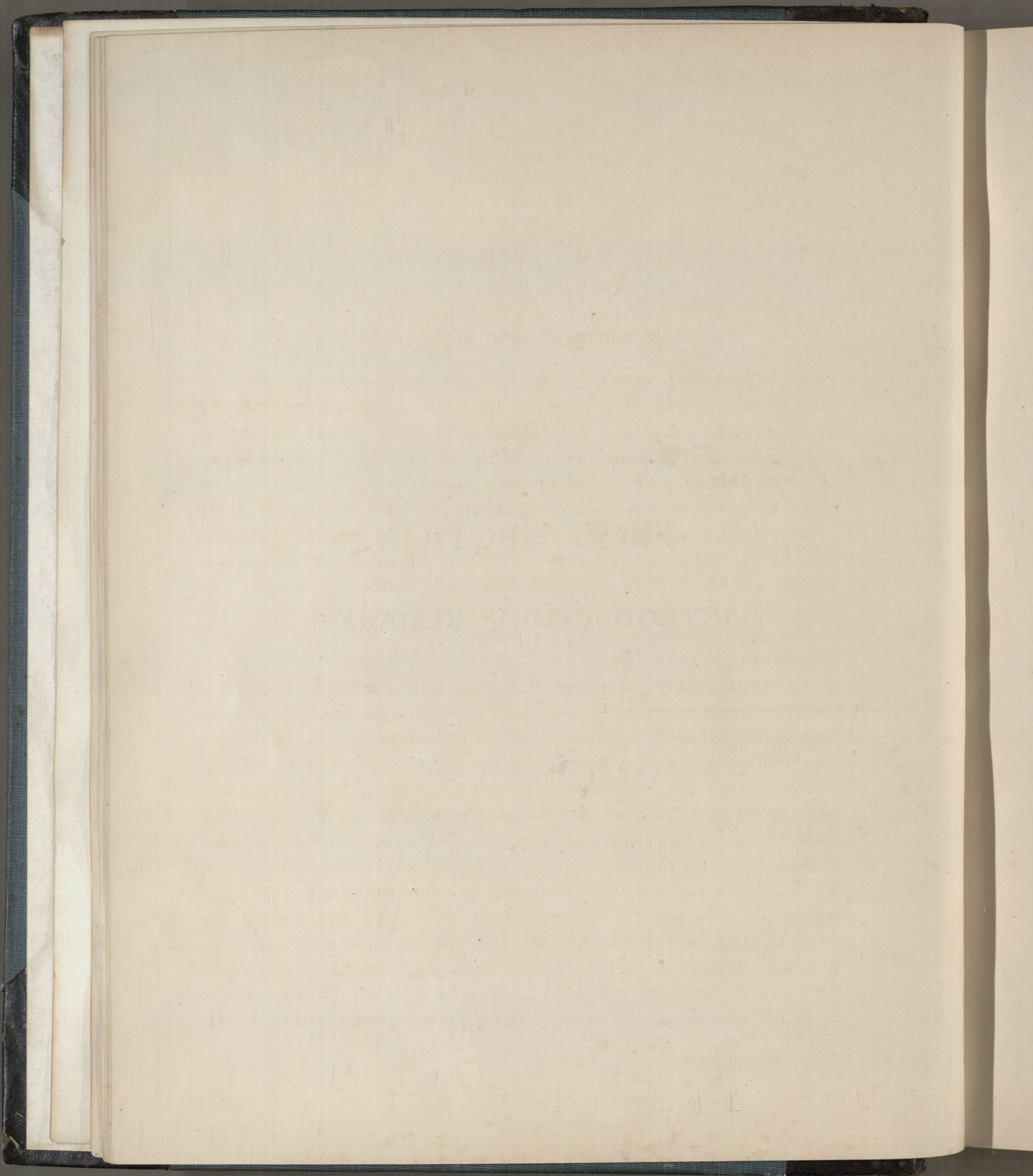


FIRST SECTION.



INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.



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It is no doubt possible to learn to talk any language without acquiring its written system. Thousands in every land speak their native tongue fluently who are entire strangers to letters. At the same time we feel, in the case of English for instance, that there is somehow a great gulf fixed between him who merely speaks by ear and the man to whom tradition reveals the whole past and history and inner life of our language through the more certain channel of the eye. We should not even allow that a foreigner really knew our language who should jot it down in some private and particular notation of his own. We expect him to learn our orthography, and in short to write English as the English write it. That our orthography is cumbrous, unscientific, self-contradictory, has nothing to do with the matter:—it exists, and not to know and practise it is to lack the better half of an English education.

Now similar considerations apply to Japanese with even greater force. To a very considerable extent the written system here *is* the language,—the language itself and the way in which the natives write it being indissolubly linked together. True, the introduction of a Romanised transliteration possesses great utility for foreign students. Many of us hoped at one time to see such a transliteration adopted by the Japanese themselves, and worked hard with that object in view. Romanisation would have served two worthy ends:—it would have vastly simplified the task of all learners, whether native or foreign, and it would have brought the mass of the Japanese people into closer relations than is now possible with the mental habits and the literature of the West. As a matter of fact, the efforts of the RŌMAJI KWAI, or “Romanisation Society,” failed completely, as did also those of the *Kana no KWAI*, a more narrowly patriotic association started with the object of substituting the exclusive use of the *Kana* syllabary for that of the Chinese character. Neither Japan’s signal victory over China in the war

of 1894-5, nor her previous abandonment of Chinese philosophical and other ideas has affected by a hair's-breadth her dependence on the Chinese written language. On the contrary, Japan continues to draw from Chinese sources almost every new term needed for the representation of European things. "Savings-bank," "promissory note," "currency reform," "current and deposit account;" "vaccination," "anesthetics," "antiseptic," "hypodermic injection;" "electoral district," "order of the day," "standing committee," "previous question;" "breechloader," "iron-clad;" "church," "bishop," "sacrament," "predestination,"—well-nigh every technical term required in every new branch of knowledge is obtained by combining two or more well-known Chinese vocables into convenient, self-explanatory compounds; and with this ever-increasing multitude of Chinese words, the empire of the Chinese ideographs becomes riveted more and more firmly as the years roll by. At the present day, the system of writing employed by the Japanese people remains essentially the same as it was a thousand years ago, namely, a mixed system founded on the Chinese ideographs, which are used partly in their full form with their proper ideographic signification, partly in abbreviated forms having phonetic values and constituting syllabaries to which the name of *Kana* has been given. The most important of these *Kana* syllabaries is the *Hiragana*. The *Katakana* is less widely known.

It seems advisable to state the case thus clearly at the outset, in order, by disembarassing students' minds of erroneous notions, to prepare them to face their real task. Some worthy folks, while compelled to allow the insufficiency of mere Romanised texts, go on clinging to the belief—shall we rather say the desperate hope?—that if they learn the *Kana* they will have done their duty, that the *Kana* is in fact the Japanese written system, that to know the *Kana* is to know how to read and write Japanese, and that either the Japanese nation will end by adopting the *Kana* as the sole and exclusive national method of writing, or that they may do so, or that they might do so, and in any case that they ought to do so, because then things would be so much simplified, and every one would be able to learn Japanese easily and live happily ever after.

Good people, you are deluding yourselves, or others are deluding you. The *Kana* does *not* suffice, the *Kana* by itself is *not* the Japanese written system, but only the least important fraction thereof. As for its imaginary future triumph over the Chinese characters, recent actual experience and all theoretical probabilities

point directly the other way. Besides which, it is not the future that practical students have to deal with, but the present. Even allowing, for the sake of argument, that foreigners imperfectly acquainted with a language are qualified to pronounce judgment on the fitness or unfitness of its written system,—even allowing this, and it is allowing more than reason herself will allow,—what then, so long as the natives continue to write on as heretofore? Anglo-Saxon students should surely—of all people in the world—be practical. Now this fiddle-faddling with the *Kana* is not practical. Not only every popular book, every important newspaper, every official notification, but every private receipt, every estimate, every play-bill, every advertisement, every letter, even every post-card sent by your cook or “boy” to his people at home, every written document of every kind connected with the life and work of the whole people of Japan, individually and collectively, has the Chinese character as its basis. It is all “Mixed Script” (*Kanamajiri*), that is, a backbone of Chinese characters with *Kana* ligaments. And do not come and tell us—as if they constituted some startling new factor about to revolutionise Japan—of booklets in *Kana* or in Roman, which you have lighted upon in some nook or corner. Such things exist,—have long existed; but they possess, for all practical purposes, about the same importance (or unimportance) as the “Fonetik Nuz,” or those English treatises on “Little Mary and her Lamb” and cognate topics which sometimes drip from the press in words of one syllable exclusively. This being the state of the case, any missionary whose attainments are limited to the *Kana* will inevitably figure as the intellectual inferior of the meanest of his flock,—a position not calculated to assist him to gain influence or respect. In the British and German Consular Services such considerations as these have been acknowledged and acted upon from the earliest days. The same apply, more or less, to all European students of the language. If they are to learn Japanese at all, why not learn it thoroughly? After all, very dull Japanese boys succeed in learning the characters perfectly. Then why should not we do so? The path though arduous, is really less so than appears at first sight, and all sorts of interesting episodes are sure to occur to engage the attention and lessen the fatigue of him who has the courage to travel along it. Recognise the difficulty, face it honestly, work hard, and you will be rewarded by a knowledge genuine so far as it goes, instead of a messy *à peu près*.

A few words to explain how and why the 2,350 Chinese characters

comprised in this manual were chosen,—why just those and not others—may be here in place. The Chinese language is said to contain over 80,000, if all rare and antiquated forms be included in the count. The celebrated “KŌKI JITEN” dictionary registers about 41,000, exclusive of duplicate forms. Dr. Wells Williams’s, which is founded on it, has over 12,000, and Giles’s over 13,000 including abbreviated forms; but the last named lexicographer remarks that a font of 6,000 suffices for the printing of a Chinese newspaper, and is moreover “an ample stock-in-trade for any scholar.” In Japan the stock-in-trade ample for a scholar is less. The European reader might be apt to think that new characters have to be invented for the representation of new foreign ideas. Such is not the case. All that is invented is *new combinations of characters*, as mentioned above, that is, new compound words. The tendency is rather to let rare characters drop out of sight, and to do new work with familiar tools. Nor is it only rare characters that are here discarded:—scant use is made of some which the Chinese employ familiarly, though it is also true that the Japanese specially patronise certain others, and have even invented a few of their own to represent words having no Chinese equivalents. These considerations mar the usefulness, so far as Japan is concerned, of certain statistics taken by foreigners in China regarding the relative frequency of the recurrence of characters,—statistics whose general utility is further gravely impaired by the fact that translations made by foreigners or under their supervision,—not genuinely native works,—were taken as the basis of enquiry. In this dilemma, the only thing to do was to look about for more trustworthy guidance on a matter of such paramount importance to practical students. Enquiry at Tōkyō printing-offices then showed the maximum number of characters employed in this country to be 9,500; but of these, over 3,000 are extremely rare, serving the needs of such writers only as affect archaic and poetical diction. The number kept on hand in all the usual varieties of size and “face” is 6,100; but this again must be regarded as a maximum, an abundantly liberal limit stretched so far only by precaution, in order to meet the multifarious requirements of commercial, legal, medical, administrative, and other technicalities, but never attained to in the practice of any one writer or even in the knowledge of the general public. Scholars carry over 4,000 characters in their heads, the general public about 3,000. One thousand characters, which the experience of forty years has proved to recur with special frequency, are kept by the type-foundries in larger quantities than the rest; but a few

additional hundreds on the boundary line run them hard in the race, and some 800 or 900 more form a needful acquisition. This gives a reduced total of about 2,350 common characters with which students *must* familiarise themselves, whether their ultimate object in learning Japanese be mission work, diplomacy, commerce, or learned research. Just these 2,350 indispensable characters are here brought before their notice, with explanations thrown in occasionally to ease the drudgery of memorising. A few—a very few—characters of a lower degree of usefulness may be distinguished by a keen eye among the number. But there is method even in this madness. Such characters are brought in because they help to explain others of greater importance,* the total result of their introduction being to lighten the learner's task. The same end is sought to be attained by varying the method of tuition, a certain number of characters being given singly, others apropos of certain subjects, such as the study of the radicals or of proper names, others again in connected texts, which might themselves—in part at least—be committed to memory, both as a lesson in characters and in Japanese style.

Now with regard to the method of using this manual. The *Section on the Grammar of the Written Language* is made necessary by the considerable differences dividing the written from the spoken speech,—differences which affect both etymology and syntax. Read this section over first, in order to obtain a general idea of the subject, and thenceforward consult it from time to time as occasion offers. You will thus be prepared to understand the Exercises attached to Sections III and IV and the Extracts from native authors given later on, which are intended to serve as practice not merely in the characters, but in that form of the Japanese language which those characters are habitually employed to transcribe.

Section III treats shortly and in a purely practical manner of the *Hiragana*. Technical discussions concerning the origin and development of that syllabary, useless to the beginner, though highly interesting and instructive to the more advanced student, are reserved for a later section. So is the *Katakana*, whose utility is far inferior. With Section IV preliminaries are left behind, and the Chinese characters are attacked.

The student is strongly urged to take all these and the succeeding sections

* For instance, the doggerel verse introduced apropos of the name of the "camellia" and other useful names of trees (Nos. 1322-6) happens to include the *hisagi*, for which there is little or no need; but in such a context it is actually easier to learn that character than not to learn it.

in the order in which they are printed,—this not only because the method of compilation followed presupposes in the reader of each section a knowledge of the contents of the preceding sections, but because the nature of the subject-matter itself is best understood and assimilated by such a course. *Experto crede.* To endeavour to swallow all the varieties of the *Kana* at one gulp will give you an intellectual indigestion:—time will be better apportioned, labour better bestowed by taking them in detachments, the most useful forms first, and mixed with the Chinese characters with which usage constantly combines them. Then again the characters. Some beginners would fain learn their rationale, plunge into radicals and phonetics and ancient forms,—into all sorts of theory in fact,—before having laid any foundation in practice. This is totally wrong, and can lead only to disappointment. Plain as it may come to appear later on, the nature of the Chinese character is too remote from anything in European experience to be clearly apprehended from mere external description. Practical acquaintance with a certain number of characters, their sounds and uses, is a necessary preliminary. Avail of *memoria technica* whenever it offers; and whenever possible, learn the characters in groups of two or three rather than singly. A plan which has been found helpful by many is to have characters written in a good bold hand on square bits of cardboard, of which a few can always be carried in the pocket or stuck up about the room.

No directions are given in this work for the technique of calligraphy, because no mere verbal directions can be of any use. The aid of a writing-master is indispensable, and it is taken for granted that both characters and *Kana* will be duly practised, native brush in hand. The pages of characters printed large are given with that object. To write the various strokes in the order prescribed by custom is a matter of vital importance, because that order has determined the nature of the abbreviations used in the cursive style.

Notwithstanding great additional trouble to the printer, it has been considered worth while to indicate throughout the volume whether the reading of each character is Chinese or Japanese. This has been effected by putting the native Japanese in Italics, the Chinese in small capitals, thus *ICHI wo kiite, jū wo shiru.* Sometimes a single word may belong half to one language, half to the other, as *ZONZURU, tesūRYŌ.* The compiler does not advise students to trouble themselves much about this matter at the outset. He only hopes that they may

be led insensibly towards sound notions of etymology. As for burdening the memory, of set purpose, with all the pronunciations of any particular character, that is very far from desirable. Take 明, for instance, No. 15 on our list. In that context it is read MEI, the two characters 明治 together forming MEIJI, a word needed every day of one's life in Japan, as it is the "year-name" of the present reign, and consequently employed every time the date is written. It would be worse than useless at first to try to remember that MEI is what is technically termed the "KAN-ON" of this character, that its "GO-ON" sound is MYŌ, and that certain contexts require it to be read *akeru*, *akiraka*, and perhaps in yet other ways. To do so would be worse than useless for two reasons. One is that time can be more profitably employed in learning something else. The other is that all really necessary additional items of knowledge concerning the character 明 will come naturally in process of time and study. An example in the first reading lesson brings to our notice the compound 明日, MYŌNICHĪ, in which 明 occurs again, and thus reminds us of the fact—already familiar from the usage of Colloquial speech—that MYŌ, not MEI, is the pronunciation to be adopted in that special case. The rarer readings can afford to wait. That is how Japanese children learn,—synthetically, not analytically,—and the results thus obtained are far superior. Theory will come in its place. The occasional theoretical items that have been sprinkled here and there, will serve the double purpose of introducing the student to Far-Eastern ideas at the same time as he imbibes the Far-Eastern words and symbols. As the Japanese proverb teaches, IK-KYO RYŌ-TOKU, "One effort and two gettings," or, as we say in English, "Killing two birds with a stone:"—that is the surest way to learn, the pleasantest, and also the most profitable. The story forming Section VI, and the various extracts forming Sections IX and X, will fulfil a similar purpose. Section VI gives a peep into the life of Old Japan described in the most familiar phraseology. The pieces in Sections IX and X are all quite modern. The choice of them has been governed partly by ease of style and usefulness of the characters occurring in them, due regard being had to variety. It has also been thought best to include such pieces only as treated of subjects more or less permanently interesting, which the lapse of a few years cannot render antiquated even in this swiftly changing land. Fires and official banquets, typhoons and elections are among the evils to which Japanese society will remain subject.

Country trips will continue to be taken, comparisons between China and Japan will continue to be instituted, and questions of morality to be discussed. Hotels will always be advertised, patent medicines puffed, books reviewed, rewards offered for lost articles, and chit-chat of much the same tenour will fill the postman's bag. The letters and post-cards given in Section XII have all been either actually received or sent, the names only being sometimes changed. They are not imaginary productions, such as "Ready Letter-writers," both in and out of Japan, are apt to deal in. The student's native teacher may not improbably despise some of them as trivial or *okashii*. In the compiler's opinion such little leaves, however humble, torn from the page of real life are more likely to prove useful than high-flown effusions about the New Year, and the cherry-blossom, and the virtues of ancient heroes.

In conclusion, as some guide to those who might wish to divide up the contents of this manual into various "standards," the compiler would suggest that the first standard should include Sections II—V, the second Sections II—IX (for the earlier portions must never on any account be let drop), and the third the whole book. Ability to read the cursive texts in Section XII might, however, be generally excused, or considered as an extra feat for which special marks would be given. A similar consideration applies even more strongly to the list of 1,600 extra characters printed at the end of Section XI, which do not properly form part of the present work, but are rather to be regarded as a finger-post indicating the path to those who sigh for more worlds to conquer.
