

THE YEAR 1891 IN JAPAN.

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Sir Edwin Arnold is giving the world a poet's impressions of Japan. He makes its scenery and its art, its customs and its people pass before our eyes like the scenes of some fair drama, poetic, restful, pure, and far away, without one touch of rude reality to disturb the fond illusion. For our delight he exercises the poet's unquestioned right and sets forth his own sensations in the garb of facts. May no unfortunate read his poetry as prose and seek in real Japan the substance of these fancies light as air.

Readily as Japan lends itself to artist and poet, it is not fairyland. It has its own unyielding facts, painful and sharp, which remain, ignore them as we may. It is of our world of sin and sorrow, and has no beauty without the underlying pain, and wins no triumph for which it does not pay. The Japanese are learning this truth, and the time has gone past here, too, when "To be young was very heaven!"

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE.

"The earth also shook and trembled, the foundations also of the mountains moved and were shaken; then the channels of waters appeared, and the foundations of the world were laid bare." Villages and towns fell with a crash, and from the clouds of dust and smoke the bewildered people, terrified, rushed forth, leaving behind the wounded and the dead. Ten thousand had been killed, fifteen thousand had been wounded, and five hundred thousand were homeless; and all was in a moment, without warning, in the twinkling of an eye. On such foundation rests the beauty of Japan.

The warnings are incessant. Look at the earthquake record in Tokyo for the few years past; in 1885, 51 earthquakes; in 1886, 55; in 1887, 80; in 1888, 101; in 1889, 115; in 1890, 25; and familiarity breeds not contempt, but increasing apprehension. The record includes many slight tremblings, but also severer shocks which have thrown down chimneys, cracked walls, and caused the earth to open. Nor has the memory of the earthquake of 1854 grown faint; and the story is often told of the destruction of the great city and the death of an hundred thousand persons. Now again whole provinces have suffered.

"The Nagoya-Gifu plain is one of Japan's great gardens, but it has been devastated. A disturbance occurred in the Mino Mountains, and at once an area greater than that of the Empire of Japan became a sea of waves, the movements being magnified on the surface of the soft alluvial plains. In Tokyo, more than two hundred miles from the centre of the disaster, the ground moved in long, easy undulations, producing in some persons dizziness and nausea, the movement being not unlike what we might expect upon a raft rising and falling on an ocean swell. Near to its origin the waves were short and rapid, cities were overturned, the ground was fissured,