



GREAT JAPAN: THE SUNRISE KINGDOM.

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JAPANESE dolls, fans, screens, parasols, teacups and tea-pots, and bric-à-brac of various kinds are familiar objects to our girls and boys. Many have seen some of the Japanese themselves, and know that there are several hundreds of their educated class in this country, in business or at school, studying our civilization and sciences; but few young Americans have clear ideas of the present or former condition of this remarkable people.

We, the people of the United States, were the first among nations to knock at Japan's door and ask to be on visiting terms with our far-off neighbor, who for about two hundred and fifty years had lived like a hermit. That knock hastened the Japanese revolution, and this revolution overthrew their double system of government and restored the Mikado to his proper place as the real ruler of the country.

This "land of dainty decoration" is destined to stand high among the world's nations. The strides it has made in civilization since that revolution of twenty years ago remind us of the boy who stole the giant's seven-leagued boots, in the fairy-tale.

Although they are studying us, as well as our sciences, our religion, and our civilization, they have no intention of adopting all our customs. On the contrary, they are examining our ways carefully, in order that they may adopt the good, and reject the bad or whatever is unsuited to their conditions of life.

Here are a few facts about the Japanese which will not be difficult to remember.

Before their revolution of 1868, the people other than the nobility were divided into four ranks:

First: The warrior rank, called Samurai (pronounced *sah-moo-ri*). Second: The farmer rank, called Hyakusho (*hyah-koo-shō*). Third: The

mechanic rank, called Shokunin (*shō-koo-noon*). Fourth: The merchant rank, called Chonin (*chō-noon*).

There were two sets lower than these: the Eta, workers in raw hides; and the Hinin, squatters on waste lands—the lowest class of beggars. Both were outcasts.

The degrees in rank above the main body of the people stood thus:

First: The Mikado, or Emperor, and the royal families. Second: The Kugé (pronounced *koo-gā*), or the court nobles. Third: The Shogun (*shō-goon*) families. Shogun meant the governing man, chief general. Fourth: The Daimio (*dī-myō*) families. Daimio meant masters of provinces, or territorial nobles.

There were many subdivisions of rank among these noble families, but the two great divisions were the court nobility and the sword, or warrior, nobility.

Twenty-one years ago, the Emperor of Japan was a mere figurehead, and his predecessors for more than five hundred years had been little more. They lived in strict seclusion and exercised no ruling power. Only a few nobles of the highest rank had the privilege of beholding the Emperor's face. The Japanese throne has never been bandied about from one dynasty to another. Their history begins twenty-five hundred and forty-nine years ago, before Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Jews. During this time, one hundred and twenty-three sovereigns have sat on the throne, nine of whom have been women; and all have belonged to this one dynasty. It is a nameless dynasty, for it is beyond the need of a family name.

Jimmu, the first Emperor of Japan, was reverently believed to be the great-grandson of Ninigi, the grandson of the sun-goddess, sent by her to rule over the earth. From this belief in the divine origin of the imperial family, arose two of the many titles of the Mikado, namely: "Tenshi" (pro-

nounced *ten-shee*), "the son of heaven," and "Tenno" (pronounced *ten-nō*), "the sovereign from heaven," or "appointed by heaven." Tenno is the title required to be used officially.

The form of government was an absolute monarchy, and the early emperors were the direct executive heads. The empire was divided into *gun* (*goon*), or provinces, and these subdivided into *ken*. This was called the *gun-ken* system, and the whole was under the rule of the Emperor.

There was, from very early times, a Shogun, or general; but at first his power was small. Yoritomo, one of the most celebrated men in Japanese history, obtained great power during a civil war in the twelfth century by restoring order and establishing firm government. He became the most powerful subject in the empire, and the Mikado appointed him Sei Tai Shogun (*sai ti sho-goon*) in 1192. This title means "Barbarian-quelling Great General," and it was the greatest honor that could be bestowed on a subject. The whole country was placed under military rule, and this was the beginning of the double system of Japanese government. Gradually, more and more power was concentrated in the Shogun's hands, while only empty dignities and numerous titles were left to the Emperor.

That "son of heaven," however, though often a child, was the source of all rank and dignity; and though the office of Shogun became hereditary in certain families, and though the Shogun lived with the pomp and splendor of a king, he always owed his appointment to the Emperor. The Shogun assumed the protectorship of the Emperor.

This form of government was called the Shogunate.

The office belonged in turn to several families. The last dynasty of shoguns was the Tokugawa (*to-koo-gah-wah*) family. The founder, Tokugawa Iyeyasu (*e-yā-yas-oo*) of the noble Minamoto stock, seized the supreme power in 1603, and held it with a strong hand. His dynasty continued in power until 1868, a period of two hundred and sixty-five years. This was a period of peace in Japan and continued until their late civil war.

The rulers immediately under the Shogun, and owing him military service, were the daimio (*dā-myo*). There were three ranks of daimio; Koku-shiu (*kō-koo-she-oo*), the greater landed-lords; Tozama (*tō-zah-mah*), the smaller landed-lords; and Fudai (*foo-dā*), the generals and captains to whom the Tokugawa family gave land in reward for services.

These lords had many subordinate officers of various degrees in rank, all, however, being samurai, or warriors. Every warrior was attached to some daimio, and therefore was a *kerai* (*kā-rī*),

or vassal. Those who left the service of their lords for any purpose were called *ronin* (*rō-neen*), or masterless men.

The feudal system had a very minute code of honor, and there grew out of it a most exalted sense of loyalty and devotion. History is full of the stories of men who sacrificed their lives for their lords; but the rule did not work both ways—the lord did not lay down his life for his vassal.

The farmers and other classes in the province of the daimio put themselves under his protection, and paid him tribute. These taxes were enormous, for upon them depended the support of the unproductive class, the two-sworded gentry called Samurai, or warriors. So all revenue came into the hands of the military class, and the Kugé, or court nobles, became very poor in this world's goods, but not poor in spirit. The lowest Kugé was superior in rank to the Shogun.

Besides the Emperor's family there were set apart four families of imperial descent, from whom the Emperor might choose an heir for the throne in case there was no heir in his own family. The throne did not always descend to the eldest son, but the father might choose as heir the son who seemed to him most suitable. The Emperor's daughters sometimes married nobles, and sometimes married into the royal families belonging to the dynasty.

Under this double system of government, the Mikado and the Shogun, the outside world supposed there were two emperors, one a spiritual, the other a temporal emperor. This "temporal Emperor" was merely the Mikado's general. The Mikado, the "son of heaven," lived at Kioto, a city beautifully situated, in a palace much like a temple in outward appearance, but with little of the splendor of a European palace. Magnificence of display might do very well for upstart generals, but was unseemly for the semi-divinity of royalty. The Shogun lived at Yeddo, which was thus the real seat of government.

In 1853, Millard Fillmore, President of the United States, sent Commodore Perry with a large squadron of well-equipped vessels, to convey a letter to the Emperor of Japan asking that a treaty might be made between the two nations. The formidable appearance of the steam-vessels greatly frightened the hermit nation, but compelled a respectful reception of the mission of the "savages." A high official was sent to receive the letter, which was delivered, not to the Emperor, but to the Shogun, who called himself the "Tai Kun" (*Tā-koon*), meaning great prince or ruler. The Mikado never bestowed this title on any one, and the Shogun had not before formally assumed it.

In 1854 the Shogun made a treaty with the

United States, and shortly afterward with England, France, Holland, and Austria. These treaties opened a few ports, and when they were ratified in 1859, these were made ports of trade, as well as ports of entry and supply. But these treaties had not received the sanction of the Mikado, and were not really legal. In making them the Shogunate pretended to be the supreme power in Japan, while it was not. This deceit hastened its downfall. A few Japanese saw the necessity of opening the ports, but by far the greater part were jo-i (*jo-ee*), foreign-haters. The original meaning of jo-i was "Keep back, savage."

There were many deep students and thinkers among both the kuzé and the daimio families, who longed to see the Mikado again the ruler of the nation. The Americans, English, French, and Dutch were pressing their claims for entrance and trade. The Mikado disapproved of the treaties when they were reported to him, and this excited intense wrath all over the land. The cry arose, "Honor the Mikado, and drive out the barbarian."

Civil war broke out, followed by ruin and desolation. The war cry was, Daigi meibun (*Dī-gee mā-boon*), meaning, "The King and the subject." Finally, on November 9, 1867, Tokugawa Keiki formally resigned the office of Sei Tai Shogun. The Mikado, Komei (*Komay*), died about the same time, and his son, Mutsuhito (*Moot-soo-hī-to*), a boy of seventeen, was thereupon declared sole sovereign.

The office of Shogun was abolished, and a provisional government was formed on the 3d of January, 1868. The government intended to expel the foreigners, but knew it was then not strong enough. So they waited in order that they might gain strength.

Now the followers of the Tokugawa families had seen that it was the best thing for Japan to introduce foreign civilization. They being out of power, it seemed that Japan would relapse into strict seclusion, and again lead the life of a hermit-crab. But Mr. W. E. Griffis, one of the professors of the Imperial University of Tokio, Japan, from 1872 to 1874, says the noblest trait in the Japanese character is willingness to change, when convinced of error or inferiority. The samurai leaders of the restoration induced the imperial court to invite the foreign ministers to an audience. A personal meeting helped to make the court nobles see things more clearly. They had thought all foreigners beasts. They found them honorable men, and with noble humility acknowledged their error and made friends.

Peace did not come all at once. There had been many murders of foreigners, of Americans, Englishmen, and men of other nationalities, by fanatical assassins, and danger lurked in secret places. But in justice it should be said that these murders were often provoked by insolence on the part of the foreigners. Nevertheless, the path to modern civilization had been opened, and in that path the devoted Japanese leaders have steadily led their people.

The young Mikado, Mutsuhito, the 123d Emperor of the nameless dynasty, was the first of his line to take oath as a ruler.

On the 12th of April, 1868, he made oath before gods and men that "a deliberative assembly should be formed; all measures should be decided by public opinion; . . . and that intellect and learning should be sought for throughout the world, in order to establish the foundations of the empire."

This oath was reaffirmed October 12, 1881, and the year 1890 is fixed as the time for limiting the imperial prerogative, forming two houses of parliament, and transforming the government into a constitutional monarchy.

The Emperor's capital was changed from Kioto to Yeddo, which was re-named, and called Tokio.

Feudalism, or the holding of fiefs by the daimio, came to an end in 1871, by imperial edict, and the whole of great Japan was again directly under the Mikado's rule.

The titles of kugé and daimio were also abolished, both being re-named simply Kuasoku (*Koo-as-o-ko*), or noble families. The distinctions between the lower orders of people were scattered to the winds, and even the despised outcasts were made citizens, protected by law.

The degrees in rank among the Japanese are now as follows:

First. The Emperor and the royal families.

Second. The Kuasoku, the noble families.

Third. The Shizoku (*Shee-zō-ko*), the gentry.

Fourth. The Heimin (*Hā-meen*), the citizens in general.

The results of the Japanese Revolution may be summed up thus:

First. The restoration of the Mikado as ruler, and ending of the Shogunate.

Second. The opening of the entire country to foreigners.

Third. The gradual abolition of rank in the main body of the people, giving all equal rights under the law.

Old Japan has gone! Long live the New!