

JAPANESE PLAYS
AND PLAYFELLOWS

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BY
OSMAN EDWARDS

WITH TWELVE COLOURED PLATES BY
JAPANESE ARTISTS

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LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1901

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TO
YAKUMO KOIZUMI
AND
LAFCADIO HEARN
POET AND FRIEND
WITH
ADMIRING GRATITUDE

PREFACE

I do not pretend to compete in the crowded field of Japanese sociology with those who have lived more than six months or less than six weeks in the country. My own stay was limited to half a year. I had, of course, studied the language with native teachers and devoured the records of foreign travellers. I concluded that theatrical matters had been less fully described than any other: to them, accordingly, I devoted most attention. But there were other themes on which I had been insufficiently informed. Impersonal essays are, therefore, supplemented by personal reminiscences, for which I claim indulgence. If the first now seem to me too short, the second may seem to others too long. Yet I have tried only to select incidents and characteristics which differ strikingly from Western ways.

Austere critics will assuredly resent the excess of incense burned in these pages in honour of the musumé. But, whether she and they like it or not, she continues to summarise in her dainty little person much of her country's magic: its picturesqueness, its kindness, its politeness. On certain symptoms of anti-foreign feeling I have dwelt at some length, because the obvious witchery of Japan so often results in the suppression of unpleasant