are helping to bring together East and West "in a spirit of mutual sympathy."

But there is still a great deal to be done before the cloud of ignorance is dispersed, and it is to be hoped that Japan and Japanese culture may occupy a more important place in English literature in future. Kipling saw at once the abundance of material for the artist, and Hearn allowed himself to be absorbed in it. Stevenson and Noyes, if they had known the country at first-hand, might have done fuller justice to it. Sir Edwin Arnold had the right spirit, but not the power. There are not many outstanding books written in English by foreigners (using the word from the English
point of view) about their own lands; we know little of the real France or Spain or Russia in consequence, for though translations give facts they rarely convey the spirit of the original. It is interesting in this connexion to note that apart from Hearn's writings, the only examples of pure literature dealing mainly with Japan which have achieved fame, and which come near to ranking as English classics, are "Bushido" and "The Book of Tea," both by Japanese authors; and the fact that they were written in English suggests that further contributions from the natives of the country may enrich our literature. For after all, a visitor, unless he is content to submerge himself for a long period in the life around him, is not likely to gain more than a superficial knowledge, and it is the Japanese themselves who must interpret Japan to the world.