

PREFACE.

JAPAN, once in the far-off Orient, is now our nearest Western neighbor. Her people walk our streets; her youth sit, peers and rivals of our students, in the class-room; her art adorns our homes, and has opened to us a new Gate Beautiful. The wise men from the West are, at this writing, opening their treasures of tea, silk, gold-lacquer, bronzes, and porcelain at the first centennial of our nation's birth.

We hail the brightness of the rising of this first among Asiatic nations to enter modern life, to win and hold a place among the foremost peoples of the earth. It is time that a writer treated Japan as something else than an Oriental puzzle, a nation of recluses, a land of fabulous wealth, of universal licentiousness or of Edenic purity, the fastness of a treacherous and fickle crew, a Paradise of guileless children, a Utopia of artists and poets. It is time to drop the license of exaggeration, and, with the light of common day, yet with sympathy and without prejudice, seek to know what Dai Nippon is and has been.

It has been well said by a literary critic and reader of all the books on the subject that to write a good history of Japan is difficult, not so much from lack of materials, but from the differences in psychology. This I realize. My endeavor, during eight years' living contact with these people, has been, from their language, books, life, and customs, to determine their mental parallax, and find out how they think and feel.

I have not made this book in libraries at home, but largely on the soil of the mikado's empire. I have slight obligation to acknowledge to foreign writers, except to those working scholars in Japan who have written during the last decade with knowledge of the language. To them I owe much; first and most of all to Mr. Ernest Satow, who, in the special department of historical research, stands leader. To Messrs. W. Dixon, Aston, Mitford, Hepburn, Brown, Blakiston, Von Brandt, and Parkes, I am also indebted. I am under many obligations