

## III.

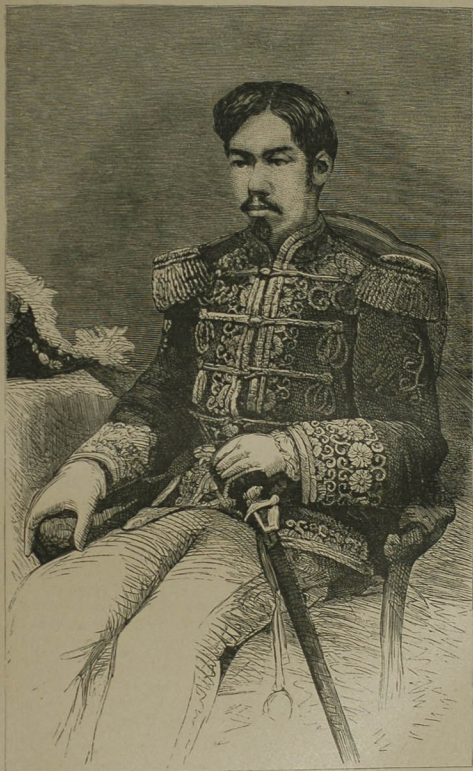
*MATERIALS OF HISTORY.*

BEFORE attempting a brief sketch of Japanese history, it may be interesting to the reader to know something of the sources of such history, and the character and amount of the materials. A dynasty of rulers who ostentatiously boast of twenty-five centuries of unbroken succession should have solid foundation of fact for their boast. The august representatives of the mikado Mutsūhito,\* the one hundred and twenty-third of the imperial line of Dai Nippon, who, in the presence of the President and Congress of the United States, and of the sovereigns of Europe, claimed the immemorial antiquity of the Japanese imperial rule, should have credentials to satisfy the foreigner and silence the skeptic.

In this enlightened age, when all authority is challenged, and a century after the moss of oblivion has covered the historic grave of the doctrine of divine right, the Japanese still cling to the divinity of the mikado, not only making it the dogma of religion and the engine of government, but accrediting their envoys as representatives of, and asking of foreign diplomatists that they address his imperial Japanese majesty as the King of Heaven (Tennō). A nation that has passed through the successive stages of aboriginal migration, tribal government, conquest by invaders, pure monarchy, feudalism, anarchy, and modern consolidated empire, should have secreted the material for much interesting history. In the many lulls of peace, scholars would arise, and opportunities would offer, to record the history which previous generations had made. The foreign historian who will bring the

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\* Mutsūhito ("meek man"), the present emperor, is the second son of the mikado Komei (1847-1867), whom he succeeded, and the Empress Fujiwara Asako. He was born November 3d, 1850. He succeeded his father February 3d, 1867; was crowned on the 28th day of the Eighth month, 1868; and was married on the 28th of the Twelfth month, 1868, to Haruko, daughter of Ichijō Tadaka, a noble of the second degree of the first rank. She was born on the 17th of the Fourth month, 1850. The dowager-empress Asako, mother of the emperor, is of the house of Kujō, and was born on the 14th day of the Twelfth month, 1833.



His Imperial Japanese Majesty, Mutsūhito, Emperor of Japan, and the 123d Mikado of the Line.

or exaggerated, that their statements, especially in respect of dates, can not be accepted as true history. According to the *Kojiki*, Jimmu Tennō was the first emperor; yet it is extremely doubtful whether he was a historical personage. The best foreign scholars and critics regard him as a mythical character. The accounts of the first mikados are very meagre. The accession to the throne, marriage and death of the sovereign, with notices of occasional rebellions put down, tours made, and worship celebrated, are recorded, and interesting glimpses of the progress of civilization obtained.

A number of works, containing what is evidently good history, illustrate the period between the eighth and eleventh centuries. A still richer collection of both original works and modern compilations treat of the mediæval period from the eleventh to the sixteenth century—the age of intestine strife and feudal war. The light which the stately prose of history casts upon the past is further heightened by the many poems, popular romances, founded on historic fact, and the classic compositions called *monogatari*, all of which help to make the perspective of by-gone centuries melt out into living pictures. That portion of the history which treats of the introduction, progress, and expulsion of Christianity in Japan has most interest to ourselves. Concerning it there is much deficiency of material, and that not of a kind to satisfy Occidental tastes. The profound peace which followed the victories of Iyeyasū, and which lasted from 1600–1868—the scholastic era of Japan—gave the peaceful leisure necessary for the study of ancient history, and the creation of a large library of historical literature, of which the magnificent works called the *Dai Nihon Shi* (“History of Great Japan”), and *Nihon Guai Shi* (“Japanese Outer, or Military History”), are the best examples.

Under the Tokugawa shōguns (1603–1868) liberty to explore, chronicle, and analyze the past in history was given; but the seal of silence, the ban of censorship, and the mandate forbidding all publication were put upon the production of contemporary history. Hence, the peaceful period, 1600 to 1853, is less known than others in earlier times. Several good native annalists have treated of the post-Perry period (1853–1872), and the events leading to the Restoration.

In the department of unwritten history, such as unearthened relics, coins, weapons, museums, memorial stones, tablets, temple records, etc., there is much valuable material. Scarcely a year passes but some rich trove is announced to delight the numerous native archæologists.

The Japanese are intensely proud of their history, and take great

care in making and preserving records. Memorial-stones, keeping green the memory of some noted scholar, ruler, or benefactor, are among the most striking sights on the highways, or in the towns, villages, or temple-yards, betokening the desire to defy the ravages of oblivion and resist the inevitable tooth of Time.

Almost every large city has its published history; towns and villages have their annals written and preserved by local antiquarians; family records are faithfully copied from generation to generation; diaries, notes of journeys or events, dates of the erections of buildings, the names of the officiating priests, and many of the subscribing worshippers, are religiously kept in most of the large Buddhist temples and monasteries. The *bonzes* (Jap. *bōzū*) delight to write of the lives of their saintly predecessors and the mundane affairs of their patrons. Almost every province has its encyclopedic history, and every high-road its itineraries and guide-books, in which famous places and events are noted. Almost every neighborhood boasts its Old Mortality, or local antiquary, whose delight and occupation are to know the past. In the large cities professional story-tellers and readers gain a lucrative livelihood by narrating both the classic history and the legendary lore. The theatre, which in Japan draws its subjects for representation almost exclusively from the actual life, past or present, of the Japanese people, is often the most faithful mirror of actual history. Few people seem to be more thoroughly informed as to their own history: parents delight to instruct their children in their national lore; and there are hundreds of child's histories of Japan.

Besides the sober volumes of history, the number of books purporting to contain truth, but which are worthless for purposes of historical investigation, is legion. In addition to the motives, equally operative in other countries for the corruption or distortion of historical narrative, was the perpetual desire of the Buddhist monks, who were in many cases the writers, to glorify their patrons and helpers, and to damn their enemies. Hence their works are of little value. So plentiful are these garbled productions, that the buyer of books always asked for *jitsu-roku*, or "true records," in order to avoid the "*zu-zan*," or "editions of Zu," so called from Zu, a noted Chinese forger of history.

In the chapters on the history of Japan, I shall occasionally quote from the text of some of the standard histories in literal translation. I shall feel only too happy if I can imitate the terse, vigorous, and luminous style of the Japanese annalists. The vividness and pictorial

detail of the classic historians fascinate the reader who can analyze the closely massed syntax. Many of the pages of the *Nihon Guai Shi*, especially, are models of compression and elegance, and glow with the chastened eloquence that springs from clear discernment and conviction of truth, gained after patient sifting of facts, and groping through difficulties that lead to discovery. Many of its sentences are epigrams. To the student of Japanese it is a narrative of intensest interest.

The *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, which give the only records of very ancient Japan, and on which all other works treating of this period are based, can not be accepted as sober history. Hence, in outlining the events prior to the second century of the Christian era, I head the chapters, not as the "Dawn of History," but the "Twilight of Fable." From these books, and the collections of ancient myths (*Koshi Seibun*), as well as the critical commentaries and explanations of the Japanese rationalists, which, by the assistance of native scholars, I have been able to consult, the two following chapters have been compiled.\*

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\* In the following chapters, I use throughout the modern names of places and provinces, to avoid confusion. The ancient name of Kiushiu was Tsukushi, which was also applied to the then united provinces of Chikuzen and Chikugo. Buzen and Bungo were anciently one province, called Toyo. Higo and Hizen are modern divisions of Hi no kuni ("The Land of Fire"). Tamba, corrupted from Taniwa, and Tango ("Back of Taniwa") were formerly one. Kadzusa and Shimōsa, contracted from Kami-tsu-fusa and Shimo-tsu-fusa (*kami*, upper; *shimo*, lower; *tsu*, ancient form of *no*; *fusa*, a proper name, tassel), were once united. Kōdzuke and Shimotsuké, formed like the preceding, were "Upper" and "Lower" Ké. All the region north of Echizen, known and unknown, including Echizen, Etchū, Echigo, Kaga, Noto, Uzen, and Ugo, was included under the name Koshi no kuni. Later synonyms for Kiushiu are Saikoku (Western Provinces), or Chūzai in books. Chūgoku (Central Provinces) is applied to the region from Tamba to Nagato. Kamigata is a vague term for the country around and toward Kiōto.