

The first Japanese book to reach the United States

Peter Kornicki
EAJRS, Sofia
19 September 2019

Japanese books in the USA

Yale accessioned two Japanese woodblock-printed books in 1868 and began collecting Japanese books in the early 1870s.

Ellen H. Hammond, “A history of the East Asia Library at Yale University,” in Peter X. Zhou, ed., *Collecting Asia: East Asian libraries in North America, 1868-2008* (Ann Arbor MI: The Association for Asian Studies, 2010): 3-20.

Were these the first Japanese books in the USA? Actually, no...

We need to go further back than 1868 and take another look at the Perry Expedition.

Ikoku ochibugusa 異国
落穂草

亞黑利加國王ヨリ

一百五拾里鏡	一ツ	一銘	酒	十瓶
一薰氣車	一ツ	一藥種類		十瓶
一バツテイラ	二艘	一大筒		六瓶
一小長持	一棹	一繪圖類		數々
一異鳥	一羽	一金銀銅鉄		類多
一書物	數品	一雷言前知		寄品
一銘茶	五拾			

右十四品此度上陸

The Perry Expedition as shopping trip...

- ‘Apart from the bathing scenes, there was enough in the popular literature, with its obscene pictorial illustrations, to prove a licentiousness of taste and practice among a certain class of the population, that was not only disgustingly intrusive, but disgracefully indicative of foul corruption.’ [Shimoda]
- ‘A lively and in some cases rather a furious desire to purchase Japanese curios and works of art broke out among the officers of the squadron, some of whom had to be disciplined for brutal conduct toward the shopkeepers before the trade could be put upon a conventional basis of cash payment for good received.’ [Hakodate]

Ala. by "Cohaverio"
Cohaverio, a trader
main avenue - Hakodadi
near the Custom house



孟子卷之三

公孫丑章句上

凡九章

朱熹集註

公孫丑問曰夫子當路於齊管仲晏子

之功可復許乎

懷夫又反公孫丑孟子弟子齊人也當路居要地也管仲齊大夫名夷吾相桓公霸諸侯許猶期也孟子未嘗得政丑蓋設辭以問也

孟子曰子誠齊人也知管仲晏子而已矣

齊人但知其國有二子而已不復知有聖賢之事

或問乎曾西曰吾子與子路孰賢曾西定

然曰吾先子之所畏也曰然則吾子與管

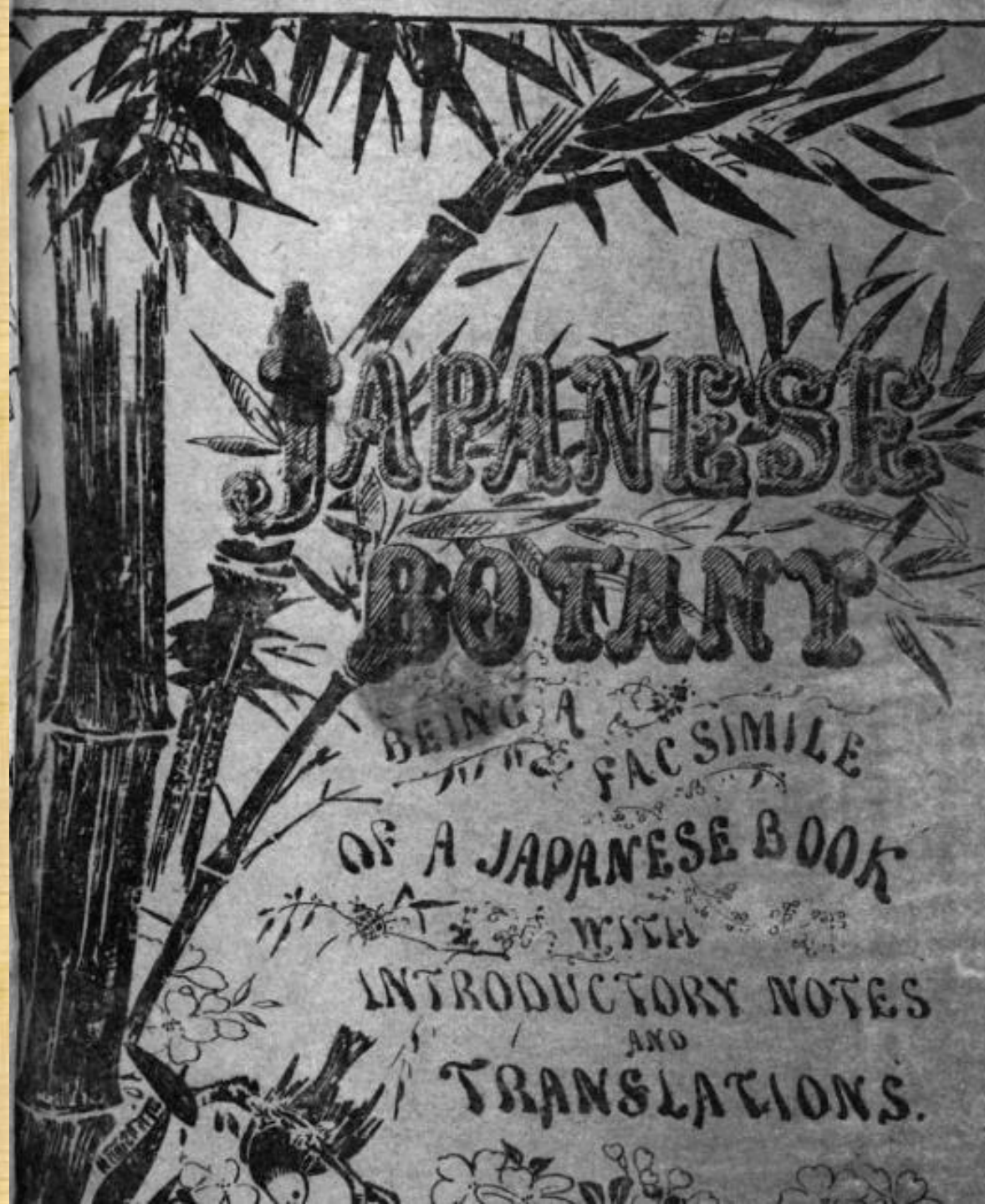
Thomas O'Dudley
U.S.S. Powhatan
Hakodadi Japan
May 1854

The temples of Mount Tenmoya
or the Camel neck
Vol 2

ADDITIONS
TO THE
LIBRARY AND CABINET
OF THE
AMERICAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY,
August, 1854—August, 1855.

By Dr. J. Wilson, Jr., U. S. N.
Fourteen small books printed in Japan.







Who was Wilson?

Precise address but
no date

Why is half the boat
missing?

A
Monthly List
OF
NEW BOOKS PUBLISHED IN GREAT BRITAIN,

GHENT,
Rue des Champs, 80.

SOLD BY
MR. C. MUQUARDT,
Place Royale, N° 11, près du Parc, à Bruxelles.

LEIPZIG,
3 Rue Royale.

1. NEW WORKS and NEW EDITIONS published during SEPTEMBER.

634

MR. C. MUQUARDT'S MONTHLY LIST.

HUGHES.—Reading Lessons—Advanced Series, Second Book. Edited by Edward Hughes, Head Master of the Royal-Naval Lower School, Greenwich Hospital. 12mo. with numerous illustrations, pp. 439, cl. 3s. 6d.

HUMPHREY.—Manual of Greek and Latin Prose Composition; specially designed to illustrate the difference of Idiom between those Languages and the English. By E. R. Humphreys, LL.D. 12mo. pp. 186, cl. 3s. 6d.

JACKSON.—The Sinfulness of Little Sins: a Course of Sermons preached in Lent. By John Jackson, D.D. 9th edit. fcp. cloth 3s. 6d.

JAMAICA (Courts of), and their Jurisdiction. By an Island Solicitor. Part 1, The Administration of Criminal Justice. 8vo. pp. 614. 2s.

JAPANESE BOTANY: being a Facsimile of a Japanese Book; with Introductory Notes and Translation. 4to. (Philadelphia), boards 2s.

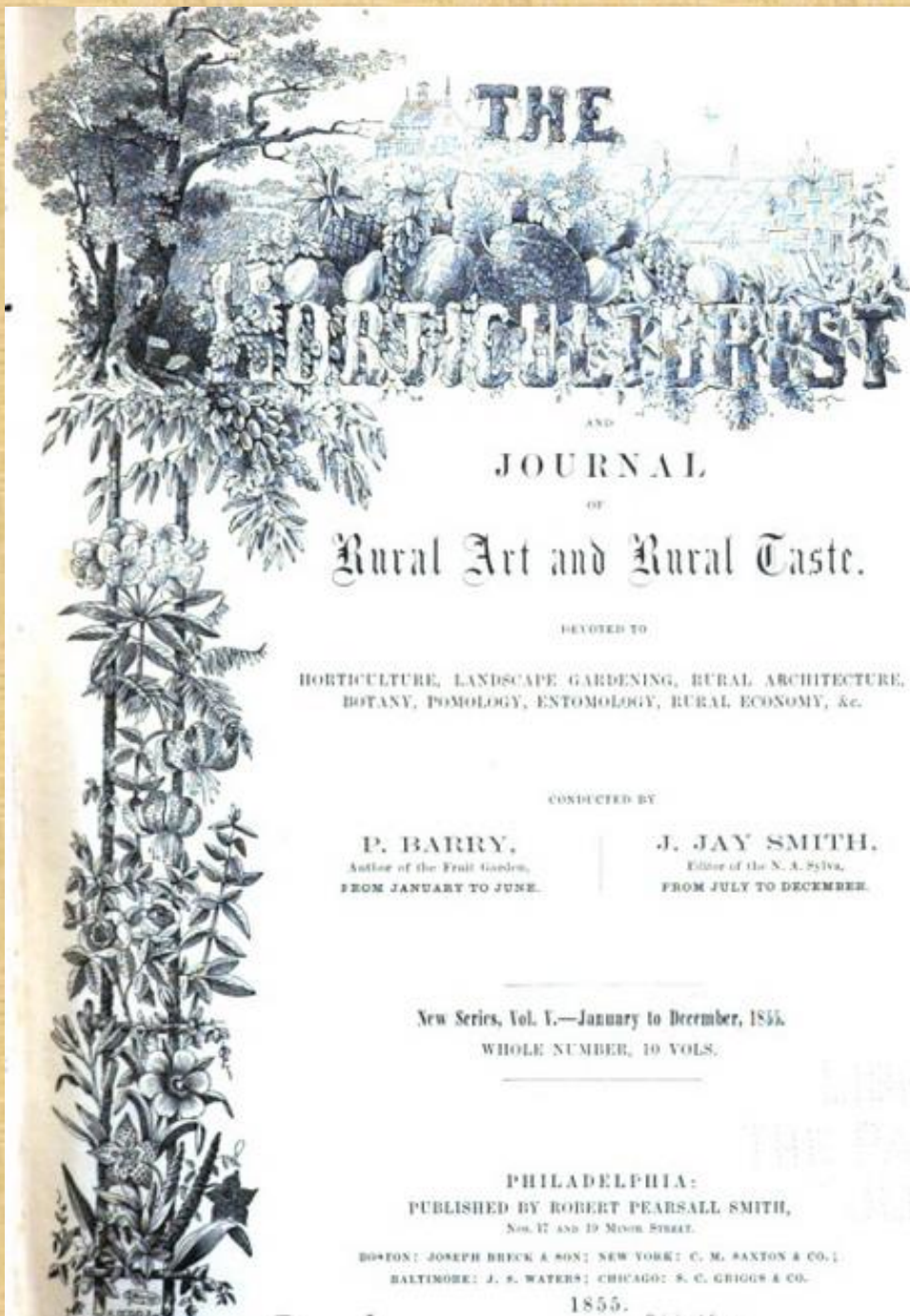
RAFTER.—Percy Blake; or, the Young Rifleman. By Capt. Rafter. 3 vols. post 8vo. pp. 950, cloth. 31s. 6d.

RECOLLECTIONS of Russia during Thirty-three Years' Residence. By a German Nobleman. Revised and translated by Lascelles Wrexall. 12mo. cloth (Constable's Miscellany, Vol. 8) 3s. 6d.

REED.—Lectures on English History, from Chaucer to Tennyson. By Henry Reed. 2d edit. 12mo. pp. 411, cloth 6s. 6d.

ROBERTS.—Indian Exchange Tables: in Two Parts. Part 1, Sterling Money into East India Company's Currency. Part 2, East India Company's Currency into Sterling, calculated from 1s. 8d. to 2s. 4d. per Rupee, progressing by Rights of a Penny. By J. H. Roberts. 2d edition, 8vo. pp. 133, cloth 10s. 6d.

ROBERTSON.—Sermons preached at Trinity Chapel, Brighton. By the late



Reviews.

Japanese Botany; being a fac-simile of a Japanese Book, with introductory notes and translations. Philadelphia: Published by J. B. Lippincott & Co. \$1.25.

When the Japan expedition was first proposed, no class of our fellow citizens felt a greater interest in its success, apart from national considerations, than did we as horticulturists. Japan had been so long something of a sealed book, that our curiosity was excited at the prospect of a peep at the inside. By the prying of some enterprising Dutch botanists we had already been delighted with a Paulownia, some fine Clematises Hydrangeas, and many other acquisitions; we hoped that our friend Perry, and others of his command, would be able to minister still to our desires.

Nor have we been altogether disappointed. Many opportunities did not occur to them, but the few that did were eagerly made available, and every thing that could throw any light on the Horticulture or Botany of Japan, was carefully preserved and brought to us.

The present book we owe to the energy of Dr. Wilson of the expedition; and while it is an interesting contribution to the flora of Japan, it is at the same time a genuine literary curiosity. The work is small quarto, and even including the binding, exactly an imitation of the original copy. Forty papers are devoted to the drawings, which we are surprised to find much superior as artistic productions to what we were led to believe the Japanese capable of. Amongst the figures are several quite new to us, especially two Caryophyllaceous plants, allied to the well known Chinese Pink, (of which also a drawing is given,) and which appears to be very beautiful. Our old friends *Onis Chinensis*, and *Silium speciosum*, with other stranger forms allied to them, we readily recognize. One plate is occupied with a bunch of Chrysanthemums, representing pretty well such specimens as were in cultivation with us twenty years ago. Could we send our Japan brethren a collection of their favorite flowers, as modern French florists have improved them, they would scarcely see in them the same species.

The work has other interesting features besides these we have specified. The editor has translated the characters, and placed the interpretations side by side with the inscriptions, thus affording an insight into the nature and construction of their language.

We have no doubt that all interested in Japanese curiosities, especially floral and botanical ones, will agree with us in wishing the publishers a remunerative sale for their spirit in getting up this treat for us.

Dr Joseph Wilson (1816-1887)
Retired as Surgeon Captain, US Navy = 海軍大佐

Saturday, June 25th.—Most of the day was spent on board the “Supply” where I went in the morning to go with Dr. Wilson and examine coral beds, but found the tide so high that we had to wait till afternoon. On reaching the coral reefs we had some difficulty in keeping the boat easy, but by the men getting overboard many pretty specimens were obtained of madrepores and other sorts, with two kinds of echinus.

For the following note on the bird now before us and the preceding species, we are indebted to the kindness of **Joseph Wilson, jr., M. D.**, of the United States Navy, who was attached as surgeon to the squadron of the expedition :

“ Our acquaintance with the pheasants of Japan began soon after our arrival at Simoda, or about the middle of April, 1854. A Japanese brought to the landing-place a young bird, which, with the dark tips on his downy covering and his frequently repeated *peet-peet*, might have been mistaken for a young turkey, but for his diminutive size. This interesting little fellow had been obtained by hatching an egg of a wild pheasant, obtained in the hills, under a domestic fowl.

Commodore M. C. Perry
From your ob[edien]t
Joseph Wilson Jr. M.D.
U.S. Navy

The New York Historical
Society copy of *Japanese
botany* (acquired in 1867):
'Commodore M. C. Perry
From your ob[edien]t
ser[van]t, Joseph Wilson
Jr. M.D., U.S.Navy'

Ehon ōshukubai

画本鶯宿梅

Tachibana no Morikuni

Published in 1739.

Volume 5 only.

Note British Museum
acquisition date and
added page numbers.

Anastatic printing

畫本鶯宿梅卷之五

目錄

草花之部

蒲公英 5 15

蕨 0 47

弥重棣棠 16 50

鬼薔 13 52

紫蘭 15 56

紫藤 17

風車 19

29 NO 55

牡丹 6 46

碎米薔 12 51

土筆 9 49 50

紫羅蘭花 14 53

海老根草 16 58

纏枝牡丹 18

鉄線花 20

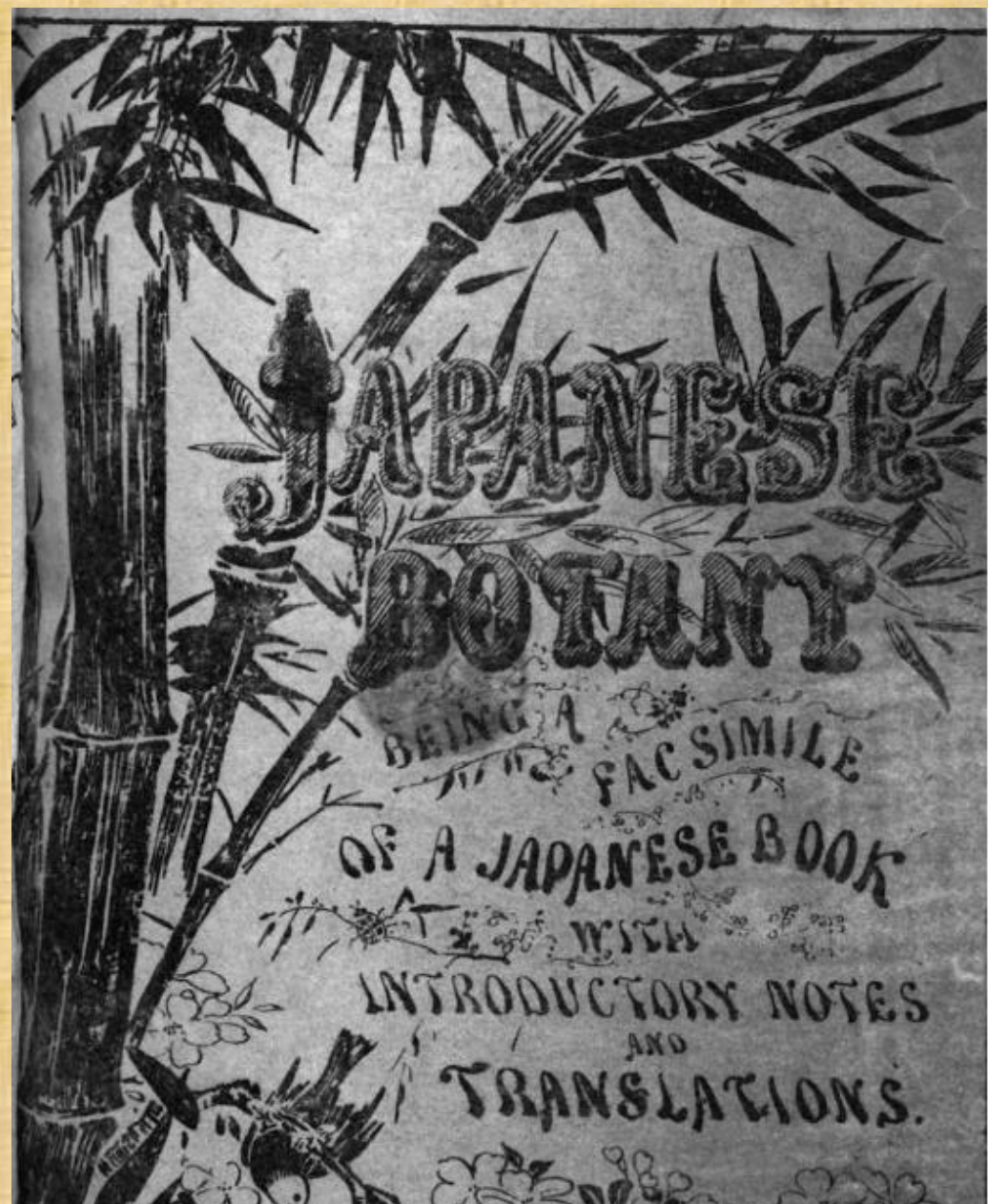


Careful examination shows that it is a composite picture with elements taken from book 4 of *Ehon ōshukubai* ...









蒲公英

葉の形は似たり。花は苦菜の如し。花は白く。花の二重なる。金
 錢花の如し。花は白く。葉は大きく。花は正月下旬。三月
 下旬まで花あり。花凋で白毛と出さ。ゆるぎなき。



4. THE JAPANESE ALPHABET.

Hirakana.	Katakana.	Names of Letters.	Hirakana.	Katakana.	Names of Letters.	Hirakana.	Katakana.	Names of Letters.
い	イ	i	え	エ	re	お	オ	ko
ろ	ロ	ro	そ	ソ	so	け	ケ	e
は	ハ	ha	つ	ツ	tsu	て	テ	te
に	ニ	ni	ね	ネ	ne	あ	ア	a
ほ	ホ	ho	な	ナ	na	さ	サ	sa
へ	ヘ	he	ら	ラ	ra	き	キ	ki
と	ト	to	む	ム	mu	ゆ	ユ	yu
ち	チ	tsi	う	ウ	wu	め	メ	me
り	リ	ri	わ	ワ	wi	み	ミ	mi
ぬ	ヌ	nu	の	ノ	no	し	シ	shi
る	ル	ru	お	オ	o	え	エ	ye
を	ヲ	wo	く	ク	ku	ひ	ヒ	hi
わ	ワ	wa	や	ヤ	ya	も	モ	mo
か	カ	ka	ま	マ	ma	せ	セ	se
よ	ヨ	yo	け	ケ	ke	そ	ソ	su
た	タ	ta	ふ	フ	fu	ん	ン	n

い

え

ろ

は

に

Digitized by Google

5. In the attempt to represent the Japanese syllables by Roman letters, these last are considered as possessing the phonetic value which they generally have in European languages. Though each vowel has two sounds, Europeans will generally pronounce them correctly.

a is pronounced as in cart or can.

i is pronounced as in machine or pin.

u is pronounced as in tube, or as aeiou and u, in collar, pillar, corner, father, third, stir, shadow, mayor, tub, plunge, pluck, murder, &c.

e is pronounced as in grey or hen.

o is pronounced as in no or song.

6. The Japanese letters are each an entire syllable, except the last. They are often, for convenience, arranged as in the following table. Twenty-five additional syllables are formed by || じ = *nigori* dotting them.

	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
1	ワ	ヲ	ヤ	マ	バ	ハ	ナ	タ	カ	サ	シ	セ	ソ	コ	ア	1
2	イ	リ	井	ミ	ビ	ヒ	ニ	チ	ジ	シ	ギ	キ	イ	2		2
3	ウ	ル	ユ	ム	フ	ブ	ヌ	ツ	ズ	ス	ク	グ	ウ	3		3
4	エ	レ	エ	メ	ペ	ベ	ヘ	テ	デ	ゼ	ケ	ゲ	エ	4		4
5	オ	ロ	ヨ	モ	ポ	ホ	ノ	ド	ト	ゾ	ゴ	コ	ヲ	5		5
1	wa	ra	ya	ma	pa	ba	ha	na	da	ta	za	sa	ga	ka	a	1
2	i	ri	yi	mi	pi	bi	hi	ni	dsi	tsi	zhi	shi	ghi	ki	i	2
3	wu	ru	yu	mu	pu	bu	fu	nu	dsu	tsu	zu	su	gu	ku	wu	3
4	e	re	ye	me	pe	be	he	ne	de	te	ze	se	ghe	ke	e	4
5	o	ro	yo	mo	po	bo	ho	no	do	to	zo	so	go	ko	wo	5

The letters of the first, ninth, thirteenth, and fifteenth vertical lines, are scarcely more than simple vowel sounds, and are often substituted for each other. Those of the tenth and twelfth are thus substituted for each other; /, ba

Daily National Intelligencer (Washington DC)
27 August 1855

Was Joseph Wilson the first
American to learn Japanese?
And how did he manage to
learn so much in so little time?

This contribution in aid of the efforts now making by several learned Orientalists to open up to us a knowledge of the language and literature of Japan is from Dr. Jos. WILSON, jr., of the United States Navy, who was attached to the recent expedition to Japan. While at Simoda he busied himself in procuring such native books as it was possible to obtain ; and by the diligent study of these on the voyage homeward and since he has been enabled to prepare the translations that accompany the book. It is to be hoped that a sufficient number of copies will be sold to at least repay his pecuniary outlay and enable him to produce other works of a like useful and interesting character which he has in preparation.

The sounds ^{usually} uttered by children in their first attempts at speech, are used in all languages to indicate for the most part, nearly the same objects, and may hence be mentioned among the Physiological coincidences of language. For instance: —

- {English} ma, mama, mother, pa, father, parent, sister &c.
Tahitian — pa, father; patea, mother; metua, parent.
Feejee — tama, father; lina, mother; matua, parent; ^{tatti, sister;} mea, nurse.
Japan — tsitsi, father; fafa, baba, mother; tsi, nupa, nurse.
Corea — ^아pi, father; ^어mi, mother; ^할tsobo, grand mother.
Hebrew — ab, father; ame, mother,
Latin — pater, father; mater, mother;

Samuel Wells Williams (1812-1884)

- American missionary in Canton from 1833.
- Supervised the printing press of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Macao.
- Became acquainted with Japanese castaways in Canton
- Sailed to Japan in 1837 aboard the *Morrison*
- In 1840 published translation of *Kodō zuroku* 鼓銅図録
- In 1851 published article on Japanese syllabaries
- In 1853 acts as Commodore Perry's interpreter
- From 1860 to 1876, US Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing
- Returned to USA in 1877 and became first professor of Chinese at Yale

ART. IV. *Ko Dou Dzu Roku*, or, *A Memoir on Smelting Copper, illustrated with plates.* Small folio, pp. 20. Translated from the original Japanese.

JAPAN, and all that pertains to it, has been regarded by us with peculiar interest ever since the commencement of our work. Nearly all the volumes of the Repository contain articles relating to the country, or its inhabitants: and we wish they had been more in number, and better in quality. When speaking or writing about the Japanese or Chinese, a feeling of half reverence for their antiquity, and somewhat of wonder at their integrity as nations, is always apt to tinge one's thoughts; while at the same time we are half disposed to ridicule their assumptions of these same things, and declare that they are unworthy of the least attention. We are at once both credulous and distrustful, like one who hears a very strange story from a dear friend. However, we hope and trust that the days of our ignorance are passing away, and that ere long we shall be better known by them and they by us.

The work whose name, standing at the top of the page, has unwittingly molded our thoughts, long lay on our shelf an object of curious rarity. The pictures told the general character of the work, but beyond them all was unknown. It was a gift to a friend from M. Brüger, surgeon of the Dutch factory at Desima, who visited Canton in 1828, and brought with him a few Japanese books, among which was this identical volume. Some years after, a few others were brought here from Batavia, which M. Siebold had presented to his friends there. Subsequently several natives from the land of the Rising Sun, by an all-directing Providence, found their way to Canton and Macao: and from them a few more volumes were obtained. The opportunity was favorable, and as time and other engagements have allowed, we have cultivated their acquaintance, begun to learn to speak their language, and read the books which had so long been sealed. The subjects of the several works, obtained as we have just described, from various sources, are very miscellaneous; an inventory of them will give the best synopsis of their contents, and perhaps form an appropriate introduction to the translation of their fellow.

1. *Kashira gaki zoü ho. Kin Moü dzu i*, or *First book in Instructing Youth*, with additions; the plates arranged into chapters. Twenty-one chapters bound up in 10 volumes. First year of the reign

of the emperor Kwanshei, 1780. This work is composed of plates with very short explanations printed at the top of the page. The pictures are in good style, and with the corresponding explanations, cannot fail to be fully understood by the tyro. Along with instruction in his own language, it was apparently intended to teach the lad the Chinese name of the article, or whatever else is represented, and thus the book can be availed of by a Chinese scholar in learning Japanese.

2. *Kwa-hon O shiyaku bai*, or *Painting of the Nightingale roosting upon the plum-tree.* Nine volumes, octavo. Genbon, 5th year, 1800. This is a collection of odd stories, legends of heroes and demigods, illustrated with plates.

3. *Ko kin shen kwo Kagami*, or, *Mirror of ancient and modern coins.* Printed at Yedo and Ohosaka. Kwanshei, 2d year, 1790. In 1 vol. 8vo. This little work appears to be merely a livraison of a larger treatise on the same subject, it being only a single chapter on those ancient coins that cannot be arranged into sections. It is printed differently from all the others, being in the katakana character intermixed with the Chinese.

4. *Onna Dai Gaku: Takara Haku*, or, *A Casket of Jewels being the Superior Lessons for Females.* 1 vol. 8vo. Bunkwa, 4th year, 1807. Published at Miyako, Yédo, and Ohosaka. This is very similar to the Chinese work called the *New Heav'n King*, or *Inferior Lessons for Females.*

5. *Onna Gaku Sunahachi misaho Kagami*, or, *Mirror of the Rules and Principles of Female Education*, with additions: 1 volume. royal 8vo. Tenpo, 5th year, 1834. Published at Yedo and Ohosaka. This work is similar to the preceding, but much more complete; the first eleven leaves are composed of drawings of the principal occupations of women, articles of the toilet, &c. The great portion of the book contains a treatise on female education, giving an account of all the principal festivals in the year with an illustrative drawing to each one running along the top of the page. The waste leaves of the book, i. e. those next the cover, are painted: a piece of ornament we suppose in compliment to the fair students.

Conclusion: the significance of *Japanese Botany*

- Poor sales.
- As in Europe, botany of greater interest than the language.
- The *American Oriental Society* and Japan
 - Inaugural meeting 1842: John Pickering as President of AOS
 - 2nd issue of the journal: Pickering on paper money in China and Greenough on population and trade in China
 - 1851 issue, review of a German translation of a Japanese novel
 - 1853 issue, hopes that Commodore Perry's expedition "may contribute to enlarge our knowledge of that great Empire, all we know of which, at present, only excites the desire to know more."
 - The next article on Japan in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* came in 1910, the first of Asakawa Kan'ichi's articles on village society in Japan.
 - Up to 1940 only two substantial articles on Japanese subjects, one by Sakanishi Shiho of the Library of Congress (she was forcibly repatriated in 1942) and one by Chitoshi Yanaga of Hawai'i.