A JAPANESE VIEW OF JAPAN.

BY K. T. TAKAHASHI.

"In the quietude of an isolated Isle she grew up to be a fair maiden, unknown to the world. Time came, however, when they found and forced her out into society. They worship her now. But she is a heathen, and Christians knew, long before, that she could not be good. God bless Christians! what man, what woman, what nation, can be faultless—perfect? This maiden has, indeed, an abundance of shortcomings. But with the learned, as well as with the fastidious, it has become a fashion to rival in discovering such excellent qualities as a long-continued peace and unsophisticated modesty of human nature have developed in her, although many who are so wise as to force events, learned that in no remote future this amiable damsel, too, will outdo herself, and become a virtueless coquette." These are the lines which occurred in my reading some time They recur to me with strange fitness as I sit thinking about Japan.

I have just finished reading an article with the quaint title of "The Japanese Smile," by Lofcadio Hearn, which appeared some months ago in The Atlantic Monthly. Following the bent of the day, Mr. Hearn takes it upon himself to make such a whimsical topic the subject of an elaborate discourse, discovering in the national trait a cause for commendation rather than condemnation. This is entirely kind of Mr. Hearn, and I shall have nothing to find fault with in him, especially as he has done well what he had proposed to do. Besides, 1 am a Japanese myself, and nothing is more agreeable to me than to hear foreigners speak approvingly of my country.

But there is another side to Mr. Hearn's essay, probably not intended by him, and it is that the article sums

up the reasons why, on the one hand, friendly foreigners admire Japan, and on the other hand, at the same time, why they raise their warning fingers. For attractions may be many and various in Japan; but it is essentially the joyful atmosphere that envelopes her whole existence which enchants foreigners. And it is this joyful atmosphere, native and natural, which Mr. Hearn expands upon in his article. But when he expresses his anxiety that Japan, if left to herself, will come to lose all her charming peculiarities, and contract the odious practice of smiling to hide,—to hide cold irony, evil secrets, the heart of a hypocrite: to hide all that degrades mankind to deviltry,—and, still worse, perhaps, of grunting instead of smiling, Mr. Hearn is again voicing the sentiments of many an Occidental. So that his essay is, after all, an ingenious summary of the current western opinion upon Japan. That opinion is an unhappy one from my point of view.

It is said that it was the United States, and then England, that entreated, pleaded, nay, forced upon Japan, the opening up of her ports and harbors: that they introduced civilization into Japan, and that the gates once opened, the noontide of the 19th century surged in, in an appalling manner, at least to the eyes of But our good foreigners outsiders. are, almost in the same breath, preaching forbearance and conservatism to Japan. Do they know that out of one hundred foreign visitors to Japan, seventy-five are, I may be allowed to say, pleasure-seekers, who are only too apt to indulge in vagaries unworthy of home and relatives; and twentyfour are commercial Christians, whose Christianity is consistent only with