

Preface

IN A WORD, I AM A BOOKWORM. As a child, I read almost all the wonderful novels and poetry in my high-school library, where I first encountered a special treasure of English literature – Lafcadio Hearn’s Transcript of English literature which had been done about 100 years ago at Tokyo University. (I read them in translation in Japanese then when I was 16 years old). Full of very interesting and characteristic points of view, it led me to read much more English literature, and from that time on I wanted very much to study English literature at university. Unfortunately, I had to choose Japanese literature so that I became a teacher in high school.

Forty years as a teacher was a long journey in my life. I was very happy when I retired so that I could start studying again what I had so adored for such a long time. I went to English language school. Luckily, I met several wonderful teachers there. Now what I can do in English is the result of their teaching. The best help they gave me was encourage me to write in English. I will never forget my long-term teacher Graham Bathgate, without whose patient careful help I could not have written this book.

Writing for me is a creative action followed by thinking which makes me feel wonderfully alive. I know I will be happy whenever I am writing.

One of my favorite writers, Okamoto Kidou (1872-1939), wrote in his essay “Reminiscences of Old Edo” that the look and atmosphere of Tokyo (as it is now), had disappeared since the big earthquake of 1923 over most of the east of Japan. He missed the old Edo and hoped his essay would be like a piece of thread connecting old and modern Japan. Some well-informed people say that quiet old Tokyo changed after the 1950s in the post-war era, especially after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

I hope this simple book can be more than a collection of memories, not like some old wife’s tale, but rather will be a bridge between Tokyo of the past and Tokyo today.

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