

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### RECENT FICTION.

**THE LOYAL RONINS.** From the Japanese. By SHIUCHIRO SAITO and EDWARD GREY. Illustrated by KEI-SAI YEI-SEN, of Yeddo. New-York: G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS. 1880.

A newspaper of Paris during the past summer has been issuing in installments a Japanese tale with Japanese illustrations. We have not got so far as that in America or England, but already the number of translations in book form from the Japanese is becoming respectable. The story of the Forty-seven Ronins has been given more than once in English print, but never before with such fullness or with so strong a smack of the original soil. Mr. Edward Grey, it appears, is a proficient in the Japanese language and art; he is associated with Mr. Shiuchiro Saito, a young man who received his education in the United States, and goes back to his country well pleased with his instruction and the people among whom he received it. A third collaborator is a Japanese artist of Yeddo, who rejoices in the name of Kei-sai Yei-sen. The last named is no mean draughtsman, following, of course, the methods and mannerisms of the art of Japan. The perspective looks Westernized, yet is still somewhat strange to our prejudices. The arms of the Ronins, the shoulders and legs of coolies, assume exaggerated action. The pictures as they came from Japan were in two pieces; the American editor thought it necessary to remedy this by joining them together and touching the edges; apparently they were then photographed on the block. They are printed on tinted paper in strong black ink.

The peculiarity of this translation is its extreme literalness. All the names of the actors are translated into their English equivalents, many words like Ronin, samurai, &c., which have no short English equivalent, are left as they are, thus:

"After a while the Master of Ceremonies excused Lord Tortoise-well, who was permitted to retire to the reception-hall. Then, addressing the other noble more contemptuously than before, he said: 'How exceedingly clumsy you are to-day. One would think you a countryman, ignorant of the manners of Yeddo.'"

"At this provocation Lord Morning-field rose, and, clutching the hilt of his sword, cried, 'Defend yourself, Sir Kira.'"

The adjoining picture of this scene expresses very ably the characters of the two minor nobles; Sir Kira has a hateful, vindictive, and cowardly face; that of the smooth-shaven Lord Morning-field is resolute and indignant. It need hardly be said that the story is one of the most popular of Japan, and has been received with applause in Europe, not only on its intrinsic merits as a tale of varied adventure, but as thoroughly typical of this phase of feudality as it appeared in the extreme Orient, the same in principle with that which obtained in the West, but clothed in very different manners. Perhaps many readers will prefer the less literal, shorter, more easy-going versions of the story, but there is something very piquant in the flavor of so close a translation as this. One loses smoothness of diction, concentration, a steady flow of plot, but, on the other hand, there is always the advantage of having no other writer's personality between us and the author. He was, we are told, Tamenaga, "the Charles Dickens of modern Japan." The American editor proposes, should the public look with favor on his initial volume, to make further translations from Tamenaga, as well as from Bakin, "the Sir Walter Scott of the Japanese literary world." It is pretty evident that Mr. Grey has given himself a very long tether in his translation; he lets us have all, whether it relates to the central story or not. Should other volumes appear, the likelihood is that the series will become prosy by too much irrelevant matter. The author's preface has plenty of "local color." For instance: "During the long winter evenings of my childhood, when the lamp burned dimly in the paper lantern, and but partly revealed the pictures on the screens, I often sat by the fire-bowl and listened with awed face to my honored mother, who, to compensate me for the gloom of the apartment, would relate stories of the Forty-seven Ronins, and thus illuminate my soul with the light of loyalty."

The inclination is to consider such stories merely as fairy or nursery tales. Such, however, would be a serious mistake. Their child-like quality comes from a peculiarity in the national character. The story at bottom is one of bloodshed, of heroic devotion to an idea, of faithfulness to masters pushed to a Quixotic extreme.

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資料 2 : The Loyal Ronins 書評