

Title: The Americans in Japan: an abridgement of the Government narrative of the U. S. Expedition to Japan, under Commodore Perry.

Author: Tomes, Robert, 1817-1882.

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After the negotiations had terminated, the Commodore insisted upon the privilege being granted to his officers of visiting the neighborhood. This was accorded, but under severe restrictions, limiting the visits of the Americans to within certain fixed limits, and the Japanese people were so strictly watched on these occasions by the police and spies, that they did not dare to speak with, and hardly to look at, the strangers.

In obtaining water and other supplies, in the conveyance of the presents back and fro, and putting up the telegraph, and arranging the miniature railroad, the Americans, however, were necessarily brought in contact with the natives. The common people always exhibited, on these occasions, a very friendly disposition toward their visitors ; and although they were generally reserved about themselves and their country, as if constrained by fear of their superiors, they exhibited an intense curiosity to know all about the United States. It was difficult to satisfy their exceeding inquisitiveness, which seemed to be particularly directed toward the dress, every article of which they were desirous of handling and finding out the English name by which it was called. A button excited the highest interest, and the present of one was esteemed an immense favor. Their curiosity about the woollen clothing and the buttons of the Americans may be accounted for from the fact of the Japanese not having either.

When visiting the ships, the mandarins and their attendants were never at rest; but went about peering into every nook and corner, peeping into the muzzles of the guns, examining curiously the small-arms, handling the ropes, measuring the boats, looking eagerly into the engine-room, and watching every movement of the engineers and workmen as they busily moved in and about the gigantic machinery of the steamers. They were not contented with merely observing with their eyes, but were constantly taking out their writing materials, their mulberry- bark paper, and their India ink and hair pencils, which they always earned in a pocket within the left breast of their loose robes, and making notes and sketches.

The Japanese had all apparently a strong pictorial taste, and looked with great delight upon the engravings and pictures which were shown them, but their own performances appeared exceedingly rude and inartistic. Every man, however, seemed anxious to try his skill at drawing, and they were constantly taking the portraits of the Americans, and sketches of the various

articles that appeared curious to them, with a result, which, however satisfactory it might have been to the artists, (and it must be conceded they exhibited no little exultation,) was far from showing any encouraging advance in art. The Japanese are, undoubtedly, like the Chinese, a very imitative, adaptative, and compliant people; and in these characteristics may be discovered a promise of the comparatively easy introduction of foreign customs and habits, if not of the nobler principles and better life of a higher civilization.