

does drag wearily at times it instructs the people thoroughly in the history of their country and gives them a living interest in its great leaders.

But if the play drags the audience is prepared for the wearisome spots, and it manages to enjoy itself. The

NO JAPANESE ACTRESSES.

The Stage of Japan Like Ours in Elizabeth's Day.

In the near future the theater goes of this country may be given the unique opportunity of seeing the greatest living actor of that now famous nation, Japan. The gentleman's name is Danjero, and among the traveled classes of his country he is called the Henry Irving of Japan.

Since the great war with China and its numerous signal victories Japan has been invariably regarded as a nation of unusually advanced civilization. This may be so regarding its army, navy and implements of war, but as far as the stage is concerned it is many hundred years behind the dramatic art of today. If Danjero should visit us it is doubtful if he would succeed in corraling the quantities of gold coin of the realm that other foreign lights of the stage do, such as Bernhardt, Irving, the Kendals, Tree and Langtry. But the great interest in anything relating



DANJERO AS A EUROPEAN.

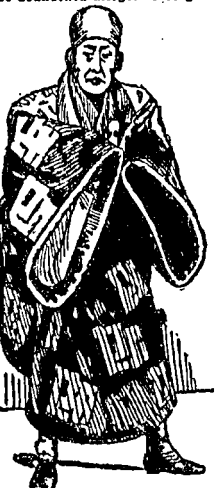
to Japan would make Danjero a partial success even if his histrionic ability did not tickle the delicate American palate.

While Danjero is called the Henry Irving of Japan, there are few direct reasons for the sobriquet except the general fact that he occupies the same high position in the Japanese world of dramatics that Irving does in the English. Danjero is bowed down, to by the stage world of Tokio, and artistically towers head and shoulders above all his rivals.

Personally he is a little, almost insignificant man of the boards. He is short, dumpy and modest, and much of his wide popularity is due to his gentleness and kindness of character. He dresses in European clothes ordinarily, and, having a liberal education, is conversant with affairs in America and Europe. He is a good business man, too, and, in addition to being the leading actor of his nation, he is part owner of the finest theater in Tokio. He says that the Japanese actors are not paid the immense salaries that the English and Americans receive—in fact, the pay is so small that a widely known "star" could not accumulate by a lifetime of hard work a moderate fortune.

AN EIGHT-HOUR PLAY.

If Danjero comes here the Japanese method of presenting a play will have to be abandoned altogether or greatly



DANJERO AS AN OLD MAN.

curtailed. In Danjero's Tokio theater the curtain rises promptly at 9 a. m. and does not fall again until 5 p. m. This means an eight-hour performance, which is something more than most people care to attend.

The reason of the great length of the play is that the Japanese drama portrays only big events in the history of the nation. Some of these events are so lengthy that a play runs two, three and four days. Of course, in a serial drama of this kind the curtain invariably falls at some exciting climax; the curiosity or interest of the audience is excited, and they come the following day to view the next installment of the drama. These serial plays are not unlike the serial stories, novels, etc., printed in periodicals. They are conducted with realism as far as the lapse of time is concerned. For instance, if General Lee's surrender at Appomattox were the event to be portrayed the play would begin with the arrival of the two great armies upon the scene; then it would show the preparations for a fight; the scurrying about of messengers a day or so later to arrange for a meeting of the two generals, and would finally conclude with the surrender scene. All the details are faithfully reproduced, and even if the play



DANJERO AS A VIRAGO.

body of the Japanese theater is divided into little compartments five feet square, and separated from one another by a low fence or partition about a foot high.

One of these little boxes cost from \$1.25 to \$1.50 a day, and at this moderate expense a husband, wife and several small children can enjoy a day's pleasuring. These family parties fill the theater, and with their little contrivances for making tea, manage, with a well provided basket, to make a comfortable lunch in the middle of the day. When the drama lags these family parties chatter with one another at a terrific rate. The noise doesn't interfere a bit with the actors or the action of the play. It runs along smoothly, even when the racket of the conversation is so great that all other sounds are lost in the hubbub.

But as soon as the interest in the play revives the onlookers are all attention. The Japanese, particularly the women and children, are a sensitive people, and their emotions are easily stirred. They are made to weep and laugh and applaud vigorously as occasion demands.

NO ILLUSIONS PRACTISED.

The Japanese do not go in much for illusion in their theaters. The scenic effects can hardly be dignified by that term. The stage revolves on a pivot, and is divided into three sections, allowing the trifling change of scene without any intermission. The actors step from one division to the other in full view of the audience, and the play goes merrily on.

Another curious feature is the manner of the players in entering the stage. There are no wings and nothing suggestive of "behind the scenes." When not on the stage the actors remain in the rear part of the theater, and when their turn to go on comes around they gravely pass through the audience, ascend a narrow gang plank leading to the stage, and then go on with their parts. This method of entrance and exit creates no comment; the Japanese are accustomed to it.

AN EVELESS STAGE.

Notwithstanding that the fever of progression has taken hold of Japan, the "new woman" era has not yet reached that oriental kingdom. Women are so rigidly guarded or thought so little of that they are given no place on the stage. All of the great actors are women impersonators—they are both actors and actresses, as the play demands.

Danjero is a famous impersonator of women, and it is his ability in this direction that has given him great fame. Two of the illustrations show him in his most popular roles, one as a woman, the other as an old man. He is quite an adept in costuming and facial make-up, as the pictures show.

The Japanese are familiar, to a certain extent, with the ways of the English-speaking stage. American and English actors have toured the larger cities of the kingdom, producing Shakespeare's plays, and the best received of the latter was "Julius Caesar," the warlike character of which seemed to touch them strongly.

Danjero is certainly an artist, and should he visit us, it may be that the great actors of this country will find they have something to learn.