

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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The Happy Life.

How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will,
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill!

Who God doth late and early pray
More of his grace than gifts to lend,
And entertains the harmless day
With a well-chosen book or friend.

This man is freed from servile bands
Of hope to rise, or fear to fall—
Lord of himself, though not of lands;
And, having nothing, yet hath all.

THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN.

I.

Japan is an ancient and extensive empire, consisting of about four large and many small islands, said to be about 4,223 in all. The empire comprises an area estimated at 47,697 square miles, with a population in 1890 of 40,072,684.

Japan is said to possess a written history of over two thousand five hundred years, and its sovereigns to have formed an unbroken dynasty since 660 B.C., the present emperor being the hundred and twenty-first of his race.

Within the last few years Japan has made unparalleled progress in civilization, and the adoption of Western manners and customs. The feudal system under which the country was governed has been abolished, and the first national Parliament, the outcome of the constitution granted by the emperor, met in the autumn of 1890.

RESOURCES.

Japan is very mountainous, and not more than one-sixth of its area is available for cultivation, though agriculture, on which they bestow great care, is the principal occupation of the Japanese. The soil is productive, teeming with every variety of agricultural produce. Among the vegetable productions may be noted the camphor-tree, paper mulberry, and a lacquer-tree which furnishes the celebrated "lacquer" of Japan. The tobacco-plant, tea-shrub, potato, rice, wheat and other cereals are also cultivated. Copper, iron and sulphur abound; gold and silver mining is prosecuted on a small scale. It possesses a fair supply of middling coal.

The coasts are extremely rich in fish, and possess many fine harbours. It has an army of nearly 250,000 men.

In the open country rice and wheat fields abound, everywhere indicating skilled and careful agriculture.

CUSTOMS.

Meals are served on small, square tables, about a foot in height, one table being provided for each person, who sits, of course, on the floor. The meal over, the tables are removed.

Frequent bathing, in water of a high temperature, is a habit of the Japanese. The bath is heated by a charcoal furnace, connected with one side of the tub. It is not always deemed needful to change the water for each bather, and guests at hotels find it difficult to secure absolute privacy during their ablutions.

Writing of the social condition of the Japanese, Mr. MacIay expresses the conviction "that, generally speaking, the Japanese men make kind and affectionate husbands, and the women make virtuous and exemplary wives and mothers, and the children are certainly the happiest little lumps in the world; their parents fondle and spoil them most effectually, and at the same time, never lose their control over them." Though the



THE CITADEL OF OWARI CASTLE.

husband has absolute control over the person of his wife, he does not seem to abuse his power, as a general rule, though, of course, exceptions to the rule occur.

RELIGION.

The primitive religion of Japan is Shintoism, which is the worship of the invisible by a simple pastoral community.

Buddhism, brought by missionaries from China early in our era, was eagerly received by Japan, and to-day the number and magnificence of its temples show the hold it took on the nation.

The Buddhists are the champion monastery-builders of the world. Their love for nature, which is a characteristic idea of Buddhism, was prominently seen in the choice of sites for their monasteries.

Christianity was first introduced into Japan in 1549, by Spanish Jesuits, who in a short time counted their converts by thousands. But interference with things temporal, intriguing and conspiracy, brought banishment to the Jesuits, and the decree of 1587 with its edict of extermination of all Christians.

In 1853 two treaty ports were opened to foreigners, and before very many years were past, missionary stations were everywhere formed, and Japan was assiduously introducing Western civilization.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

Regarding the social condition of the Japanese, the women, though they have more liberty than any other Asiatic women, are far from enjoying the privileges of women in Europe or America. And that they are treated no worse than they are is due more to the inherent gentleness of Japanese manners than to any recognition of what is due to women.

Except in the houses of native Christians, or Japanese who have lived abroad and become thoroughly impregnated with Western ideas, a wife or daughter is merely an upper servant. In theory the wife of every man, from the Mikado downwards, performs the offices of a valet to him. Women of quite high rank keep their husbands' clothes brushed and mended, and see that everything they may require is to hand. It is the custom for Japanese ladies to make their own clothes and those of their children, and their husbands, too, when the latter do not wear European dress.

Except when she is exchanging hospitalities, a woman devotes herself to the care of her household, of her children, of her husband, and her husband's parents, if she is so unfortunate as to have them. For the Japanese woman the mother-in-law has terrors unknown in Europe. The nation is so given to

patriarchal households that it is quite the rule for a son to bring his wife home to live in his father's household. There, especially if she be the first daughter-in-law, she may live a life of utter drudgery. She is expected to wait on every one in the house except the servants, to be a sort of housekeeper under her mother-in-law, and the old people often treat their daughter-in-law with all the severity and tyranny possible to their mild and philosophical nature. A wife has no redress unless she is in the station of a servant or has powerful parents. If the former she simply gets uneasy and goes into service again.

CHIEF CITIES.

One of the earliest points of attraction to the visitor in Japan, is Yokohama, the commercial capital. It is a cosmopolitan city, almost all nationalities being represented, hence it is no the most favourable place to study Japanese life. The streets are wide and gas-lighted, and the bay filled with shipping, a greater part of which flies the national flag of Japan, for besides a large coasting fleet, Japan possesses many war vessels, all manned and officered entirely by Japanese.

Seventeen miles inland is Tokyo, the capital, a city of two and a half million inhabitants. The city is interspersed with so many temples and groves that it occupies an area at least equal to London, England, with its 5,000,000 of a population.

The castle or citadel of Tokyo is the largest in Japan, and is arranged on the general plan of Japanese castles (there are about one hundred and fifty scattered through the country), a triple system of moats and embankments, one inside the other, with a rugged hill in the centre. At Tokyo the outermost line is ten miles in circumference, a large part of the metropolis being built between the first and second walls.

MISSIONS.

The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States sent its first missionary in 1859. In 1867 the number of missionaries increased, and the people, beginning to distinguish between Romanism and Protestantism, gave more reverent attention to the truth. In 1873, the grand influx of all denominations occurred, new stations were formed, and a brighter day dawned for Japan.

It was in 1873 that our own church sent its first heralds to this distant field, the opening of which has been of such large blessing to the work at home.

THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.

J. G. Paton, one of the great missionaries of the century, was one of eleven children. How much he owes to the faithful home training of his old Scotch father he has himself told us "The very discipline through which our father passed us was a kind of religion in itself. If anything really serious required to be punished, he retired first to his closet for prayer, and we boys got to understand that he was laying the matter before God, and that was the severest part of the punishment for me to bear. I could have defied any amount of mere penalty, but this spoke to my conscience as a message from God. We loved him all the more when we saw how much it cost him to punish us, and, in truth, he had never much of that kind of work to do upon any one of all the eleven. We were ruled by love far more than by fear."



VIEW OF THE THIRD TERRACE, NINKO TEMPLE.