

sidering how to act in this horrible dilemma, when an idea struck me, that if it was in my power to transfix the mouth with some sharp instrument, it would prevent the reptile from using its fangs, should it escape my hold of it.

My gun lay at my feet; the ramrod appeared the very thing required, which, with some difficulty, I succeeded in drawing out; having only one hand disengaged.

My right arm was now trembling from over-exertion, my hold becoming less firm, when I happily succeeded in passing the rod through the lower jaw up to its centre. It was not without considerable hesitation that I suddenly let go my hold of the throat, and seized the rod in both hands; at the same time bringing them over my head with a sudden jerk, I disengaged the fold from my neck, which had latterly become

almost tight enough to produce strangulation.

There was, then, little difficulty in freeing my right arm, and ultimately throwing the reptile from me to the earth, where it continued to twist and writhe itself into a thousand contortions of rage and agony.

To run to a neighbouring stream, to lave my neck, hands, and face in its cooling waters, was my first act after despatching my formidable enemy.

The effects following the bite of this snake are faintness, agitation, tremblings, difficulty of breathing, convulsions, paralysis of the limbs, stupor, and death. Various specifics have been recommended and tried, but none are to be depended upon; and it is seldom that a man or animal bitten survives, unless, indeed, the venom-sac was previously exhausted.



THE JAPANESE.

JAPAN is an extensive empire at the eastern extremity of Asia, with a population of 35,000,000, governed by a large number of petty princes called Daimios, over whom is the Tycoon, or chief sovereign. Its chief city is Jeddo.

The earliest knowledge of Japan was brought to Europe by a traveller named Marco Polo, about six hundred years ago. Since his days we have become better acquainted with the hundreds of islands forming this kingdom, which is often called "the sealed empire." Many of these islands are to this day unvisited by Europeans or Americans. Some are said to be lovely and fruitful; others are bleak and barren, and can only be approached through narrow channels, beset with rocks and whirlpools. Of late years attempts have been made to become

friends and traders with the Japanese, and with varying success.

Jeddo is described as "one of the finest cities of the world." The houses of the nobles are palaces; and we may imagine the size of one of these when we learn that it will contain several thousand followers. Everything inside is in good order, rich in value, and very clean. In the villages, the cottage-homes of the poor have neatly-clipped hedges, and have a comfortable look about them.

Some years since, several American men-of-war went on a visit to Japan. The people were at first very shy, but soon became familiar, and went on board the vessels, showing great curiosity to learn about the different objects they saw. They followed the officers and men about the ship, and whenever they could do so, they began to examine every part of their dress. The gold-laced caps, boots, swords, and tailed coats of the

officers, and the jackets and trowsers of the sailors, called forth expressions of surprise. They fingered the broadcloth, smoothed down the nap with their hands, pulled a lappet here, adjusted a collar there, and thrust their fingers into the pockets, pulling out to view what was therein. But the articles which very much took their fancy were buttons. Their chief request was to have a button, and when presented with such a cheap gift, they carried it away as if it were of the greatest value. A button is almost unknown in their dress, which is kept together by strings and sashes.

When visiting the ships they were never at rest, but went about peeping into every nook and corner, peering into the muzzles of the guns, handling the ropes, and touching and measuring almost everything on board.

The American officers, who had special opportunities of seeing the people, went on a visit to a mayor or prefect of one of the towns. They were welcomed with great cordiality, and hospitably entertained. In the interior of the mayor's house was a large room, spread with soft mats, with oiled paper windows, and furnished with red-coloured benches. The wife and sister of the magistrate entered with refreshments, and smiled a timid welcome to the guests. The ladies were barefooted, and were dressed very nearly alike, in dark-coloured robes, secured by a broad band passing round the waist. Their faces were not wanting in expression, for which they were chiefly indebted to their bright eyes, which were black, as well as their hair: this was drawn up at the top of the head into the form of a "chignon," and fastened with large skewer-like pins.

Their lips were red, and when smiling they displayed a row of black teeth. Only the married women of Japan have the privilege of dyeing their teeth of a black colour.

The mayor gave to his guests tea and confectionery. He was very active in

dispensing these offerings, and was ably seconded by his wife and sister, who always remained on their knees in presence of the strangers. This awkward position of the women did not seem to interfere with their activity, for they kept moving about very briskly with silver kettles, filled with a strong drink called saki, and their services, from the smallness of the cups, were in constant requisition. The two ladies were unceasingly courteous, and kept bowing their heads like a bobbing toy mandarin.

The mayoress was so good-natured as to bring in her baby, which her guests felt bound to make the most of, though its dirty face and general untidy appearance made it a painful effort to caress it. A bit of sweetmeat being presented to the infant, it was directed to bow its shaven head, which it did with a degree of politeness that called forth the greatest admiration on the part of its mother and all the ladies present.

In rainy weather the Japanese wear a rain dress made of straw, which being tied together at top, is fastened round the neck, and falls over the shoulders and person like a thatched roof. Some of the higher classes cover their robes with an oiled paper cloak, which is proof against wet. The umbrella is almost a constant companion, and serves both to shade from the sun and keep off a shower. Men are never seen out of doors without a fan stuck in their girdles.

The Japanese are great eaters, though they are temperate in drink. A dinner-party will occupy three or four hours, but they stop every now and then to engage in smoking their pipes, and then return with a new appetite to the abundant bill of fare.

Among the dishes at a feast appears to be something like a pig; *possibly* it is so; though it *may be* a young puppy. Other dishes consist of sliced boiled eggs dyed crimson, fish made into rolls and boiled in fat, pieces of cold baked fish, slices of hog's liver, sugar-candy, cucum-

bers, salted radish-tops, and fragments of lean pork fried. The first course often consists of balls of meat in dough; then come seven or eight courses of different kinds of soup, to be followed by gingerbread, salad made of bean-sprouts and young onion-tops, a basket of what appears to be some dark red fruit, but which proves to be artificial balls composed of a thin rind covering a sugary pulp, and a delicious mixture compounded of beaten eggs and a slender white root with an aromatic taste.

The Japanese profess the Buddhist religion, and have numerous temples, in which are idols of wood, clay, and stone. The priests are dressed in rich embroidered and figured silks, and wear strange-looking head-dresses. These men live in monasteries, to which are given fanciful titles, as "great-peace," "source of knowledge," "fountain of happiness," "continual joy," "source of reason," and "long life" monasteries.

Two indelible features distinguish the Japanese from the European type; their half-veiled eyes and a disfiguring hollow in their breast, which is noticeable in them in the flower of their youth, even in the handsomest figures.

Both men and women have black eyes and white sound teeth. Their countenance is mobile, and possesses great variety of expression. It is the custom for their married women to blacken their teeth. The national Japanese costume is a kind of open dressing-gown, which is made a little wider and a little more flowing for the women than for the men. It is fastened round the waist by a belt. That worn by the men is a narrow silk sash, that by the women a broad piece of cloth, tied in a peculiar knot at the back.

The Japanese wear no linen, but they bathe every other day. The women wear an under-garment of red silk crape.

In summer, the peasants, the fishermen, the mechanics, and the Indian coolies follow their calling in a state of

almost complete nudity, and the women only wear a skirt from the waist downwards. When it rains they cover themselves with capes, made of straw or oiled paper, and with hats, made shield-shape, of can bark. In winter the men of the lower classes wear, beneath their kirimon or dressing-gown, a tight-fitting vest and a pair of trousers of blue cotton stuff, and the women one or more wadded cloaks. The middle-classes always wear a vest and trousers out of doors.

Their costume generally differs only in the material of which it is made. The nobility alone have the right to wear silk: they only when they pay ceremonial visits. All the classes wear linen socks and sandals of plaited straw, or wooden shoes fastened by a string looped round the big toe. They all, on their return to their own house, or when entering that of a stranger, take off their shoes, and leave them at the threshold.

The floors of their dwellings are covered with matting, which takes the place of every other kind of furniture. A Japanese has but one wife.

The Japanese have a taste for science and art, and are fond of noisy music and pageants. Their manufactures are largely developed. They make all sorts of fine stuffs, work skilfully in iron and copper, make capital sword-blades, and their wood carvings, their lacquer-work, and their china, enjoy a wide reputation.

Till very recently there were two rulers—the Taï Koon, who governed, and the Mikado, who reigned with two courts—one at Yeddo, and the other, that of the Mikado, at Miako. In 1867-68, as a result of the opening up of Japan to foreign influence, the unification of the nation under one ruler, the Mikado, was resolved upon, and, after a short civil war, the Taï Koon abdicated. The feudal nobility (*daimios*) magnanimously surrendered their privileges, and the Mikado once more as-

sumed the sole supreme authority—the temporal as well as the spiritual sovereignty of the empire. Japan became thoroughly modernized, the French imperial system of administration being

affairs. Railways, telegraphs, the various arts, sciences, and even the system of public instruction characteristic of Europe, were introduced. The army and navy were organized on European



A JAPANESE PRIEST.

pretty closely imitated. The Mikado has a ministry, council of state, and senate. For the daimios prefects were substituted, who manage provincial

models. A code of laws, on the model of the *Code Napoléon*, was introduced, and it is said that now a movement is on foot to introduce representative parliaments.