

Highland clans of Scotland centuries ago. The normal condition of a county thus governed is one of ceaseless civil war. The Mikado, finding himself unequal to the task of governing these discordant elements, in the year 1142, delegated his majesterial functions to one of the ablest of his generals, who had in reality already become his master. This new chief officer of the state, known as the *Tycoon*, soon seated himself on a throne nearly as high as that of the Mikado. The Mikado, or spiritual emperor, remained the head of the Church, the high-priest of the nation: but the administration of the temporal affairs vested in the Tycoon. The relations betwixt the two came in course of time to be of the most delicate and embarrassing kind. The longer they continued they grew the worse until, in 1868, they culminated in a revolution the most remarkable in its character and results of any that ever befel a civilized nation since the world began, and in which the hand of an over-ruling Providence may be clearly traced.

The political changes which preceded this revolution were not the result of human foresight or wisdom. The Japanese were led on, unconsciously on their part, by successive steps to a consummation they never dreamed of. Christianity, which had very little to do with it, looked on in amazement and exclaimed,—“what hath God wrought!” and now at God’s bidding it has gone in to take possession of the empire. The disintegrating forces which were to overturn the old feudal system had been long smouldering. The turning point in the history of Japan was reached with the accession to the throne of the present Emperor, Matu-Hito, on the 3rd of February, 1867. He was then a boy of seventeen, but soon gave proof that he was possessed of uncommon vigour and intelligence. It may be enough to say here that at the present time he is reputed to be one of the most enlightened and prudent men in Japan. In the second year of his reign, the office of the Tycoon, that had existed for six hundred and seventy-six years, was abolished, the then incumbent was banished; during the next few years the whole feudal system was swept away; the Mikado, threw off his

sacerdotal mask and took his position “like a man” at the head of the executive authority. The *Daimios*, as the provincial rulers were called, were stripped of their feudal powers and nine-tenths of their revenues, their obsequious retainers were thrown upon their own resources for their support, and the Japanese people, raised from a position of serfdom, have now the exercise of political rights and advantages secured to them by the administration of a representative government. A Bureau of Public Instruction has been established and a national system of Education instituted. In 1877 there were 25,459 elementary schools with 59,525 teachers and 2,162,962 scholars. There were 389 middle schools with 910 teachers. At the head of the system is the University of Tokio. There are also Normal schools for training teachers. Thousands of volumes of English text-books have been imported for use in the schools. The European system of postage has been introduced. An excellent lighthouse system has also been established. Railroads and telegraph lines are in successful operation, and, what is more germane to our subject, the laws against the introduction of Christianity have been greatly modified. The disgusting orgies connected with some of their religious festivals have been prohibited by law. The numerous public holidays of the empire, on which the people worshipped at the temples and shrines, are all done away, except New-Year’s-day and the Mikado’s birth-day. Sunday is legally constituted “a day of Rest.” Since 1837 it was a law of the land that “so long as the sun shall shine no foreigner shall touch the soil of Japan and live: that no native shall leave the country, under the pain of death: that all Japanese who return from abroad shall die: that all persons who propagate the Christian doctrines, or bear this scandalous name, shall be imprisoned: that whosoever shall presume to bring a letter from abroad, or to return after he has been banished, shall die, with all his family;” all these, and other bloody decrees have been blotted out from the statute-book.

The Japanese are naturally an industrious and ingenious people. They possess a certain nobility of character which even their great moral turpitude has not wholly effaced. They are eminently intellectual. The poorer classes have a native courtesy of manner. The higher classes are distinguished by a studied dignity and refinement. But, they are, on the other hand, a licentious people. Their past government and religion have openly sanctioned vice. Deception is their