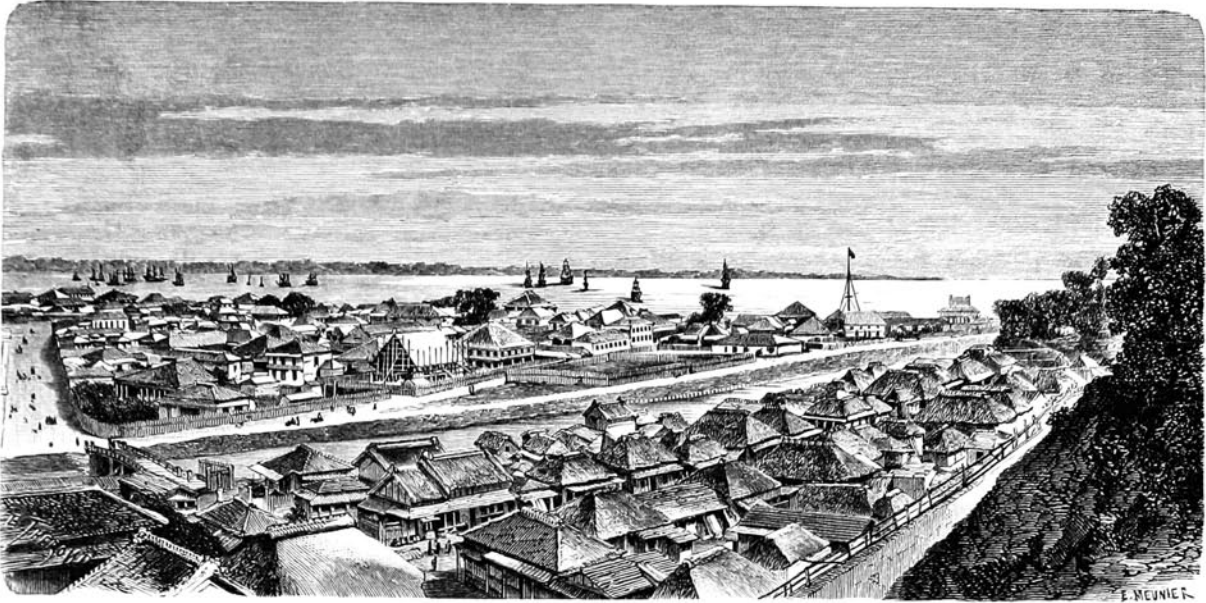


BOOK I
BENTEN

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A PORTION OF THE FRANK QUARTER AT YOKOHAMA.

CHAPTER I.

THE INLAND SEA.

EXTENT AND WEALTH OF THE EMPIRE OF JAPAN.—SCENERY AND FEATURES OF THE INLAND SEA.

THE Empire of Japan extends over more than twenty-six degrees of latitude (from $24^{\circ} 16'$ to 50° north latitude). It comprises 3,850 islands, or islets, representing a superficies of 7,521 square miles, of fifteen to the degree.

This little insular world, whose population is supposed to amount to between thirty-two and thirty-four millions, is divided into six chief groups, or archipelagoes. The largest is Japan, properly so called, comprehending 3,511 islands, with a superficies of 5,306 square miles. Then come Yeso, the great Kouriles, Krafto, the Bonin group, and the Fiow Kiow Archipelago.

The Inland Sea of Japan is bounded by the southern coasts of Nippon, and the northern coasts of Kioukiou, and Sikoff. It is, however, more like a canal than a real

mediterranean sea, being a communication established, at the height of the thirty-fourth degree of north latitude, between the Chinese Sea, or, more strictly, of the Strait of Corea, on the western coast of Japan, and the great ocean which washes the southern and eastern shores of the same archipelago. The whole of the Japanese Mediterranean is sometimes known as the Sea of Souwo.

Each of the provinces by which it is surrounded contains one or several "lordships," belonging to feudal princes, who enjoy considerable independence, and generally derive large revenues from their estates. Among others, the family of the princes of Kisou may be mentioned, as drawing from their patrimonial domains an annual revenue equivalent to the sum of £352,000 ; the Prince of Aki, whose revenue is £279,400 ; the Prince of Nagato, whose fortune amounts to £236,160 ; and the Prince of Bidzen, who draws £198,400.

The Japanese Mediterranean, like the European sea so called, is divided into several basins. They are five in number, and are named from the most important of the provinces which overlook them, so that the Inland Sea bears five different names throughout its longitudinal course from west to east.

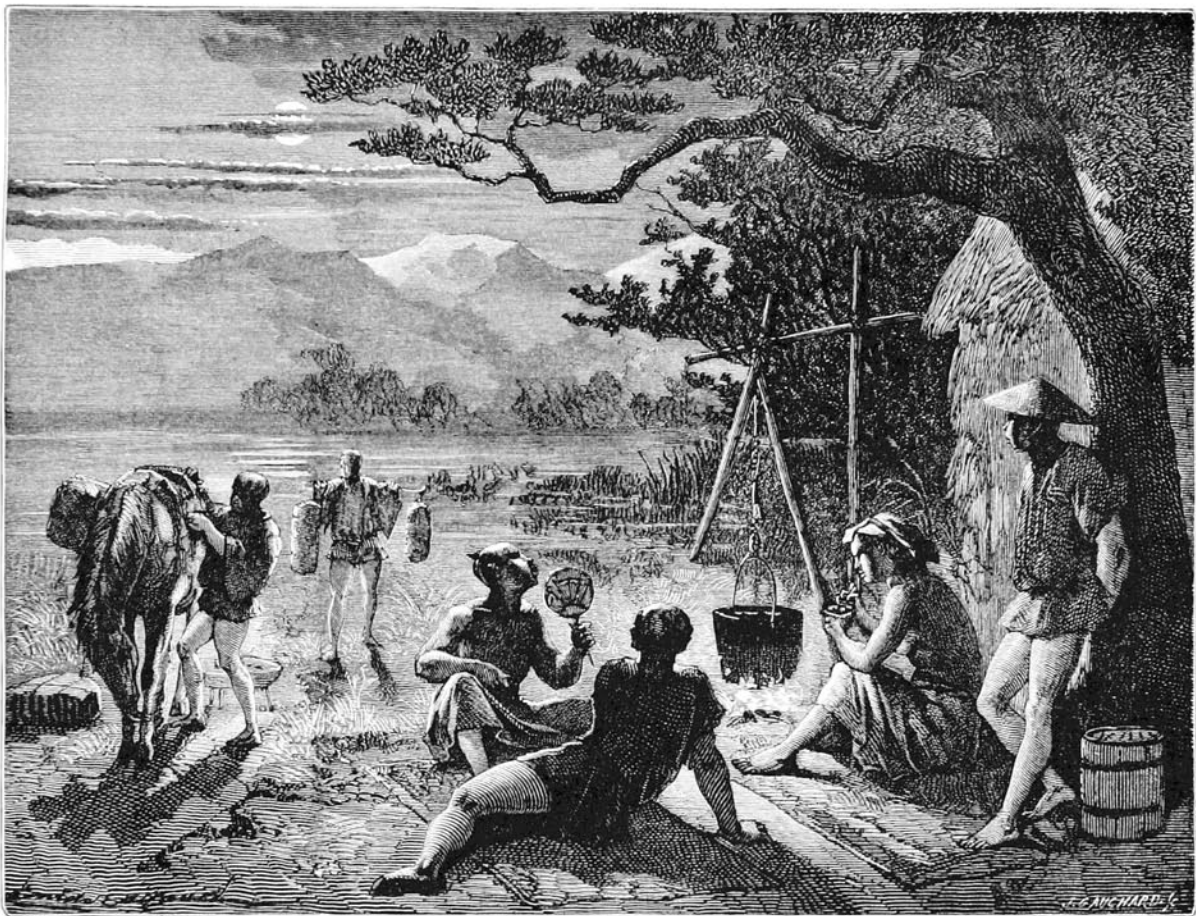
In the midst of the natural wealth which surrounds them, the large, industrious, and intelligent population of the country parts of Japan have for their entire possessions only a humble shed, a few working implements, some pieces of cotton cloth, a few mats, a cloak of straw, a little store of tea, oil, rice, and salt ; for furniture, nothing but two or three cooking utensils ; in a word, only the strict necessities of existence. All the remaining product of their labour belongs to the owners of the soil, the feudal lords.

The absence of a middle class gives a miserable aspect to the Japanese villages. Liberal civilization would have covered the borders of the Inland Sea with pretty hamlets and elegant villas. The uniformity of the rustic dwellings is broken by temples, but they are to be distinguished at a distance only by the vast dimensions of their roofs, and by the imposing effect of the ancient trees which are almost always to be found in their vicinity. Buddhist pagodas, which are lofty towers with pointed roofs, adorned with galleries on each floor, are much less common in Japan than in China.

On entering the basin of Hiogo, we came in sight of a town of some importance, on the coast of Sikoff ; it is called Imabari. A vast sandy beach, which is rarely to be found in Japan, stretched back to a kind of suburb, in which we could discern a busy concourse of people, apparently carrying on market business. Above the strand

were fertile plains, whose undulating lines were lost in the mist at the foot of a chain of mountains bathed in sunshine. The principal peaks of this chain—Kori-yama, Yafatzowsen, and Siro Yama—are from 1,000 to 1,600 yards in height.

Fortifications, or rather mounds of earth, behind which shone several banners, protected the batteries posted in front of the port. Some soldiers, standing in a



ISLANDERS OF THE INLAND SEA.

group on the shore, followed our corvette with their eyes. There was nothing remarkable in the aspect of the town, except the sacred places, adorned by gigantic trees.

Some time afterwards we passed, within rifle-range, a large Japanese steamer, which our pilot, whom we consulted, and who judged from the colours of the flag, informed us was the property of the Prince of Tosa. His estates are situated in the southern portion of the island of Sikoff, and they bring him in a very large annual revenue.

Most probably he was returning from a conference of the feudal party held in the city of Kioto, at the court of the Hereditary Emperor of Japan; and had embarked at Hiogo, in order to regain his own province by the Boungo canal. What were his sentiments on beholding a strange corvette cleaving the waters of the Inland Sea? Does he flatter himself that he can repel the civilization of the West by the arms which it places at his disposal? Does he know whither steam will lead him?

Counting up all the war-steamers which, to our knowledge, have been furnished to Japan by Europe and America, we make the number fourteen. The first, the yacht *Solenburg*, was given to the Taikoun by the King of the Netherlands; another, the yacht *Emperor*, by the Queen of England; the others have been sold by the Governments or the traders of the West, either to the Taikoun, or to certain of the principal daïmios, such as Mito, Nagato, Satsouma, and Tosa.

A little before sunset we saw, on the coast of Sikoff, a feudal castle, remarkable for its picturesque site upon the summit and the sides of a wooded hill, at whose feet a rustic hamlet seemed to shelter itself under the protection of the ancient lordly towers. It is the Castle of Marougama, the residence of Prince Kiogokow Sanoke, whose revenues are valued at £40,000. The castles of the daïmios are generally at a distance from the towns and villages. They are composed, in most instances, of a vast quadrangular enclosure, within thick and lofty crenellated walls, surrounded by a moat, and flanked at the corners, or surmounted at intervals throughout their extent, by small square towers with slightly sloping roofs. In the interior are the park, the gardens, and the actual residence of the daïmio, comprising a main dwelling, and numerous dependencies. Sometimes a solitary tower, of a shape similar to the other buildings, rises in the middle of the feudal domain, and rears itself three or four stories higher than the external wall. As in the case of the Chinese pagodas, each story is surrounded by a roof, which, however, but seldom supports a gallery. All the masonry is rough, and joined by cement; the woodwork is painted red and black, and picked out with copper ornaments, which are sometimes polished, but sometimes laden with verdigris. The tiles of the roof are slate-colour. In general, richness of detail is less aimed at than the general effect resulting from the grandeur and harmony of the proportions of the buildings. In this respect, some of the seignorial residences of Japan deserve to figure among the remarkable architectural monuments of the peoples of Eastern Asia.

SCENERY OF THE INLAND SEA.

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We anchored in a bay of the island of Souyousima, at the southern point of the province of Bitsiou, and at the entrance of the basin of Arima. We were surrounded by mountains, at whose feet twinkled many lights shining in from houses. The stillness was unbroken, save by the distant barking of dogs. Next morning, April 24, very early, we were ploughing the peaceful waters of the Arimanado. This basin is completely closed on the east by a single island, which divides it from the Idsouminada by a length of thirty miles. It is in the form of a triangle, whose apex, turned towards the north, faces the province of Arima, on the island of Nippon. This is the beautiful island of Awadsi, which was the dwelling-place of the gods, and the cradle of the national mythology of the Japanese. The lowlands at its southern extremity are covered with a luxuriant vegetation, and the soil rises gently into cultivated or wooded hills until they touch the boundaries of a chain of mountains from 300 to 700 yards in height. Awadsi belongs to the Prince of Awa, whose annual revenue amounts to £160,000. It is separated from the island of Sikoff on the west, by the passage of Naruto, and the island of Nippon on the east, by the Strait of Linschoten.

The greater number of the steamers which cross the Japanese Mediterranean from west to east, pass from the basin of Arima into that of Idsoumi, where they generally touch at the important commercial town of Hiogo; and from thence they enter the great ocean by the Strait of Linschoten. That passage of Naruto which leads



WINTER DRESS OF THE FISHERMEN AND PEASANTS.

directly from the basin of Arima into the great ocean is shorter than the former; it is, however, much less frequented, because it is considered a dangerous channel for high-decked vessels.

We saw the coasts drawing nearer and nearer to us, as we descended, towards the south-west corner of this triangular piece of land. At the same time a promontory of the island of Sikoff rose above the horizon on our right, and seemed to stretch continuously onward in the direction of Awadsi. Very soon we found ourselves in a passage from whence we could distinctly see the beautiful vegetation of the coast of Sikoff and the coast of Awadsi. At length we saw the gates of the Strait: on



JAPANESE BIRDS.

the left, rocks surmounted by pines, forming the front of the island of Awadsi; on the right, a solitary rock, or islet, also bearing a few pines, forming the front of the island of Sikoff. Between them the sea, like a bar of breakers, though the weather was calm: afar, the undulating ocean, without a speck of foam; the tossing of the waves in the passage being solely the result of the violence of the current. All around us, on the waves and at the foot of the rocks, were thousands of sea-birds, screaming, fluttering, and diving for the prey which the sea, stirred to its depths by the current, was perpetually tossing up to them. Several fishing-boats

THE COASTS OF THE INLAND SEA.

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were out, not on the canal—that would have been impossible—but behind the rocks, in the creeks of the little solitary islet and of Sikoff.

Below Awadsi, the united waters of the two straits of Naruto and Linschoten form the canal of Kino, which washes the shores of the province of Awa, on Sikoff, and of the province of Kisou, on Nippon. We sailed for some time yet in sight of the latter; then the land disappeared from our eyes, and we soon perceived, by the wide-rolling motion of the waves, that we were on the outer sea, in the immense domain of the great ocean.

I occupied myself, during the whole evening, in recalling the recollections of my journey; and I could find nothing out of Switzerland to compare with the effect of the beautiful Japanese scenery. Since then, several Japanese, travelling in Switzerland, have told me that no other country awakened so vividly the remembrance of their own. Still more frequently I transported myself in fancy to one or other of the archipelagoes of the Souwonada, earnestly desiring the advent of that hour when the breath of liberty will give them, in the Far East, the importance which formerly belonged, in Europe, to the Archipelago of our Mediterranean.

They cannot be blended into a general impression. Nothing is less uniform than the scenery of the shores of the Inland Sea. It is a series of pictures which vary infinitely, according to the greater or less proximity of the coasts, or to the aspect of the islands on the horizon. There are grand marine scenes, where the lines of the sea blend with sandy beaches sleeping under the golden rays of the sun; while in the distance, the misty mountains form a dim background. There are little landscapes, very clear, trim, and modest: a village at the back of a peaceful bay, surrounded by green fields, over which towers a forest of pines; just as one may see by a lake in the Jura on a fine morning in June.

Sometimes, when the basins contracted, and the islands in front seemed to shut us in, I remembered the Rhine above Boppard. The Japanese scenery is, however, more calm and bright than the romantic landscapes to which I allude. The abrupt slopes, the great masses of shade, the shifting lines, are replaced by horizontal levels; by a beach, a port, and terraces; in the distance are rounded islands, sloping hills, conical mountains. These pictures have their charms: the imagination, no less than the eye, rests in the contemplation of them; but it would seek in vain that melancholy attraction which, according to the notions of European taste, seems inseparable from the enjoyment.

C

Laying aside the question of the picturesque, which is not the essential element of our relations with the Far East, I hope that, sooner or later, a chain of Western colonies will be formed at Japan, peacefully developing the natural and commercial resources of that admirable country, along a line marked by Yokohama, Hiogo, Simonosaki, and Nagasaki. It might have a regular service of steamers. The trading steamers of America, as well as those of China, might maintain the relations of the two worlds with the King of the Archipelagoes of the Great Ocean. Europeans, weary of the tropical climate or the burthen of business in China, might seek pure and strengthening air, and pass some weeks of repose on the shores of the Japanese Mediterranean. How many families settled in China, how many wives and children of Europeans, would be delighted to profit, during the trying summer months, by this refuge, as beautiful and salubrious as Italy, and yet near their actual home!

But while imagination, forestalling the march of time and the triumphs of civilization, evokes the charms of a European society from the bosom of the isles of the Souwonada, I must acknowledge that I privately congratulated myself on having seen the Japanese Mediterranean in its primitive condition, while one may still "discover" something, and has to ask the pilots the names of the islands, the mountains, and the villages, and to cast anchor for the night in some creek called "fair port" by the natives.

On the night of April 24, after having doubled the southern point of the great island of Nippon, *i.e.* the promontory of Idsoumo, situated at the southern extremity of the principality of Kisou, we sailed, during the whole day on the 25th, with the current which the Japanese call Kouro-Siwo, which runs from south-west to north-east, at the rate of from thirty-five to forty miles a day. It is a current of hot water, whose maximum temperature is 30° Centigrade.

The weather was fine, and the sea a shining emerald-green. I passed many hours on the poop, in stillness and vague contemplation. For the first time I enjoyed the pleasure of sailing. The silence which reigned on board added to the majestic effect of the ship, laden up to the summit of her masts with her triple wings of white. It was as though the fires had been extinguished, and the noise of the engines hushed, that we might present ourselves more respectfully at the gates of the residence of the Taikouns. But when night fell, the fires were lighted again, in case of accident; for the land-winds frequently cause much trouble to the ships in the Gulf of Yeddo. On