

place in the councils of the sovereign is assigned to him than to any of his colleagues.

In general, the sketch of those official speeches of which we have been speaking is drawn out for him by the Emperor's own hand. He works out the ideas, and then reads the whole to the Emperor; which, after it has been corrected, is communicated to the rest of the ministry. The morning before the sitting Rouher has another audience, when, often at the last moment, not unimportant changes are made. The really marvellous memory of Rouher has grown with all this exercise of mind.

Rouher, in a word, is just the man whom Napoleon III requires—without ambition, without independence, and wonderfully endowed with talents and tact. To have discovered him out of the mass of parliamentary mediocrities, and to have made him pliable to his absolute and inflexible will, is the merit of the Emperor alone.

We must add to this sketch that the private life of Rouher, as well as his personal honour, have never in the remotest degree been subjected to the criticisms of the enemies of the empire.—*From Daheim.*

"OLD WEDGWOOD" WARE.

THE publication of interesting and profusely illustrated biographies of Josiah Wedgwood, by Miss Meteyard and Mr. Jewitt, has given an extraordinary impetus to the collection of the works of that remarkable man. The demand for the earlier productions of the manufactory at Etruria has sharpened the wits of dealers, both honourable and unscrupulous; and as the latter form, alas! an overwhelming majority, a few hints for the guidance and protection of ingenuous and unwary collectors may not be unacceptable.

In the first place, then, it is a duty which every collector owes to himself, to distrust, *primâ facie*, dealers in articles of *virtù*, rare pottery included. This apparently uncharitable dictum is justified by the fact that there is nothing of this kind which perverted ingenuity will not essay to imitate and traffic in, from a Raphael to a scarabæus. It is perfectly notorious to collectors that counterfeit antique furniture, Roman, Greek, and early English coins, Etruscan vases, bronzes of the classic period, implements of the primæval ages, old Sèvres and Dresden china, and other varieties of pottery, aboriginal weapons, mediæval seals and manuscripts—in fact, everything commanding the fictitious prices paid by collectors, are manufactured on a large scale. The publication of the names and addresses of the people who follow this disreputable calling would be a public duty, were it possible to be sure that the dealers have not sometimes been themselves the dupes of the manufacturers of these wares.

Let it be stated, however, at once, that, in the writer's opinion, the successors of Josiah Wedgwood are quite incapable of knowingly lending themselves to such traffic. Nevertheless, their works, and those of John Adams and Co., of Hanley, who are equally entitled to the benefit of the saving clause, are periodically visited by professed dealers in "Old Wedgwood," and the articles there purchased are afterwards palmed off upon the uninitiated for the almost priceless productions of the Wedgwood and Bentley period. These dealers—mostly Jews—buy up job lots of ware, which they at once offer unblushingly, and at fabulous prices, as "the genuine article," or else attempt to "doctor" it into a resemblance of the old ware, by a variety of processes little known beyond the craft. For instance, some few years since the

writer went into a pretentious-looking shop in the Strand, and requested to be allowed to examine a pair of jasper flower-pots. The moment he took them into his hand, he knew by a raspy "feel," peculiar to new biscuit pottery, that in all probability they had been in the oven within six months from that time. The assistant volunteered the information, "You have the genuine article there, sir;" and the price demanded was eight guineas. They might have been purchased at Etruria for ten or twelve shillings. Various devices are resorted to to remove this tell-tale asperity of surface; and it is not long since that two Jew dealers, having quarrelled, one of the fraternity disclosed that his rival was in the practice of immersing new goods in a butt of stagnant soft water, trusting to the viscosity of the bath to give them that exquisite smoothness of surface which is one of the most marked characteristics of "Old Wedgwood," but which time alone can impart in perfection.

The greatest windfall for dealers in "Old Wedgwood" happened in this wise. Contemporary with Josiah Wedgwood there lived at Hanley one Elijah Mayer, a persevering and fairly successful copyist of the great master. Much of his ware, in the black basaltes and cane-coloured bodies, was highly meritorious. Elijah Mayer was succeeded by his son Joseph Mayer, an eccentric old gentleman, who died about seven years since worth a round quarter of a million of money. At his death, his executors came into possession of a large quantity of choice pottery, the earlier productions of the house, on which lay undisturbed the dust of half a century; for, although Mr. Mayer had been out of business many years, the remnant of his stock had never been sold. A considerable proportion of this ware was made after original Wedgwood models, of which, however, it fell far short. Scenting their prey from afar, the London dealers in "antiques" swooped down upon this accumulation and bought it up by cratesful. They then removed it to London, and cautiously introduced it into their shops and windows as "Old Wedgwood," frequently obtaining from the inexperienced, for the better specimens, more pounds than they had cost shillings. Many pieces of this ware are stamped "E. Mayer," and this appears to have been a source of perplexity to some of the dealers; but there was one, at least, who found a way to surmount the difficulty, for he told a friend of the writer that this stamp was the name of Wedgwood's designer or manager, and was merely a private mark for the facilitation of business.

One more illustration of the "tricks of trade." Some time since, the art director of one of the leading firms in the Potteries obtained a spoilt copy of a group of figures in parian, for the purpose of making some experiments in colour. The experiments were made, and the group was put aside as worthless; but, before it had been consigned to the "shord-ruck," it caught the eye of a Jew dealer, who either begged it or bought it for an old song. Bringing it up to London, he submitted it to the inspection of a distinguished—one might say illustrious—statesman, who lightens the toils of office, and beguiles the hours of retirement, by indulging in the gentle passion for rare specimens of the potter's art. The dealer represented the group to be a remarkably scarce and valuable piece of Italian pottery of the *cinquecento* period: a fabulous sum was paid for it: rumour says £50. The fortunate possessor, unwilling that such a treasure should be wholly lost to the public, sent it to South Kensington, whence, however, it was ere long ignominiously expelled on being accidentally seen and identified by the modeller.

Lastly, let not the collector of "Old Wedgwood" be beguiled into the purchase of anything which does not bear the impress of that honoured name, nor let him suppose that because an object is so impressed, it was necessarily produced under Wedgwood's personal superintendence, for the chances will be fifty to one that it was not. Nor, again, let him conclude that the presence of the much-desiderated "Wedgwood and Bentley" stamp is an infallible sign of genuineness, for it has happened before now that modern bodies have been attached to old plinths. But let him, if the opportunity present itself of possessing any of these charming relics, and he has not confidence in his own judgment, consult some experienced connoisseur, preferring the risk of being out-bidden to the mortification of burning his own fingers.

JAPANESE POETRY.

Few people have any idea of what Japanese poetry is, or have even thought that there may be poets in that distant quarter of the world. But we have before us a volume of extracts, pretty stanzas, the production not of one poet, but culled from a hundred. The title might run thus: "A Verse from each of the Hundred Poets;" but the original title in literal English is more quaint. It is "One Head (or chapter, verse, stanza) of the Hundred Men;" and these hundred men are emperors, empresses, tycoons, learned monks, warriors, ladies, and others, all of the noble class, whose poetic effusions are collected into a little household book.

Everybody in Japan knows these verses. They have been handed down from father to son for hundreds of years. They are familiar in every household. Some learn to know them by hearing others repeat them, and others by studying the ancient language in which they are written. Japanese is of so flexible a nature that there is no difficulty in forming beautiful epithets for their sacred mountains, or streams, or woods and dells, when they wish to embody their thoughts in verse.

The first verse reminds us of that illustrious Irish cabin, which was open to the sky, where one of our own heroes first saw the day. The Emperor Tengee, which means "heavenly wisdom"—(all Oriental names are significant)—describes somebody's experience of autumnal dew, thus:—

My lowly hut is thatched with straw
From fields where rice-sheaves frequent stand.
Now, autumn's harvest well-nigh o'er,
Collected by my toiling hand,
Through tatter'd roof the sky I view,
My clothes are wet with falling dew.*

A certain supervisor of shipping coming from China to Japan gets wealth, and this excites envy, whereupon he is banished to the "eighty islands," whence he sends this verse to his friend:—

Ye fishermen, who range the sea
In many a bark, I pray ye tell
My fellow-villagers of me—
How that far o'er vast ocean's swell,
In vessel frail
Towards Yasoshima I sail.

The emperor afterwards discovers his innocence, and restores him to his former rank.

The Japanese greatly admire the maple, as its leaves turn red in autumn, and in many of these verses it is mentioned:—

For 'mid the hills the momiji
Is trampled down 'neath hoof of deer,
Whose plaintive cries continually
Are heard both far and near;
My shivering frame
Now autumn's piercing chills doth blame.

The redd'ning leaves of th' momiji
That on Ogura's summit grow,
How pleasant 'tis their tints to see!
Ah! did they but their beauty know,
They would linger till there pass'd again
Our Emperor's miyuki* train.

On the seventh night of the seventh month, which is a festival among the Japanese, ravens are supposed to fly towards two particular stars in the milky way, and the appearance they present in dense flocks as they sail along is said to resemble a bridge. In the royal park there is also a bridge called the "Raven Bridge." The poet puts these two ideas together in the following stanza, which has probably suffered in translation:—

Upon the bridge where ravens, aye,
Do love to pass where hoar-frost's sheen,
When hoar-frost's glittering film is seen;
I trow the break of day is nigh.

In the twelfth ode we have a beautiful figure used. The Goddess Otome, said by the poet to be borne along in the clouds, is taken for the dancing girl at the festival, where he catches but a glimpse of her as she moves rapidly in the throng:—

In fitful path across the sky,
By various winds of heaven forced,
Cloud-borne Otome glideth by—
Now hath the breeze its vigour lost
An instant, and her form so bright
For a fleeting moment greets my sight.

The Japanese poet views the moon much in the same spirit as we of the western world do, as the following verses by different authors testify:—

How oft my glance upon the moon hath dwelt,
Her secret power my soul subdued—
Her sadd'ning influence I alone have felt,
Though all men autumn's moon have viewed.

On every side the vaulted sky
I view: now will the moon have peered,
I trow, above Mikasa high
In Kasuga's far-off land upreared.

The †Ariake-moonbeams will
In th' morning heaven linger still;
While I from thee—how hard the smart—
By Akadski compelled, must part.

A famous soldier in the wars with Corea, who penned the following lines, must have possessed the true poetic spirit. He refers to the blossoms of the *sakura* tree, which wither about the end of the spring.

'Tis a pleasant day of merry spring,
No bitter frosts are threatening,
No storm-winds blow, no rain-clouds low'r,
The sun shines bright on high,
Yet thou, poor trembling little flow'r,
Dost fade away and die.

The autumnal gale, and the dew-drops and withered leaves dispersed by it are noticed here:—

Now dew-drops sparkling o'er the moor are seen,
The autumn gust sweeps howling by,
Scarce lurks an instant 'mid the reeds I ween:
In timid show'r the dew-drops fly,
And, scattered o'er the grass, there lie.

Now autumn's gales, in various freak,
On herb, on tree, destruction wreak,
And wildest roar
The gusts that down from Mube pour.

The winds of autumn have amassed
Dried withered leaves in ruddy heaps,
Have them in th' mountain-torrent cast,
Whose stream in stony channel sweeps;
Amid the rocks that bar the way
The mom'ji's reddened leaves delay.

* These metrical translations are from "Japanese Odes," by F. V. Dickins, M.B. Smith, Elder, and Co., London.

* A *miyuki* means a royal progress.

† *Ariake* means the moon shining all night. *Akadski* means the dawn.