

PROGRESS OF JAPAN.



THE Empire of Japan has now been in existence for 2,000 years or more, and, during all these centuries, not a single break has occurred in the line of Emperors. They have all been of the one family, and have ever been held sacred and inviolable. This remarkable fact is due, no doubt, to the national valor of the people, who repelled every attack upon their shores. They were closed in from the outside world, like a tortoise in his shell, and thus were enabled to preserve their peculiar customs from generation to generation. Like the Chinese in some respects, they possessed greater vigour and displayed more activity. No Mongols and no Tartars were powerful or aggressive enough to tear down the barriers of exclusion and to disturb the unbroken and unprecedented succession of Emperors.

In ancient times, there was no distinction between civil and military life. The whole people formed one huge army; militarism reigned supreme. To die in the name of patriotism was held the noblest of noble deeds. The Emperor, according to general belief, controlled the destinies of all his subjects, and so there could be nothing but everlasting glory in laying down life for him.

The adoption of Chinese ideas during the Middle Ages had the effect of creating a division of power. A line was drawn between the two spheres of arms and politics; but it proved a very vague one, and the warrior classes soon regained supremacy. At this stage there became evident a tendency to distribute authority. Feudalism, gradually made its way into the land. The Emperor rented the soil to the daimyos or seigneurs, and these, in turn, to the tenants. The system that prevailed was very much the same as obtained in other countries, but the Emperor retained the title of all property as a heritage handed down to him by his predecessors. Shoguns or governors ruled in the provinces, and they, as a body, formed the real power of the state. The Shogunate held the sovereignty of the country for seven centuries. In 1867 it surrendered its authority to the Emperor, and the old régime was resumed after a lapse of hundreds of years. The Restoration marked a turning point in the history of Japan from narrower to broader lines of policy and from lower to higher ideals of life.

As soon as the Emperor was returned to power, he began to exert a very progressive influence upon the government of the Em-