JAPAN:

ITS HISTORY, TRADITIONS, AND RELIGIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAND AND ITS INHABITANTS.

Japan consists of four great, and many small, islands—Its nearness to Russia, China, and Korea—Its extent and area—The Kurile, Loo-choo, and Yayeyama islands—The mountains of Japan—Its harbours, rivers, and lakes—Its climate—The winters less rigorous than was anticipated; the hot season short—Effects of the *Kuro-shiwo*, or "black current," and of the *Oya-shiwo*, or "cold current"—The Japanese Mediterranean, or Inland Sea—This is shallow, and therefore variable in temperature—Dr. Rein's favourable description of the climate—Our own experiences of it—The geology of Japan—Volcanic disturbances—A summary record of its chief earthquakes—The god Daibutsu of Nara decapitated—The summit of the sacred mountain, Fuji, shaken in—The wreck of the frigate *Diana* by an earthquake—Typhoons—Dr. Maget's recommendation of Japan as a sanatarium—The measure of its heat and humidity—The origin of the Japanese people—Extraordinary ages of their god-ancestors—The first emperor's father, aged 836,042 years—Dr. Kaempfer's theory of a Japanese migration from Babel—The theory of an Aino origin—The Japanese a Tungusic race—Their route from Mantchuria, by Korea—The mixture of races—The men not usually of small stature—The women small but pleasing, and often beautiful in appearance—Defacing customs dying out—Improving condition of the people.

THE beautiful land of Japan consists of four great islands, which may be regarded as Japan proper, and of many smaller islands, some lying near their shores, and others stretching away into far-distant seas—the Kuriles all but touching the icy coast of Kamschatka, and the Loo-choos*

* Called Liukiu by the Chinese, and Riukiu by the Japanese.

reaching far down towards the tropic seas. The native name of the whole country is Nippon, or Dai Nippon (or Nihon),* and the four main islands are called Honshiu, Shikoku, Kiushiu, and Yezo.† Shikoku and Kiushiu may almost be regarded as continuous with the main island Honshiu, the straits between them being but narrow, and more easy to cross than are many rivers. The distance of the fourth island, Yezo, from the mainland is more considerable, but is not much greater than that of the Isle of Wight from Portsmouth, or than that of Kent from Essex at the Nore. In the case of Yezo and Honshiu, however, they are but the extremities which approach each other, the land of each stretching away in opposite directions.

Japan, while washed on its eastern and southern shores by the vast Pacific Ocean, is situated much nearer to other countries than many people suppose. Its mainland is within about 100 miles of the great continent of Asia at Korea, and between the two lies the large Japanese island of Tsushima, which is within 25 miles of Korea, and about 35 of Japan.‡ The island of Saghalin, lately taken over from Japan by Russia, is within about 20 miles of Yezo, and is very much closer still to the mainland of Asia, being

* The name is often written Niphon, or Nifon. Japan has many other native designations, mostly of an historical, poetical, and colloquial nature. One of these signifies "Country of the Great Islands," with reference to the legendary origin of the country; another signifies "Outspread Islands," from the fact of their being spread out over the sea like Japanese garden stepping-stones; another, "Cliff-Fortress Island"; others signifying "Country of the Sun," and "Nest of the Sun." Mr. Pfoundes, in his Japanese Notes, gives the following also: "Consolidated Drop," "Between Heaven and Earth," "Southern Country of Brave Warriors," "Country of Peaceful Shores," "Country ruled by the Slender Sword," "Princesses Country" (from its belonging to the sun-goddess), "Land of Great Gentleness," and "Honourable Country." The word "Nihon," which I have given in brackets in the text, is an abbreviation of *Dai Nihon Koku*, or "Great Sun Source Country."

† Most geographies and school-books erroneously limit the name Nippon, or Niphon, to the main island, Honshiu.

‡ In estimating these distances, in spelling the names of places, and in similar matters, I shall conform usually to the very valuable map of Japan compiled by Mr. R. H. Brunton, C.E., a highly competent authority, and published by Trübner & Co., of London.

distant only about 5 or 6 miles. The distance between Japan (Yezo) and that mainland (Russian Tartary), on the south side of Saghalin, is considerably less than 200 miles. This proximity of Japan to Korea, China, and the Russian possessions may prove of the greatest possible importance to her future, and is well worth bearing in mind by every one interested in her.

Taking the four great islands of Japan as one, the length of the country, measured north and south, is roughly nearly 900 miles; and its breadth, east and west, about 800. These dimensions would give, however, a very exaggerated idea of its size, unless qualified by the facts, that the actual width at the broadest part (neglecting minor protuberances) is below 200 miles, the average breadth being much less, while between the main islands is inclosed much inland water, including the beautiful Inland Sea. The approximate area of Japan is given by its present government as 148,700 square miles, that of the island of Great Britain being about 90,000, and that of the United Kingdom about 121,000 square miles. The southern extremity of Japan proper (Kiushiu) is in latitude 31° north, its northern extremity (Yezo) being in latitude 45½° north. The whole country lies, therefore, much farther south than England, the latitude of the south of Cornwall being 50° north.

The Kurile Islands, which have come into the recognised possession of Japan since the surrender to Russia of the much more important island of Saghalin, extend in a long line in a north-western direction, from Yezo to Kamschatka, over a distance of 600 miles. The Loo-choo and Yayeyama islands extend in an opposite, or south-western, direction, a distance of about 500 miles. A third group, or rather chain, of islands stretches away from the south-east part of Japan, beginning with the long volcanic island of Vries—which is still in volcanic activity, and was surmounted with a banner of smoke when we left Japan in April 1879—and ending with the Bonin group, which are nearly 500 miles from Japan proper. It will be unnecessary for the purposes of this work to do more than make slight mention of these

far-reaching island dependencies of Japan, although the nearer islands will occasionally claim fuller notice.

The general appearance of Japan itself, and of these long chains of islands rising at intervals from the sea, conveys the idea that they all are the summits of mountain ranges, which in the course of ages have had their bases submerged by the rising of the sea, or else have gradually settled down beneath the sea's surface. The islands are for the most part steep and lofty in proportion to their area, and Japan proper is an exceedingly hilly country, the eminences often towering up into mountains of Alpine height. Fuji-san is 13,000 feet high; Mount Mitaké, 9000 feet; Asama, 8500; Chokai, 6000; Odai, 5400; and several others 5000 feet high: many of them are active, and some quiescent, volcanoes, the designation of "extinct volcano" being sometimes prematurely applied. The coasts are deeply indented by the sea, and the sea as deeply indented by high promontories, with many islands emerging, both off the coasts and from the inland waters. There are said to be more than three thousand islands in the Japanese group, some of them as large as our large counties, and others too small to deserve separate mention. There are fifty-six harbours and trading ports, many of which are, however, of too little depth to admit European ocean-going vessels. Nagasaki is a splendid deep-water harbour, sheltered on all sides by lofty and picturesque hills. The inland sea has many excellent anchorages for the largest ships.

The main island of Japan (Honshiu) being both narrow and mountainous, and the other three comparatively small, there are no great rivers navigable for hundreds of miles as in many European countries. The principal rivers, taken in the order of the approximate lengths of their main channels, are the Shinana-gawa, of which the main channel is 180 miles long; the Toné-gawa, 170 miles; the Kita-kami-gawa, 140; the Ishikari-gawa, in Yezo, 130; the Tenriu-gawa, 120; the Kiso-gawa, 115; the Sakata-gawa and the Okuma-gawa, each 110; and the Noshiro-gawa, 100 miles. Some of the shorter rivers are nevertheless formidable streams at times, spreading over beds a mile

and more in width, and running with all the speed and violence of huge mountain torrents.* But few of the rivers bear the same name from source to mouth, the name often being changed more than once on its way to the sea.

As a mountainous country Japan has, naturally, numerous lakes, but owing to the narrowness of the mainland, and to the irregularity in its level, but few of them are of any considerable extent. The largest, Lake Biwa, near the centre of the main island of Honshiu, has an area of 190 square miles, and is a highly picturesque and beautiful sheet of inland water. Lake Kasumiga-Ura is 80 square miles in extent, and there are others of 35, 25, and 20 square miles, with several very much smaller. Hakoné Lake, which is best known to Europeans from its situation on the great high-road between Tokio and Kioto, and from its accessibility from Yokohama, is beautifully situated, but is $3\frac{1}{2}$ square miles only in extent.

The climate of Japan is very different from that which some authors had led me to expect. The winter, in particular, was not nearly so rigorous as I had anticipated. Snow fell occasionally, and lay for several days, in Tokio, and occasionally cold winds blew. But the cold was relieved by so much bright sunshine that its chilling effects were the exception rather than the rule. It is true that the winter of 1878–79 in Japan was said to be as exceptionally mild as that in England was severe, and due allowance must be made, of course, for this fact; but those who have resided for several years in the country give a good account of its winters. Professor W. Anderson,† of Tokio, for example, in a scientific paper, states that from November to March inclusive the weather is exceptionally fine; "the

* "The Oi-gawa rises in the south-west of Kai, and traverses the province of Totomi, intersecting the Tokaido between Kanaya and Shimada. It is more remarkable for the breadth of its bed, which near the mouth is two and a half miles wide, and for the swiftness of its current, than for the length of its course."—*Satow.*

† Professor of Surgery and Anatomy in the Imperial Naval Medical College, and Medical Officer to the British Legation, L.R.C.P. Lond., and F.R.C.S. Eng.—a highly scientific and accomplished observer.

days are mostly warm and sunny, the sky clear and cloudless, and the air is dry and bracing." He adds, however, that there are sudden and great variations of temperature, which appear to occasion as much catarrh, bronchitis, pleurisy, pneumonia, and sub-acute rheumatism affections as in our own country. But these diseases are not caused by climate only, the construction of the houses and the dress of the people having very much to do with them, and in Japan both houses and dresses are such, in my opinion, as to tend greatly to multiply such complaints. In the months of April and May the weather is very changeable, "but it will compare very favourably," says the same authority, "with the corresponding period in England." From the middle of June to the middle of September there are heavy falls of rain, and these, combined with a high temperature, saturate the atmosphere with moisture, and produce great lassitude and debility. People have to keep indoors as much as possible during the heat of the day. About the middle of September the weather begins to improve, and October, although occasionally subject to heavy rains, is usually a healthy and pleasant month.

The climate of a mountainous country like Japan, with an extremely irregular contour, and extending over 11° of latitude, is of course very different in different places. It is further influenced on part of the coast by the well-known warm ocean stream known as the "black current" (*Kuro-shiwo*), which sweeps up from the warm south, past Shikoku and the south-eastern shores, and then onward across the Pacific to the coast of America, where it flows southward past California.* It has a marked effect upon the temperature of the land by which it flows, producing greater warmth than is experienced in the same latitudes on the opposite side of Japan, although a branch of the Kuro-shiwo flows northward into the sea of Japan. The island of Yezo, one would expect, is much colder than the southern parts of the empire,

* Or, as some authorities say, turns earlier eastward and south-eastward, and loses itself in the drift current of the Pacific, without reaching the American shores.

but the difference is greater than is due to difference of latitude alone. This is caused by a stream setting down past the eastern side of Yezo from the cold sea of Okhotsk. It is not a stream of great breadth or volume, but it produces a notable effect upon the neighbouring land. "The south of Kiushiu is washed by the strength of the Kuro-shiwo, and in consequence has almost a tropical climate during the whole year; while the Oya-shiwo runs along the east coast of Yezo, which coast is fast bound in ice for twenty miles off the land during the whole winter."* Moreover, Japan has, as we know, its Mediterranean, and this exercises some influence upon its climate. It is comparatively shallow, and is consequently influenced in some degree by the river water flowing into it, and still more by the direct effect of the seasons. It is colder in winter and warmer in summer than the Pacific and Japan seas, with which it communicates, falling to 50° (Fahr.) in winter and rising to 77° in summer. The character of the climate is well stated summarily as follows, by Dr. Rein, Professor of Geography at the University of Marburg, in Germany, who has given great attention to the subject: "The climate of Japan reflects the characteristics of that of the neighbouring continent, and exhibits, like that, two great annual contrasts, a hot, damp summer, and a cold, relatively dry winter; these two seasons lie under the sway of the monsoons, but the neighbouring seas weaken the effects of these winds and mitigate their extremes, in such a manner that neither the summer heat nor the cold of winter attain the same height in Japan as in China at the same latitudes. Spring and autumn are extremely agreeable seasons, the oppressive summer heat does not last long, and in winter the contrast between the nightly frosts and the midday heat, produced by considerable insulation, but still more by the raw northerly winds, causes frequent chills, though the prevailing bright sky makes the season of the year much more endurable

* Capt. A. R. Brown, in an able paper on "Winds and Currents in the Vicinity of the Japanese Islands," read at the Asiatic Society of Japan, in 1874.

than in many other regions where the winter cold is equal. As a fact, the climate of Japan agrees very well with most Europeans, so that people have already begun to look upon certain localities as climatic watering-places, where the inhabitant of Hong Kong and Shanghai can find refuge from the oppressive heat of summer, and invigorate his health." * This appears to me to be one of the best, as well as one of the latest, statements of those who have given attention to the subject. We certainly experienced in Japan many lovely summer-like days, in Tokio, on the shores and islands of the Pacific coast, at Nagasaki, in the interior, at Nara, at Kioto, and on the Tokaido, and our visit was from the 10th of January to the 10th of April. Early in the last-named month the park of Wooyeno was alight with cherry and plum-blossoms, and crowded with people drawn forth from the city by the irresistible charm of springtime. On a moonlight evening spent at the river-side residence of Prince Hachisuka, we remained out of doors in evening dress and without hats long after the maiden splendours of the moon had turned the gardens into fairyland, and converted the blossom-strewn lake into a floor for Titania and her court. On the opposite side of the river Sumida the famous bloom-groves of Mukojima stretched apparently for miles in silver whiteness, and in a night almost as fair and mild as we English ever linger in at home. A little longer stay was necessary, however, in order to realise in its fulness the beautiful outbreak of a Japanese summer. "When the fields are sown with summer grains, and the flute-like song of the *uguisu* or Japanese nightingale is heard from out the young foliage of the bushes, summer is already present, and the vegetation now begins to develop under a powerful insolation, accompanied by plentiful and frequent showers of rain, a variety and fulness such as we seek in vain in the Mediterranean region. Japan owes these blessings to the south-west monsoon and to the Kuro-shiwo, namely, its fertilising summer rain, its astonishingly

* Asiatic Society of Japan, 1878.

rich flora, and the possibility of reaping two harvests in the year off the same field" (Rein).

The conformation of Japan and of its outlying islands, considered in connection with its neighbouring islands and the adjacent continent, is a great temptation to writers, now that geology is a fashionable study, to speculate upon the great cosmic forces and methods by which this part of the world has been brought to its present form and conditions. A recent writer says, for example: "The Japanese islands form a link in that great chain of volcanic action which is carried on from Kamschatka through the Philippines, Sumbawa, and Java to Sumatra, and thence in a north-westerly direction to the Bay of Bengal."* Baron Richtofen, in a paper read before the Geological Society of Berlin,† states that the west and east portions of the Japanese islands, from Kiushiu eastwards through Suruga and Shinano, are the direct continuation of the mountain system of south and east China, and that this system is intersected at either end by another,‡ commencing on the west in Kiushiu, and extending southwards in the direction of the Loo-choos, and on the east constituting the northern branch of the main island, Honshiu, and with a slight deviation of direction continuing through the great islands of Yezo and Saghalin. The far-ranging Kurile Islands form a third system. The second of these systems is the scene of great volcanic disturbances, as are likewise the interferences or crossings of these several ranges, where indeed volcanoes most abound.

We had been but a very few days in Japan when we experienced our first rocking in that volcanic cradle in which Tokio (formerly Yedo) is nursed, and the experience was repeated during our stay in the capital nearly a dozen times. Sometimes the lateral vibration was quite violent, and sustained for many seconds, during most of which the house creaked and strained considerably. Those who have

* 'National Encyclopædia.' † Translated in Griffis's 'Mikado's Empire.'
‡ Running S.S.W. & N.N.E.

investigated the matter say that no trustworthy records exist of the earthquakes which doubtless occurred before the fifth century A.D., because prior to that date no system of writing existed in the country. But there are records of many destructive earthquakes since that period.* In 599 A.D. a severe shock destroyed all the buildings of Yamata, and prayer was offered, by command, to the god of earthquakes in all parts of the empire. In 642, 676, and 678, the same place was again severely shaken, the trembling lasting for three or four days on the first of these occasions. In 679 Tsukushi (now Chikuzen and Chikugo), in the great island of Kiushiu, was assailed by a tremendous shock, causing many fissures and chasms, one of which was four miles long. In 685, "innumerable lives were lost in many provinces," Shikoku suffering most, 2000 acres of land sinking down permanently into the sea on the coast of Tosa, in that island. In 715, a more eastern district, that of Totomi, was so shaken that enormous masses of earth fell from the hills, stopping the course of the Aratama River, and three counties (Fuchi, Chogé, and Ishida) were converted into a temporary lake. In 819, several of the more central and eastern provinces were so visited, that "mountains were rent asunder in several places, and innumerable lives were lost." Many calamitous earthquakes are recorded in the eighth and ninth centuries, mountains being rent, rivers dried up, castles thrown down, and many lives lost, one shock (in 855) even going the length of shaking the head off the famous colossal god (Daibutsu) of Nara, and rolling it down, over his golden lotus seat, upon the temple floor; while in Mutsu, in 869, "the sky was illuminated, and the movement of the ground so violent that the people could not stand up, and many of them were crushed by falling houses, and others were swallowed up in fissures; soon afterwards the sea rolled in upon the coast with a tremendous noise, and washed away thousands of the people." In one of the Kioto temples,

* The following summary of earthquake shocks is abridged from Mr. J. Hattori's paper in the 'Transactions' of the Asiatic Society of Japan, 1878.