A sign board performs the same function for customers that a lighthouse or a landmark does for navigators. The dexterity shown in making a sign board leads to the shop a number of customers who come in thinking, "This is a place where I can find the thing I want to buy." A good sign successfully advertises a shop and at the same time keeps it always fresh in the mind of the customer who has once patronized it.

In our cities signs are in two forms: one is a mere bromide of a name plate which is domestic and of a very early origin; the other is a variety of poster which is the imitation of a modern foreign design. The latter is, of course, preferable to the former for performing the true function of a sign board.

Downtown are seen a pretty good number of English sign boards which are unfortunately much inferior to Japanese sign boards in many respects. In design, coloring, and inscription, Japanese signs are so good that a large number of them are praiseworthy. While English sign boards are still in their infancy. If their statements be understood they should be classified as good. In criticizing
we cannot go further than this point: the statements given on them are wrong. The defects which we find in these poor English boards in our city may be classified into five groups.

1. Bad Punctuation.

As shown in the following list, on some sign boards we see nearly every word followed by a period. On sign boards a great part of the statement goes without punctuation as shown in this advertisement:

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RANGELEY MOCCASINS
Smoke and Brown
OXFORDS AND SHOES
BEHR'S BOOT SHOP
15 North Main Street
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We cannot tell whether the fault is on the side of the sign-maker or on the side of the author. It may be too much to expect that all the sign-makers and authors of sign boards should have an English Education. However, they can do better if they possess a little knowledge of the use of periods and commas. The lack of this knowledge may not cause them to lose several thousand dollars, as an ancient Greek merchant did when he did not punctuate correctly in his message, but it will surely give them a bad reputation.

ORIGINALS
Oura. Moter Car. & Co
Bar. Please. Comen.
Manufacturer and Dealer in
ENGLISH SIGN BOARDS IN NAGASAKI CITY

2. Crowding Arrangement.

A sign board I have noticed at Hamano-Machi is a good one. Every word is correctly spelled. The statement is good. If the letter arrangement did not give a crowded appearance, this sign would be ranked first. As in drawing a letter picture, a crowded letter arrangement lays a heavy burden on the eyes of the reader. As long as he can only read it with difficulty, it will not attract his attention.

ORIGINALS

A HOT BATH ROOM
To get ready in upstairs
DRY GOODS STORE
ALL ASSORTED GOODS OF SILK AND COTTON,
QUALITY GUARANTEED, PRICE FIXED,
INSPECTION CORDIALLY INVITED.

3. Improper Words.

The use of improper words not only makes the sign board look funny, but it destroys the entire value of the sign board. As seen in the following list, I have been able to pick up many examples of this kind. In this respect I should like to advise the authors and makers of sign boards to study how to express their thoughts in English. Some appear to think that Japanese words spelled in Roman letters convey ideas to foreigners. Japanese words are not changed into English by means of Roman letters. I presume
they give their ideas in the Japanese way, but they never happen to think how the ideas are expressed in England as well as in America. A little peep into an English magazine will give them the right idea.

**ORIGINALS**

**ALL SORTS OF GOODS—**

**ONE PRICE**

... & CO.

**GENERAL MANUFACTURER, WHOLESALE AND RETAIL DEALER IN EVERY DESCRIPTION OF FINE ART TORTOISE-SHELL WORKS**

...

Name ... Yohinten

Name ... Head Office

**CORRECTIONS**

**ALL SORTS OF SUNDRIES**

(One Price to All)

... & CO.

**FINE TORTOISE-SHELL WORKS**

Name ...

Manufacturer

Dealer

Street address ...

**FANCY GOODS**

Name ...

**SHOES AND BOOTS**

Name ...

Head Office

...

Branches

...
ORIGINALS

Kimono's Store

CHEMICAL and DRUGGIST
Medical Machines

New Fashionable
Shoes and Boots Maker

Apotheker

Meals at All Time

House Hold Furniture

A HOT BATH ROOM
To get ready in upstairs

CORRECTIONS

"KIMONO"
(Japanese Clothes)

CHEMICALS and DRUGS
MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS
and SUPPLIES

Shoes and Boots
of the Smartest Fashions

Apothecary

Meals at All Hours

Furniture and Upholstery

HOT BATH
on the second floor
ORIGINALS

Open from 8 a.m. - to midnight

Photographist

Sell - Part

Manufacturers and Dealers
in Tortoise-Shell Wares

European Barber
Hair Dressing Saloon

Necklaces of Imitation & Culture
Pearls

Damascene Ware and
Tortoise-Shell Ware

CORRECTIONS

Store Hours:
8 A.M. to 12 P.M.
or
Open from 8 a.m.
to Midnight.

Photographer

SALES DEPARTMENT

Manufacturers of and Dealers
in Tortoise-Shell Wares
or
Tortoise-Shell Wares

Hair Dressing Saloon
(European Style)

Necklaces of Imitation and
Genuine Pearls

Damascenes and
Tortoise-Shell Ware
ENGLISH SIGN BOARDS IN NAGASAKI CITY

ORIGINALS

Travellers’ Trunks, Bags, Leather Goods, and Table Cloth.
Repairing done.

Medicine Store

General Store

Europe Hotel

CORRECTIONS

All Sorts of Trunks, Travelling Bags, Suit Cases, etc.
(Luggage of all sorts repaired.)

Drug Store

Adults’ and Children’s Wearing Apparel

... Hotel
(European Plan)

The following are good examples:

Always-the-Best! Take Home Our
TORTOISE-SHELL, IVORY, CORAL, and
INLAID LACQUER WARE
“Service With a Smile”
S. FUTAEDA & Co.
35 Higashi-Hamano-Machi, Nagasaki
Phone: 458 (L. D.)
8. 商業と経済

NECKLACES, LACQUER WARE, ALBUMS, PHOTO-FRAMES, etc. Yukey & Co.
Manufacturers and Dealers
35 Union Street, Nagasaki Phone: 2305

4. Spelling.

Bad spelling is due to carelessness. It is not now a question whether we can get a dictionary or not. Consult a dictionary when there is a doubt and there need not be bad spelling.

**ORIGINALS**

Meals at All Hour
Meals at All Ours
Neclaces
Lacur Boxes
Manufacturer of and Dealer in Album, Photo-Frame, etc.

Scoach Woolen Goods

**CORRECTIONS**

Meals at All Hours
Meals at All Hours
Necklaces
Lacquer Boxes
Manufacturer of and Dealer in Albums, Photo-Frames, etc.

Scotch Woolen Goods

**Note:** I presume the author may mean “Hand Knitting Yarns.”


**Note:** In this city there are some individuals and companies whose business is to let out their automobiles on hire. It will be advisable for such houses to hang some English sign board like the following:
Our city is constantly visited by tourists who prefer riding in seeing the sights. The proprietor of a garage should hang a good English sign board, if he is anxious to make money.

**ORIGINALS**

Bar. Please. Comen.

Views of Nagasaki

**CORRECTIONS**

CHERRY BAR

Please walk in

Views of Nagasaki

5. **Bad Combination.**

This defect is also strong enough to spoil the value of the sign board. It is awkward to place together a noun indicating a thing and a noun indicating a person. It is very strange to see an error of the same sort at several places and it is another proof of the lack of English knowledge among them.

**ORIGINALS**

House Hold Furniture

Watchmaker and Eye Glasses

**CORRECTIONS**

FURNITURE and UPHOLSTERY

Watches, Jewelry, Spectacles
Now we come to the question of how English sign boards in Nagasaki are to be improved.

1. The sign boards should be made attractive by the use of a design. In the city of New York, they do not use anything like our sign boards, but they tastefully make use of pillars, walls, doors, etc., to distinguish their offices or stores. At Oura an upholsterer is making use of his building for advertising his business. The application of psychology is worth considering in this respect.

2. The “Brief-but-to-the-point” system should rule sign-writing. On many signs there are too many words. The proprietor of a store is too talkative when he uses a sign board. He is putting too much in a limited space. A concise statement is far more serviceable.

3. The sign board once looked at, the impression left on a person should be a permanent one. Use an impressive design with...
catchy words.

4. The following should be taken into consideration if one is desirous of having a perfect sign board:
   a. Margin
   b. Types of letters
   c. Sizes of letters
   d. Coloring or Color scheme
   e. Plain and distinct arrangement

The characteristics of Greek art were simplicity, beauty, and symmetry. These three points gave Greek art its permanent value. The application of these characteristics will surely improve the English sign boards in our city. If a sign board is intended to attract the attention of foreign customers, it should be one representing the good reputation of the proprietor.

5. Magazines may be used for specimens. Any American or English magazine contains many good advertisements which are worth seeing. The outstanding one among them is the “Saturday Evening Post”, published in America. The price is only five cents. It is a wonderful publication, containing many advertisements, and would provide ample materials for the study of sign boards as well as advertisements.

Nagasaki,

September 15, 1925.