

“FUKUZAWA-san recommended you to me,” said Ernest.
“Did he indeed?” Igashichi asked. “Well, I am always keen to hear about Western technology. I would be grateful to learn from you.”

“I rather hoped I might be the one learning from you,” Ernest explained. “I’ve been trying to improve these boots, you see.” He lifted them onto the table, and added conspiratorially, “My intent is that they might be able to propel me several feet into the air.”

Igashichi looked at the boots, then at Ernest, then at the boots again. “Really?” he said.

“Of course,” said Ernest.

“What an unusual idea,” said Igashichi. “I’ll get to work immediately.”