

During the long history of China and Japan these countries very rarely came into conflict with each other. Only once has China invaded Japan, when Kuhlai Khan, the Mongol emperor, attempted its conquest with a great fleet, the fate of which we have already told. This effort had its influence upon Japan, for during the succeeding three centuries pirates from the island empire boldly raided the coast of China, devastating the maritime provinces and causing immense loss and suffering. They often built forts on the shore, from which they sallied forth to plunder and burn, keeping their ships at hand ready to fly if defeated. Thus they went on, plundering and destroying, their raids reaching a ruinous stage in 1553 and the succeeding years. They defeated the Chinese troops in several battles, ravaged the whole surrounding country, carried off immense quantities of spoil, sold multitudes of prisoners into slavery, and in seven or eight years slaughtered over one hundred thousand soldiers and citizens of China. The raids resembled those made at an earlier date by the Normans on the coast of France and the Danes on that of England, the sea-rovers pouncing down at unexpected times and places and plundering and burning at will.

These forays of the pirates, in which the government took no part, were followed in 1592 by an invasion in force of the kingdom of Corea. In this the invaders rapidly swept all before them, quickly overrunning the southern half of the kingdom and threatening China. The Chinese then came to the aid of their helpless neighbors, and for six years the