

The Japan Times.

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JAPAN IN AMERICAN PAPERS.

If war with a European Power was a new and invaluable experience with us, newer and perhaps equally instructive is the experience we have lately come through in trying to live above journalistic mendacities. We are not unfamiliar with the way in which sensational journals often wreck the peace of a home, bring sorrow and anguish to hearts that deserve sympathy and make bitter enemies of friends. We have seen how newspapers are largely responsible for keeping alive the Anglo-German animosity. In the latter case whatever may be said of the wisdom of continuing the warfare, it may be admitted that both sides are prompted by a sense of duty and patriotism and in that respect it may not constitute a blot on the journalistic profession. No such excuse can certainly be adduced in plea for newspapers that cater only to the morbid taste of the uncultured masses. They are tolerated, however, on the same principle that showy, shoddy goods are allowed in the market, where victims have at least the weak point of being careless and injuries extend only to individuals. But it is entirely a new thing for us to see a nation of 50 million people made an object of "yellow journalistic" exploitation with absolute disregard of truth, just to "make the paper sell," and that nation to be ourselves. We have been "written up" from all points of view and in all manner of attitudes, until American yellow newspapers have made of us the most warlike nation of the world, with the cold-bloodedness of the Boise defendants, the fiery fanaticism of negro-lynchers, the unscrupulousness of American souvenir hunters. Fortunately we have taken all good naturedly, or there would have been blood spilt. Be it remembered that it was long after American newspapers had become flooded with all sorts of calumny and

misrepresentation about this country and attempts had begun to be made to give unfair and twisted interpretations to our intentions and motives in connection with San Francisco outrages, which themselves showed no signs of abatement, that some of our more excitable publicists were inveigled into talking hot-headedly. In short there has been enough journalistic provocation from the American side, and if these had been taken up seriously on our side,—if our newspapers had erred into showing a united front, as was the case just before the late war—nobody could tell what might have happened. We do not hesitate to say that serious mishaps have been avoided solely by our press as a whole exercising forbearance and calm judgment, and think this circumstance furnishes a valuable lesson on the danger of international yellow journalism.

In another column we reproduce a letter purporting to have been written by an American merchant in Yokohama to a paper in the States, and laying bare all the typical cunning, audacity and inconsistencies resorted to by yellow journalists. This American is very anxious that his identity be not made known to the Japanese Government; but the thoughtless and ungrateful editor of the paper to whom he confides his secret gives him away by saying that he "is the head of one of the largest foreign concerns in Yokohama." This betrayal of confidence is dreadful, as it sets at nought all the swindler like trouble the American has taken in dictating false correspondence to his Japanese secretary and then writing a clandestine despatch himself. Then the American is indignant because the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo employ Japanese clerks who divulge business and state secrets, and yet he himself employs one in spite of all the inconveniences he is put to thereby! Besides his mean, miserable trick of throwing dust ever in the eyes of his own secretary whom he keeps precisely for the same reason for which he blames the Embassy of his country, furnishes a good excuse for the secretary to act the spy on such an employer. But the climax

such an employer. But the climax is reached when the American speaks of Vice-Admiral Matsumoto and shows that fourteen years of residence in Japan have not taught him that there is no Admiral, Vice-Admiral or Rear-Admiral of that name in this country,—and shows also that the writer of the letter could not be the merchant he pretends to be, but a wretched, despicable votary of yellowism who has no respect for truth and is a disgrace to his profession.

Following the letter, we transcribe a few Tokyo telegrams appearing in American papers. We notice the *Japan Daily Mail* comments severely on the same dispatches, two of which our Yokohama contemporary condemns as "mischievous and misleading" exaggerations and one referring to Viscount Tani as a story "out of whole cloth." We agree with the denunciation; but when the *Mail* accuses as it does some unknown "Japanese telegraphist" for the authorship of the dispatches we are not sure that the charge is well made. In our judgment the wording of the telegrams is too genuinely "yellow" in tone to be the work of any Japanese. A suggestion is made that facts were told obscurely or worthless rumours repeated in imperfect English by some Japanese, and these were rehearsed, seasoned and flashed across the Pacific. In any case the letter, the telegrams and a host of other things about Japan finding their way into American papers force the conclusion that American yellow journalists are among the most dangerous and contemptible foreigners in the country.