MSS A62
HIMES

The "disturbance" now going on between Japan and Russia in the far east recalls to mind the eventful career of the first native of Japan to come to Oregon, so far as known. His name was Suzuki Kinzo, and the story of his arrival in Oregon is in substance as follows: In the year 1861 a Portland merchant with his vessel was in the harbor of Hakodati, Japan, homeward bound from a voyage to the Amoor river, Siberia. An American gentleman-- there were but four or five in that port at the time-- told this merchant that he knew an intelligent Japanese lad there who was a political refugee from Yokohama, upon whose head a prize was set, and that he wanted to go to America. In reply the merchant said the boy could go with him providing he could be put on board his vessel without arousing suspicion. The other gentleman stated that he would take all responsibility in the matter, notwithstanding it was believed that spies were all about. At length the Portland bound vessel weighed anchor and started on her voyage. When about twenty miles at sea, in the dusk of the evening, a small craft was discovered, and upon this the young Jap was found and at once taken on board. Five or six uneventful weeks passed by when Portland harbor was entered, and the young foreigner, gratified for the saving of his life, went into the employ of the firm of which the merchant was a member, in the capacity of a servant, and so remained several years. During this time he was sent to the Portland High School for three years, and his natural ability and studious habits won for him the head of his

classes in mathematics and history. He was employed by the company of which his benefactor was a member to light lamps. To his employers he was faithful to the highest degree. His vigilance was untiring and his integrity unquestioned. It came to be known in due time that he belonged to high rank in his native land, but being free from false pride, the consciousness of his rank only ~~emphasized the~~ care he gave to every duty he was called on to perform than otherwise. In due time the turning point in his life came. In 1868, his health ~~becoming~~ being somewhat inpaired, his employer advised him to take a trip to San Francisco and remain a few weeks. This he consented to do. While there he accidentally met ~~some~~ a number of young Japanese gentlemen who were on their way to Washington, among whom he recognized former acquaintances. They invited him to dine with them one day. In turn he invited them to dine with him, and the best in San Francisco was placed at their disposal. These young men were found to be attaches of Governor Ito, of Yeddo, who sent for Kinzo, and was astonished to find a countryman who had been in the United States eight years and could speak English as fluently as a native American. The Governor invited him to accompany the embassy to Washington, but he refused because he considered his first duty was to serve the gentleman who had saved his life. Not long after Kinzo returned to Portland Governor Ito started back to Japan from Washington. When he arrived in San Francisco, he caused the Japanese Consul there to telegraph to Kinzo, offering him an important position. He showed

this dispatch to his employer, who advised him to accept the offer; that now he was in no danger of his life, and that honors awaited him in his own country which he could never hope to gain in the United States. With a saddened heart over leaving his benefactor, yet buoyed up with the bright prospects awaiting him, he left Portland for San Francisco. Upon arrival there he was at once made secretary and went to London, remaining there some time. Later, he was recalled to Japan, and was selected as one of the embassy to visit the courts of Spain and Purtugal. Afterwards he was again sent to London as secretary of the Japanese legation at the Court of St James, where he remained five years. For the next two years he held an important position in the foreign office at Tokio, Japan's capital, always rendering most efficient service, thus increasing his distinction. Later on he was given the choice of two important positions, one being that of Secretary of the Japanese legation at Washington. His remembrance of the kindness of the American merchant to him in his days of adversity, with the hope that he might meet him face to face some day, caused him to accept the latter place. But a vigorous and active mind had worn down a feeble body and he sickened and died in Tokio two weeks before the date of sailing to America, surrounded by powerful friends and every luxury that wealth and worth could win in the battle of life.

Kinzo was known to the writer in the late sixties and is remembered as having a thoughtful face and being a constant student,

improving every moment not employed in physical labor in improving his mind. He had been lost sight of, however, and probably would have never been thought of again had it not been that a chance inquiry about the "little Japanese Lamplighter", brought out the story of his strange career from the lips of the aged merchant who first brought him to Oregon.

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