

337
No. 211, East 14th Street, New York City, U. S. A.
November 24th, 1888.

Your Excellency.

I had the great pleasure of receiving the letter written by Mr. Kato, at your suggestion, for which I am extremely obliged to you, and also to Mr. Kato for his clear and effective manner of conveying your views. At the time the letter reached me, I was about removing from Hartford, Connecticut, to New York City — it having been decided by the physicians that my wretched health required constant treatment by more skillful experts than could be found in the smaller town. I am now settled in this new dwelling, and one advantage in the change will be that I can put myself into more immediate communication with the public press, on any occasion when service can be rendered to Japan. An example of this occurred last week, — not a very important one, but of some interest to those who are watchful of Japan's reputation in Eastern international politics. News was received here, that Mr. Denny had been required by Li Hung Chang to give up his office in Korea. In the general ignorance of Eastern affairs, a great many misunderstandings arose. Some of the newspapers made the absurd mistake of supposing that Denny was the Minister of the United States in Korea and that Li Hung Chang was the Prime Minister of that little kingdom. In the midst of the confusion on the subject, I asked to have a statement published in the New York Tribune, and an "interview" appeared four days ago, in which I endeavored to represent accurately the position which Japan holds in the diplomacy of Japan, Korea and China. The incident of Denny's removal was a trifle, it appeared to me, but it afforded the opportunity of showing the true condition of intercourse between the three nations, and I was glad to take advantage of it. I have the honor to inclose a copy of the article, which may possibly be worth your attention.

Your Excellency is doubtless interested in the result of the recent Presidential election, to the extent that it will certainly have some effect upon the diplomatic relations of Japan and the United States. If Mr. Cleveland had been re-elected, the present Envoy, Mr. Hubbard, would probably have continued to represent

this country at Tokio for four additional years. But as Mr. Harrison is chosen President, Mr. Hubbard will resign, or be recalled, soon after the 4th of next March. On broad principles, I strongly believe that the change will be advantageous to Japan. The theories of the Democratic Party are not in accordance with the ideas which should control or assist the development of Japan, and the principles of the Republican Party are more directly in harmony with those upon which the progress and welfare of Japan depend. That is my deep conviction, speaking not so much as an American, as one who is profoundly concerned in the advancement of Japan. But it does not follow, I regret to say, that the return of the Republicans will certainly and positively be of immediate benefit to Japan. Accident has more to do with political operations than high principle or good intention. Of course it is now impossible to form the slightest opinion as to who will be sent to Japan. In some degree it depends upon who will be Secretary of State, and nobody knows who will occupy that post. Mr. Harrison is a very reserved man, and although nearly a month will pass before this letter reaches you, I should not be surprised if even then it were still unknown who will be the chief of his Cabinet. It is generally believed that Mr. Blaine can have the post, if he desires it; but his health is bad, and he may not wish to engage in such active work. I am awaiting the decision with great eagerness. Among the several candidates, there are some whom I personally know very well; others with whom I can freely communicate, although I do not know them; and still others who will listen to what I may say with respect to Eastern affairs. On the other side, there are some whom I might not be able to reach or influence in any way. My strong hope is that one of my friends will become Secretary of State, so that I can express to him my convictions as to the propriety and expediency of entrusting the Japanese Legation to a man of the best ability, of honorable feeling, and of generous and sympathetic nature. I should wish to see a man of Mr. Bingham's stamp sent to Tokio; - but a younger man than Mr. Bingham, and one who is free from certain weaknesses which impaired Bingham's usefulness. I may inform Your Excellency, confidentially,

that a number of New York and Western politicians (particularly a group from Illinois) have laid their plans to get a gentleman named Denbow appointed Minister to Japan. I have met Mr. Denbow, but am not intimately acquainted with him. He was formerly a journalist, in New York and in Chicago, and he is the author of a remarkably able book on Political Economy, in which he advocates Protection in the most forcible manner. This gentleman has been spoken of for the office of ~~Assistant~~ Secretary of the Treasury, under the new administration; but he prefers a foreign mission, and his inclination is for Asia. Some of his supporters wish him to go to China; but if he is really a first class man, I shall take pains to prove to him that Japan is the proper place for a man of intellect and ability. But all this is very premature. Everything is in a state of absolute uncertainty, and I give this news to Your Excellency, simply because it is trustworthy, as far as it goes, and because even the shadowy prospects of the future have a certain interest when they are connected with Japan.

I have not yet been fortunate enough to see your representative, Mr. Mutton, but I expect to have a visit from him during this month. While I was in Hartford it was probably difficult for him to reach me, but now that I am in New York he can find me without inconvenience. I have had a few communications with members of the Japanese Consulate in New York, with the purpose of discovering whether it might be possible to open new channels of trade between Japan and this country. I have always held the opinion that certain lines of business could be prosperously established, on a substantial, if not a very magnificent scale; and the inquiries I have made have been very intelligently answered by a young man named Nakagawa, who seems to have adopted a course of action which I believe the consular officers in general might judiciously follow. He goes about among the New York merchants, and learns in what directions it would apparently be possible to introduce Japanese products, and investigates with regard to the chances of supplying Japanese

wares, or natural products, in branches of commerce which are now filled from European sources. Some of his discoveries have interested me a good deal, and I hope that all of the consular agents are industrious and enterprising in the same way. I cannot doubt that, by careful arrangement, a good market might be found for many Japanese articles. I was talking a few days ago with one of the large merchants in household provisions, and he told me that his house would willingly take a large consignment of Sardines, if the Japanese would prepare them carefully. The sardines of Japan are fully equal to those of the Mediterranean, and they could be supplied at much less cost. This merchant said the same thing about salmon and other fish; and also vegetables. I believe that a fine trade could also be built up with porcelain ware, — not the delicate, fanciful ware, but the common, cheap kind, like the ordinary Nagoya ware. There are great possibilities in exports from Japan, and I am constantly surprised to see how slowly the trade progresses. There is one industry in which ~~large~~ large fortunes could be made, with a good capital for starting; and that is the preparing of goat skins, for gloves, etc., from the Bonin Islands. But I fear I am speaking of matters which Your Excellency understands far better than I do. I am only an outside observer, keenly anxious to see everything done for the improvement of Japan's material condition; while Your Excellency has studied these subjects with close observation, and a clearer insight into all the circumstances, than I could ever obtain. My excuse for bringing them forward is, that I am desirous to witness a complete change in the trade reports, — a list of exports twice as large as that of imports, and a growth of domestic production that may reduce to the lowest limit the expenditure for foreign goods.

Returning for one moment to the Korean question, I presume Your Excellency has been informed that the poor Koreans who constitute the Legation in Washington are kept in great perplexity and anxiety by the action of the Chinese officials. The Koreans scarcely dare to claim the

usual diplomatic recognition, and the Chinese do not hesitate to declare that it is in their power to abolish the Legation at any moment, if they desire to. The head of the Korean Legation left Washington at the beginning of this week, to ^{go back} return to his country; and the Chinese say that he will not return, and that little more will ever be heard of a Korean mission in this part of the world. But we all know how arrogant and insolent the Chinese are, whenever they dare to be so.

Some very good letters from Japan have been sent to New York papers by a Mr. Carpenter. A description of Japanese courts and prisons is especially valuable, as it effectively contradicts the wild stories told by Baba Tatsui, several months ago. Poor Baba must have been crazy. He died last month, in Philadelphia.

It will perhaps be of some interest to Your Excellency to learn that Governor Sir John Pope Hennessy, who was bitterly persecuted in England, chiefly on account of his sympathy for Eastern communities and governments, has completely triumphed over his enemies. The London Times, which assailed him most maliciously, has been compelled to apologize, and to withdraw all its offensive accusations, and Hennessy now stands in a better position than ever before.

I now take leave of Your Excellency, with best wishes and sincerest regards.

Your Obedient Servant.

E. H. House

To His Excellency

Count Okuma Shigenobu.

M. J. J. M. Minister for Foreign Affairs.