

## THE YEAR IN JAPAN.

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For the year past Japan has been at peace—nature, society, missions undisturbed by calamities and unexcited by great events. Without severe earthquakes, convulsions, or struggles, the quiet routine of common life, in contrast to other years, offers little material for reports. A few weeks ago, however, two dormant volcanoes exploded, giving evidence that the seismic forces are not yet extinct; and there have not been wanting indication that forces which may convulse society are only quiescent.

*Politics.*—The long political struggle grows confused and tedious. In the winter the strife between Diet and Government, the representatives of the people and the ruling oligarchy, reached an acute stage. The end of parliamentary government—such measure as we have—seemed at hand, when the Emperor appeared, *deus ex machina*. He told the Government to mend its ways, economize, and accept the reforms proposed by the Diet. The Diet he commanded to cease its encroachments upon the imperial prerogative and its unreasonable obstruction, and to adopt a policy of peace and work. Government and Diet bowed their acknowledgments, accepted the decision, and worked for the remaining days of the session in harmony, none able to determine who was victor. Parliamentary government has made distinct advance. The device was worthy the veteran statesman who planned it, and served his turn, but it cannot be repeated. The Emperor cannot enter often the domain of party politics, even as umpire.

*Agriculture and Commerce.*—Seed-time and harvest have not failed; earth, air, and sea have brought forth abundantly after their kinds. New manufactures are introduced; railway and ship-building increase; foreign commerce advances with leaps and bounds, and never before was Japan so prosperous. But with increase of wealth comes increase of sorrow. The cost of living constantly increases, luxuries become necessities, the struggle for existence grows fiercer, and the old Japan, the lotus-eating Japan, fades away. We hear of "sweating," of cruelly long hours of work and cruelly small rates of pay, of a growing discontent and of strikes. One half comes to believe that modern civilization costs too much, and there is a growing, oppressive sense of weariness, of the monotony of life as we see Japan struggling with our selfsame problems and conditions.

*Japanese and Foreigners.*—Until Japan has its way in treaty revision this heading must be continued. And the trouble nowadays is that Japan does not know what it wants. The politicians cannot agree as to the bargain they would drive, nor as to who shall have the glory of settling this troublesome affair. As every one knows, foreigners are confined by treaty to a limited area around seven open ports, and even in the open ports can hold real estate only in small districts called "concessions." But years