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Unbeaten Tracks in Japan

by Isabella L. Bird

May, 2000 [Etext #2184]

The Project Gutenberg Etext of Unbeaten Tracks in Japan, by Bird

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UNBEATEN TRACKS IN JAPAN

AN ACCOUNT OF TRAVELS IN THE INTERIOR

INCLUDING VISITS TO THE ABORIGINES OF YEZO AND

THE SHRINE OF NIKKO BY ISABELLA L. BIRD

PREFACE

Having been recommended to leave home, in April 1878, in order to

recruit my health by means which had proved serviceable before, I

decided to visit Japan, attracted less by the reputed excellence of

its climate than by the certainty that it possessed, in an especial

degree, those sources of novel and sustained interest which conduce

so essentially to the enjoyment and restoration of a solitary

health-seeker. The climate disappointed me, but, though I found

the country a study rather than a rapture, its interest exceeded my

largest expectations.

This is not a "Book on Japan," but a narrative of travels in Japan,

and an attempt to contribute something to the sum of knowledge of

the present condition of the country, and it was not till I had

travelled for some months in the interior of the main island and in

Yezo that I decided that my materials were novel enough to render

the contribution worth making. From Nikko northwards my route was

altogether off the beaten track, and had never been traversed in

its entirety by any European. I lived among the Japanese, and saw

their mode of living, in regions unaffected by European contact.

As a lady travelling alone, and the first European lady who had

been seen in several districts through which my route lay, my

experiences differed more or less widely from those of preceding

travellers; and I am able to offer a fuller account of the

aborigines of Yezo, obtained by actual acquaintance with them, than

has hitherto been given. These are my chief reasons for offering

this volume to the public.

It was with some reluctance that I decided that it should consist

mainly of letters written on the spot to my sister and a circle of

personal friends, for this form of publication involves the

sacrifice of artistic arrangement and literary treatment, and

necessitates a certain amount of egotism; but, on the other hand,

it places the reader in the position of the traveller, and makes

him share the vicissitudes of travel, discomfort, difficulty, and

tedium, as well as novelty and enjoyment. The "beaten tracks,"

with the exception of Nikko, have been dismissed in a few

sentences, but where their features have undergone marked changes

within a few years, as in the case of Tokiyo (Yedo), they have been

sketched more or less slightly. Many important subjects are

necessarily passed over.

In Northern Japan, in the absence of all other sources of

information, I had to learn everything from the people themselves,

through an interpreter, and every fact had to be disinterred by

careful labour from amidst a mass of rubbish. The Ainos supplied

the information which is given concerning their customs, habits,

and religion; but I had an opportunity of comparing my notes with

some taken about the same time by Mr. Heinrich Von Siebold of the

Austrian Legation, and of finding a most satisfactory agreement on

all points.

Some of the Letters give a less pleasing picture of the condition

of the peasantry than the one popularly presented, and it is

possible that some readers may wish that it had been less

realistically painted; but as the scenes are strictly

representative, and I neither made them nor went in search of them,

I offer them in the interests of truth, for they illustrate the

nature of a large portion of the material with which the Japanese

Government has to work in building up the New Civilisation.

Accuracy has been my first aim, but the sources of error are many,

and it is from those who have studied Japan the most carefully, and

are the best acquainted with its difficulties, that I shall receive

the most kindly allowance if, in spite of carefulness, I have

fallen into mistakes.

The Transactions of the English and German Asiatic Societies of

Japan, and papers on special Japanese subjects, including "A Budget

of Japanese Notes," in the Japan Mail and Tokiyo Times, gave me

valuable help; and I gratefully acknowledge the assistance afforded

me in many ways by Sir Harry S. Parkes, K.C.B., and Mr. Satow of

H.B.M.'s Legation, Principal Dyer, Mr. Chamberlain of the Imperial

Naval College, Mr. F. V. Dickins, and others, whose kindly interest

in my work often encouraged me when I was disheartened by my lack

of skill; but, in justice to these and other kind friends, I am

anxious to claim and accept the fullest measure of personal

responsibility for the opinions expressed, which, whether right or

wrong, are wholly my own.

The illustrations, with the exception of three, which are by a

Japanese artist, have been engraved from sketches of my own or

Japanese photographs.

I am painfully conscious of the defects of this volume, but I

venture to present it to the public in the hope that, in spite of

its demerits, it may be accepted as an honest attempt to describe

things as I saw them in Japan, on land journeys of more than 1400

miles.

Since the letters passed through the press, the beloved and only

sister to whom, in the first instance, they were written, to whose

able and careful criticism they owe much, and whose loving interest

was the inspiration alike of my travels and of my narratives of

them, has passed away.

ISABELLA L. BIRD.

LETTER I

First View of Japan--A Vision of Fujisan--Japanese Sampans--

"Pullman Cars"--Undignified Locomotion--Paper Money--The Drawbacks

of Japanese Travelling.

ORIENTAL HOTEL, YOKOHAMA,

May 21.

Eighteen days of unintermitted rolling over "desolate rainy seas"

brought the "City of Tokio" early yesterday morning to Cape King,

and by noon we were steaming up the Gulf of Yedo, quite near the

shore. The day was soft and grey with a little faint blue sky,

and, though the coast of Japan is much more prepossessing than most

coasts, there were no startling surprises either of colour or form.

Broken wooded ridges, deeply cleft, rise from the water's edge,

gray, deep-roofed villages cluster about the mouths of the ravines,

and terraces of rice cultivation, bright with the greenness of

English lawns, run up to a great height among dark masses of upland

forest. The populousness of the coast is very impressive, and the

gulf everywhere was equally peopled with fishing-boats, of which we

passed not only hundreds, but thousands, in five hours. The coast

and sea were pale, and the boats were pale too, their hulls being

unpainted wood, and their sails pure white duck. Now and then a

high-sterned junk drifted by like a phantom galley, then we

slackened speed to avoid exterminating a fleet of triangular-

looking fishing-boats with white square sails, and so on through

the grayness and dumbness hour after hour.

For long I looked in vain for Fujisan, and failed to see it, though

I heard ecstasies all over the deck, till, accidentally looking

heavenwards instead of earthwards, I saw far above any possibility

of height, as one would have thought, a huge, truncated cone of

pure snow, 13,080 feet above the sea, from which it sweeps upwards

in a glorious curve, very wan, against a very pale blue sky, with

its base and the intervening country veiled in a pale grey mist.

{1} It was a wonderful vision, and shortly, as a vision, vanished.

Except the cone of Tristan d'Acunha--also a cone of snow--I never

saw a mountain rise in such lonely majesty, with nothing near or

far to detract from its height and grandeur. No wonder that it is

a sacred mountain, and so dear to the Japanese that their art is

never weary of representing it. It was nearly fifty miles off when

we first saw it.

The air and water were alike motionless, the mist was still and

pale, grey clouds lay restfully on a bluish sky, the reflections of

the white sails of the fishing-boats scarcely quivered; it was all

so pale, wan, and ghastly, that the turbulence of crumpled foam

which we left behind us, and our noisy, throbbing progress, seemed

a boisterous intrusion upon sleeping Asia.

The gulf narrowed, the forest-crested hills, the terraced ravines,

the picturesque grey villages, the quiet beach life, and the pale

blue masses of the mountains of the interior, became more visible.

Fuji retired into the mist in which he enfolds his grandeur for

most of the summer; we passed Reception Bay, Perry Island, Webster

Island, Cape Saratoga, and Mississippi Bay--American nomenclature

which perpetuates the successes of American diplomacy--and not far

from Treaty Point came upon a red lightship with the words "Treaty

Point" in large letters upon her. Outside of this no foreign

vessel may anchor.

The bustle among my fellow-passengers, many of whom were returning

home, and all of whom expected to be met by friends, left me at

leisure, as I looked at unattractive, unfamiliar Yokohama and the

pale grey land stretched out before me, to speculate somewhat sadly

on my destiny on these strange shores, on which I have not even an

acquaintance. On mooring we were at once surrounded by crowds of

native boats called by foreigners sampans, and Dr. Gulick, a near

relation of my Hilo friends, came on board to meet his daughter,

welcomed me cordially, and relieved me of all the trouble of

disembarkation. These sampans are very clumsy-looking, but are

managed with great dexterity by the boatmen, who gave and received

any number of bumps with much good nature, and without any of the

shouting and swearing in which competitive boatmen usually indulge.

The partially triangular shape of these boats approaches that of a

salmon-fisher's punt used on certain British rivers. Being floored

gives them the appearance of being absolutely flat-bottomed; but,

though they tilt readily, they are very safe, being heavily built

and fitted together with singular precision with wooden bolts and a

few copper cleets. They are SCULLED, not what we should call

rowed, by two or four men with very heavy oars made of two pieces

of wood working on pins placed on outrigger bars. The men scull

standing and use the thigh as a rest for the oar. They all wear a

single, wide-sleeved, scanty, blue cotton garment, not fastened or

girdled at the waist, straw sandals, kept on by a thong passing

between the great toe and the others, and if they wear any head-

gear, it is only a wisp of blue cotton tied round the forehead.

The one garment is only an apology for clothing, and displays lean

concave chests and lean muscular limbs. The skin is very yellow,

and often much tattooed with mythical beasts. The charge for

sampans is fixed by tariff, so the traveller lands without having

his temper ruffled by extortionate demands.

The first thing that impressed me on landing was that there were no

loafers, and that all the small, ugly, kindly-looking, shrivelled,

bandy-legged, round-shouldered, concave-chested, poor-looking

beings in the streets had some affairs of their own to mind. At

the top of the landing-steps there was a portable restaurant, a

neat and most compact thing, with charcoal stove, cooking and

eating utensils complete; but it looked as if it were made by and

for dolls, and the mannikin who kept it was not five feet high. At

the custom-house we were attended to by minute officials in blue

uniforms of European pattern and leather boots; very civil

creatures, who opened and examined our trunks carefully, and

strapped them up again, contrasting pleasingly with the insolent

and rapacious officials who perform the same duties at New York.

Outside were about fifty of the now well-known jin-ti-ki-shas, and

the air was full of a buzz produced by the rapid reiteration of

this uncouth word by fifty tongues. This conveyance, as you know,

is a feature of Japan, growing in importance every day. It was

only invented seven years ago, and already there are nearly 23,000

in one city, and men can make so much more by drawing them than by

almost any kind of skilled labour, that thousands of fine young men

desert agricultural pursuits and flock into the towns to make

draught-animals of themselves, though it is said that the average

duration of a man's life after he takes to running is only five

years, and that the runners fall victims in large numbers to

aggravated forms of heart and lung disease. Over tolerably level

ground a good runner can trot forty miles a day, at a rate of about

four miles an hour. They are registered and taxed at 8s. a year

for one carrying two persons, and 4s. for one which carries one

only, and there is a regular tariff for time and distance.

The kuruma, or jin-ri-ki-sha, {2} consists of a light perambulator

body, an adjustable hood of oiled paper, a velvet or cloth lining

and cushion, a well for parcels under the seat, two high slim

wheels, and a pair of shafts connected by a bar at the ends. The

body is usually lacquered and decorated according to its owner's

taste. Some show little except polished brass, others are

altogether inlaid with shells known as Venus's ear, and others are

gaudily painted with contorted dragons, or groups of peonies,

hydrangeas, chrysanthemums, and mythical personages. They cost

from 2 pounds upwards. The shafts rest on the ground at a steep

incline as you get in--it must require much practice to enable one

to mount with ease or dignity--the runner lifts them up, gets into

them, gives the body a good tilt backwards, and goes off at a smart

trot. They are drawn by one, two, or three men, according to the

speed desired by the occupants. When rain comes on, the man puts

up the hood, and ties you and it closely up in a covering of oiled

paper, in which you are invisible. At night, whether running or

standing still, they carry prettily-painted circular paper lanterns

18 inches long. It is most comical to see stout, florid, solid-

looking merchants, missionaries, male and female, fashionably-

dressed ladies, armed with card cases, Chinese compradores, and

Japanese peasant men and women flying along Main Street, which is

like the decent respectable High Street of a dozen forgotten

country towns in England, in happy unconsciousness of the

ludicrousness of their appearance; racing, chasing, crossing each

other, their lean, polite, pleasant runners in their great hats

shaped like inverted bowls, their incomprehensible blue tights, and

their short blue over-shirts with badges or characters in white

upon them, tearing along, their yellow faces streaming with

perspiration, laughing, shouting, and avoiding collisions by a mere

shave.

After a visit to the Consulate I entered a kuruma and, with two

ladies in two more, was bowled along at a furious pace by a

laughing little mannikin down Main Street--a narrow, solid, well-

paved street with well-made side walks, kerb-stones, and gutters,

with iron lamp-posts, gas-lamps, and foreign shops all along its

length--to this quiet hotel recommended by Sir Wyville Thomson,

which offers a refuge from the nasal twang of my fellow-voyagers,

who have all gone to the caravanserais on the Bund. The host is a

Frenchman, but he relies on a Chinaman; the servants are Japanese

"boys" in Japanese clothes; and there is a Japanese "groom of the

chambers" in faultless English costume, who perfectly appals me by

the elaborate politeness of his manner.

Almost as soon as I arrived I was obliged to go in search of Mr.

Fraser's office in the settlement; I say SEARCH, for there are no

names on the streets; where there are numbers they have no

sequence, and I met no Europeans on foot to help me in my

difficulty. Yokohama does not improve on further acquaintance. It

has a dead-alive look. It has irregularity without

picturesqueness, and the grey sky, grey sea, grey houses, and grey

roofs, look harmoniously dull. No foreign money except the Mexican

dollar passes in Japan, and Mr. Fraser's compradore soon

metamorphosed my English gold into Japanese satsu or paper money, a

bundle of yen nearly at par just now with the dollar, packets of

50, 20, and 10 sen notes, and some rouleaux of very neat copper

coins. The initiated recognise the different denominations of

paper money at a glance by their differing colours and sizes, but

at present they are a distracting mystery to me. The notes are

pieces of stiff paper with Chinese characters at the corners, near

which, with exceptionally good eyes or a magnifying glass, one can

discern an English word denoting the value. They are very neatly

executed, and are ornamented with the chrysanthemum crest of the

Mikado and the interlaced dragons of the Empire.

I long to get away into real Japan. Mr. Wilkinson, H.B.M.'s acting

consul, called yesterday, and was extremely kind. He thinks that

my plan for travelling in the interior is rather too ambitious, but

that it is perfectly safe for a lady to travel alone, and agrees

with everybody else in thinking that legions of fleas and the

miserable horses are the great drawbacks of Japanese travelling.

I. L. B.

LETTER II

Sir Harry Parkes--An "Ambassador's Carriage"--Cart Coolies.

YOKOHAMA, May 22.

To-day has been spent in making new acquaintances, instituting a

search for a servant and a pony, receiving many offers of help,

asking questions and receiving from different people answers which

directly contradict each other. Hours are early. Thirteen people

called on me before noon. Ladies drive themselves about the town

in small pony carriages attended by running grooms called bettos.

The foreign merchants keep kurumas constantly standing at their

doors, finding a willing, intelligent coolie much more serviceable

than a lazy, fractious, capricious Japanese pony, and even the

dignity of an "Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister

Plenipotentiary" is not above such a lowly conveyance, as I have

seen to-day. My last visitors were Sir Harry and Lady Parkes, who

brought sunshine and kindliness into the room, and left it behind

them. Sir Harry is a young-looking man scarcely in middle life,

slight, active, fair, blue-eyed, a thorough Saxon, with sunny hair

and a sunny smile, a sunshiny geniality in his manner, and bearing

no trace in his appearance of his thirty years of service in the

East, his sufferings in the prison at Peking, and the various

attempts upon his life in Japan. He and Lady Parkes were most

truly kind, and encourage me so heartily in my largest projects for

travelling in the interior, that I shall start as soon as I have

secured a servant. When they went away they jumped into kurumas,

and it was most amusing to see the representative of England

hurried down the street in a perambulator with a tandem of coolies.

As I look out of the window I see heavy, two-wheeled man-carts

drawn and pushed by four men each, on which nearly all goods,

stones for building, and all else, are carried. The two men who

pull press with hands and thighs against a cross-bar at the end of

a heavy pole, and the two who push apply their shoulders to beams

which project behind, using their thick, smoothly-shaven skulls as

the motive power when they push their heavy loads uphill. Their

cry is impressive and melancholy. They draw incredible loads, but,

as if the toil which often makes every breath a groan or a gasp

were not enough, they shout incessantly with a coarse, guttural

grunt, something like Ha huida, Ho huida, wa ho, Ha huida, etc.

I. L. B.

LETTER III

Yedo and Tokiyo--The Yokohama Railroad--The Effect of Misfits--The

Plain of Yedo--Personal Peculiarities--First Impressions of Tokiyo-

-H. B. M.'s Legation--An English Home.

H.B.M.'s LEGATION, YEDO, May 24.

I have dated my letter Yedo, according to the usage of the British

Legation, but popularly the new name of Tokiyo, or Eastern Capital,

is used, Kiyoto, the Mikado's former residence, having received the

name of Saikio, or Western Capital, though it has now no claim to

be regarded as a capital at all. Yedo belongs to the old regime

and the Shogunate, Tokiyo to the new regime and the Restoration,

with their history of ten years. It would seem an incongruity to

travel to Yedo by railway, but quite proper when the destination is

Tokiyo.

The journey between the two cities is performed in an hour by an

admirable, well-metalled, double-track railroad, 18 miles long,

with iron bridges, neat stations, and substantial roomy termini,

built by English engineers at a cost known only to Government, and

opened by the Mikado in 1872. The Yokohama station is a handsome

and suitable stone building, with a spacious approach, ticket-

offices on our plan, roomy waiting-rooms for different classes--

uncarpeted, however, in consideration of Japanese clogs--and

supplied with the daily papers. There is a department for the

weighing and labelling of luggage, and on the broad, covered, stone

platform at both termini a barrier with turnstiles, through which,

except by special favour, no ticketless person can pass. Except

the ticket-clerks, who are Chinese, and the guards and engine-

drivers, who are English, the officials are Japanese in European

dress. Outside the stations, instead of cabs, there are kurumas,

which carry luggage as well as people. Only luggage in the hand is

allowed to go free; the rest is weighed, numbered, and charged for,

a corresponding number being given to its owner to present at his

destination. The fares are--3d class, an ichibu, or about 1s.; 2d

class, 60 sen, or about 2s. 4d.; and 1st class, a yen, or about 3s.

8d. The tickets are collected as the passengers pass through the

barrier at the end of the journey. The English-built cars differ

from ours in having seats along the sides, and doors opening on

platforms at both ends. On the whole, the arrangements are

Continental rather than British. The first-class cars are

expensively fitted up with deeply-cushioned, red morocco seats, but

carry very few passengers, and the comfortable seats, covered with

fine matting, of the 2d class are very scantily occupied; but the

3d class vans are crowded with Japanese, who have taken to

railroads as readily as to kurumas. This line earns about

$8,000,000 a year.

The Japanese look most diminutive in European dress. Each garment

is a misfit, and exaggerates the miserable physique and the

national defects of concave chests and bow legs. The lack of

"complexion" and of hair upon the face makes it nearly impossible

to judge of the ages of men. I supposed that all the railroad

officials were striplings of 17 or 18, but they are men from 25 to

40 years old.

It was a beautiful day, like an English June day, but hotter, and

though the Sakura (wild cherry) and its kin, which are the glory of

the Japanese spring, are over, everything is a young, fresh green

yet, and in all the beauty of growth and luxuriance. The immediate

neighbourhood of Yokohama is beautiful, with abrupt wooded hills,

and small picturesque valleys; but after passing Kanagawa the

railroad enters upon the immense plain of Yedo, said to be 90 miles

from north to south, on whose northern and western boundaries faint

blue mountains of great height hovered dreamily in the blue haze,

and on whose eastern shore for many miles the clear blue wavelets

of the Gulf of Yedo ripple, always as then, brightened by the white

sails of innumerable fishing-boats. On this fertile and fruitful

plain stand not only the capital, with its million of inhabitants,

but a number of populous cities, and several hundred thriving

agricultural villages. Every foot of land which can be seen from

the railroad is cultivated by the most careful spade husbandry, and

much of it is irrigated for rice. Streams abound, and villages of

grey wooden houses with grey thatch, and grey temples with

strangely curved roofs, are scattered thickly over the landscape.

It is all homelike, liveable, and pretty, the country of an

industrious people, for not a weed is to be seen, but no very

striking features or peculiarities arrest one at first sight,

unless it be the crowds everywhere.

You don't take your ticket for Tokiyo, but for Shinagawa or

Shinbashi, two of the many villages which have grown together into

the capital. Yedo is hardly seen before Shinagawa is reached, for

it has no smoke and no long chimneys; its temples and public

buildings are seldom lofty; the former are often concealed among

thick trees, and its ordinary houses seldom reach a height of 20

feet. On the right a blue sea with fortified islands upon it,

wooded gardens with massive retaining walls, hundreds of fishing-

boats lying in creeks or drawn up on the beach; on the left a broad

road on which kurumas are hurrying both ways, rows of low, grey

houses, mostly tea-houses and shops; and as I was asking "Where is

Yedo?" the train came to rest in the terminus, the Shinbashi

railroad station, and disgorged its 200 Japanese passengers with a

combined clatter of 400 clogs--a new sound to me. These clogs add

three inches to their height, but even with them few of the men

attained 5 feet 7 inches, and few of the women 5 feet 2 inches; but

they look far broader in the national costume, which also conceals

the defects of their figures. So lean, so yellow, so ugly, yet so

pleasant-looking, so wanting in colour and effectiveness; the women

so very small and tottering in their walk; the children so formal-

looking and such dignified burlesques on the adults, I feel as if I

had seen them all before, so like are they to their pictures on

trays, fans, and tea-pots. The hair of the women is all drawn away

from their faces, and is worn in chignons, and the men, when they

don't shave the front of their heads and gather their back hair

into a quaint queue drawn forward over the shaven patch, wear their

coarse hair about three inches long in a refractory undivided mop.

Davies, an orderly from the Legation, met me,--one of the escort

cut down and severely wounded when Sir H. Parkes was attacked in

the street of Kiyoto in March 1868 on his way to his first audience

of the Mikado. Hundreds of kurumas, and covered carts with four

wheels drawn by one miserable horse, which are the omnibuses of

certain districts of Tokiyo, were waiting outside the station, and

an English brougham for me, with a running betto. The Legation

stands in Kojimachi on very elevated ground above the inner moat of

the historic "Castle of Yedo," but I cannot tell you anything of

what I saw on my way thither, except that there were miles of dark,

silent, barrack-like buildings, with highly ornamental gateways,

and long rows of projecting windows with screens made of reeds--the

feudal mansions of Yedo--and miles of moats with lofty grass

embankments or walls of massive masonry 50 feet high, with kiosk-

like towers at the corners, and curious, roofed gateways, and many

bridges, and acres of lotus leaves. Turning along the inner moat,

up a steep slope, there are, on the right, its deep green waters,

the great grass embankment surmounted by a dismal wall overhung by

the branches of coniferous trees which surrounded the palace of the

Shogun, and on the left sundry yashikis, as the mansions of the

daimiyo were called, now in this quarter mostly turned into

hospitals, barracks, and Government offices. On a height, the most

conspicuous of them all, is the great red gateway of the yashiki,

now occupied by the French Military Mission, formerly the residence

of Ii Kamon no Kami, one of the great actors in recent historic

events, who was assassinated not far off, outside the Sakaruda gate

of the castle. Besides these, barracks, parade-grounds, policemen,

kurumas, carts pulled and pushed by coolies, pack-horses in straw

sandals, and dwarfish, slatternly-looking soldiers in European

dress, made up the Tokiyo that I saw between Shinbashi and the

Legation.

H.B.M.'s Legation has a good situation near the Foreign Office,

several of the Government departments, and the residences of the

ministers, which are chiefly of brick in the English suburban villa

style. Within the compound, with a brick archway with the Royal

Arms upon it for an entrance, are the Minister's residence, the

Chancery, two houses for the two English Secretaries of Legation,

and quarters for the escort.

It is an English house and an English home, though, with the

exception of a venerable nurse, there are no English servants. The

butler and footman are tall Chinamen, with long pig-tails, black

satin caps, and long blue robes; the cook is a Chinaman, and the

other servants are all Japanese, including one female servant, a

sweet, gentle, kindly girl about 4 feet 5 in height, the wife of

the head "housemaid." None of the servants speak anything but the

most aggravating "pidgun" English, but their deficient speech is

more than made up for by the intelligence and service of the

orderly in waiting, who is rarely absent from the neighbourhood of

the hall door, and attends to the visitors' book and to all

messages and notes. There are two real English children of six and

seven, with great capacities for such innocent enjoyments as can be

found within the limits of the nursery and garden. The other

inmate of the house is a beautiful and attractive terrier called

"Rags," a Skye dog, who unbends "in the bosom of his family," but

ordinarily is as imposing in his demeanour as if he, and not his

master, represented the dignity of the British Empire.

The Japanese Secretary of Legation is Mr. Ernest Satow, whose

reputation for scholarship, especially in the department of

history, is said by the Japanese themselves to be the highest in

Japan {3}--an honourable distinction for an Englishman, and won by

the persevering industry of fifteen years. The scholarship

connected with the British Civil Service is not, however,

monopolised by Mr. Satow, for several gentlemen in the consular

service, who are passing through the various grades of student

interpreters, are distinguishing themselves not alone by their

facility in colloquial Japanese, but by their researches in various

departments of Japanese history, mythology, archaeology, and

literature. Indeed it is to their labours, and to those of a few

other Englishmen and Germans, that the Japanese of the rising

generation will be indebted for keeping alive not only the

knowledge of their archaic literature, but even of the manners and

customs of the first half of this century.

I. L. B.

LETTER IV

"John Chinaman"--Engaging a Servant--First Impressions of Ito--A

Solemn Contract--The Food Question.

H.B.M.'s LEGATION, YEDO,

June 7.

I went to Yokohama for a week to visit Dr. and Mrs. Hepburn on the

Bluff. Bishop and Mrs. Burdon of Hong Kong were also guests, and

it was very pleasant.

One cannot be a day in Yokohama without seeing quite a different

class of orientals from the small, thinly-dressed, and usually

poor-looking Japanese. Of the 2500 Chinamen who reside in Japan,

over 1100 are in Yokohama, and if they were suddenly removed,

business would come to an abrupt halt. Here, as everywhere, the

Chinese immigrant is making himself indispensable. He walks

through the streets with his swinging gait and air of complete

self-complacency, as though he belonged to the ruling race. He is

tall and big, and his many garments, with a handsome brocaded robe

over all, his satin pantaloons, of which not much is seen, tight at

the ankles, and his high shoes, whose black satin tops are slightly

turned up at the toes, make him look even taller and bigger than he

is. His head is mostly shaven, but the hair at the back is plaited

with a quantity of black purse twist into a queue which reaches to

his knees, above which, set well back, he wears a stiff, black

satin skull-cap, without which he is never seen. His face is very

yellow, his long dark eyes and eyebrows slope upwards towards his

temples, he has not the vestige of a beard, and his skin is shiny.

He looks thoroughly "well-to-do." He is not unpleasing-looking,

but you feel that as a Celestial he looks down upon you. If you

ask a question in a merchant's office, or change your gold into

satsu, or take your railroad or steamer ticket, or get change in a

shop, the inevitable Chinaman appears. In the street he swings

past you with a purpose in his face; as he flies past you in a

kuruma he is bent on business; he is sober and reliable, and is

content to "squeeze" his employer rather than to rob him--his one

aim in life is money. For this he is industrious, faithful, self-

denying; and he has his reward.

Several of my kind new acquaintances interested themselves about

the (to me) vital matter of a servant interpreter, and many

Japanese came to "see after the place." The speaking of

intelligible English is a sine qua non, and it was wonderful to

find the few words badly pronounced and worse put together, which

were regarded by the candidates as a sufficient qualification. Can

you speak English? "Yes." What wages do you ask? "Twelve dollars

a month." This was always said glibly, and in each case sounded

hopeful. Whom have you lived with? A foreign name distorted out

of all recognition, as was natural, was then given. Where have you

travelled? This question usually had to be translated into

Japanese, and the usual answer was, "The Tokaido, the Nakasendo, to

Kiyoto, to Nikko," naming the beaten tracks of countless tourists.

Do you know anything of Northern Japan and the Hokkaido? "No,"

with a blank wondering look. At this stage in every case Dr.

Hepburn compassionately stepped in as interpreter, for their stock

of English was exhausted. Three were regarded as promising. One

was a sprightly youth who came in a well-made European suit of

light-coloured tweed, a laid-down collar, a tie with a diamond (?)

pin, and a white shirt, so stiffly starched, that he could hardly

bend low enough for a bow even of European profundity. He wore a

gilt watch-chain with a locket, the corner of a very white cambric

pocket-handkerchief dangled from his breast pocket, and he held a

cane and a felt hat in his hand. He was a Japanese dandy of the

first water. I looked at him ruefully. To me starched collars are

to be an unknown luxury for the next three months. His fine

foreign clothes would enhance prices everywhere in the interior,

and besides that, I should feel a perpetual difficulty in asking

menial services from an exquisite. I was therefore quite relieved

when his English broke down at the second question.

The second was a most respectable-looking man of thirty-five in a

good Japanese dress. He was highly recommended, and his first

English words were promising, but he had been cook in the service

of a wealthy English official who travelled with a large retinue,

and sent servants on ahead to prepare the way. He knew really only

a few words of English, and his horror at finding that there was

"no master," and that there would be no woman-servant, was so

great, that I hardly know whether he rejected me or I him.

The third, sent by Mr. Wilkinson, wore a plain Japanese dress, and

had a frank, intelligent face. Though Dr. Hepburn spoke with him

in Japanese, he thought that he knew more English than the others,

and that what he knew would come out when he was less agitated. He

evidently understood what I said, and, though I had a suspicion

that he would turn out to be the "master," I thought him so

prepossessing that I nearly engaged him on the spot. None of the

others merit any remark.

However, when I had nearly made up my mind in his favour, a

creature appeared without any recommendation at all, except that

one of Dr. Hepburn's servants was acquainted with him. He is only

eighteen, but this is equivalent to twenty-three or twenty-four

with us, and only 4 feet 10 inches in height, but, though bandy-

legged, is well proportioned and strong-looking. He has a round

and singularly plain face, good teeth, much elongated eyes, and the

heavy droop of his eyelids almost caricatures the usual Japanese

peculiarity. He is the most stupid-looking Japanese that I have

seen, but, from a rapid, furtive glance in his eyes now and then, I

think that the stolidity is partly assumed. He said that he had

lived at the American Legation, that he had been a clerk on the

Osaka railroad, that he had travelled through northern Japan by the

eastern route, and in Yezo with Mr. Maries, a botanical collector,

that he understood drying plants, that he could cook a little, that

he could write English, that he could walk twenty-five miles a day,

and that he thoroughly understood getting through the interior!

This would-be paragon had no recommendations, and accounted for

this by saying that they had been burned in a recent fire in his

father's house. Mr. Maries was not forthcoming, and more than

this, I suspected and disliked the boy. However, he understood my

English and I his, and, being very anxious to begin my travels, I

engaged him for twelve dollars a month, and soon afterwards he came

back with a contract, in which he declares by all that he holds

most sacred that he will serve me faithfully for the wages agreed

upon, and to this document he affixed his seal and I my name. The

next day he asked me for a month's wages in advance, which I gave

him, but Dr. H. consolingly suggested that I should never see him

again!

Ever since the solemn night when the contract was signed I have

felt under an incubus, and since he appeared here yesterday,

punctual to the appointed hour, I have felt as if I had a veritable

"old man of the sea" upon my shoulders. He flies up stairs and

along the corridors as noiselessly as a cat, and already knows

where I keep all my things. Nothing surprises or abashes him, he

bows profoundly to Sir Harry and Lady Parkes when he encounters

them, but is obviously "quite at home" in a Legation, and only

allowed one of the orderlies to show him how to put on a Mexican

saddle and English bridle out of condescension to my wishes. He

seems as sharp or "smart" as can be, and has already arranged for

the first three days of my journey. His name is Ito, and you will

doubtless hear much more of him, as he will be my good or evil

genius for the next three months.

As no English lady has yet travelled alone through the interior, my

project excites a very friendly interest among my friends, and I

receive much warning and dissuasion, and a little encouragement.

The strongest, because the most intelligent, dissuasion comes from

Dr. Hepburn, who thinks that I ought not to undertake the journey,

and that I shall never get through to the Tsugaru Strait. If I

accepted much of the advice given to me, as to taking tinned meats

and soups, claret, and a Japanese maid, I should need a train of at

least six pack-horses! As to fleas, there is a lamentable

concensus of opinion that they are the curse of Japanese travelling

during the summer, and some people recommend me to sleep in a bag

drawn tightly round the throat, others to sprinkle my bedding

freely with insect powder, others to smear the skin all over with

carbolic oil, and some to make a plentiful use of dried and

powdered flea-bane. All admit, however, that these are but feeble

palliatives. Hammocks unfortunately cannot be used in Japanese

houses.

The "Food Question" is said to be the most important one for all

travellers, and it is discussed continually with startling

earnestness, not alone as regards my tour. However apathetic

people are on other subjects, the mere mention of this one rouses

them into interest. All have suffered or may suffer, and every one

wishes to impart his own experience or to learn from that of

others. Foreign ministers, professors, missionaries, merchants--

all discuss it with becoming gravity as a question of life and

death, which by many it is supposed to be. The fact is that,

except at a few hotels in popular resorts which are got up for

foreigners, bread, butter, milk, meat, poultry, coffee, wine, and

beer, are unattainable, that fresh fish is rare, and that unless

one can live on rice, tea, and eggs, with the addition now and then

of some tasteless fresh vegetables, food must be taken, as the

fishy and vegetable abominations known as "Japanese food" can only

be swallowed and digested by a few, and that after long practice.

{4}

Another, but far inferior, difficulty on which much stress is laid

is the practice common among native servants of getting a "squeeze"

out of every money transaction on the road, so that the cost of

travelling is often doubled, and sometimes trebled, according to

the skill and capacity of the servant. Three gentlemen who have

travelled extensively have given me lists of the prices which I

ought to pay, varying in different districts, and largely increased

on the beaten track of tourists, and Mr. Wilkinson has read these

to Ito, who offered an occasional remonstrance. Mr. W. remarked

after the conversation, which was in Japanese, that he thought I

should have to "look sharp after money matters"--a painful

prospect, as I have never been able to manage anybody in my life,

and shall surely have no control over this clever, cunning Japanese

youth, who on most points will be able to deceive me as he pleases.

On returning here I found that Lady Parkes had made most of the

necessary preparations for me, and that they include two light

baskets with covers of oiled paper, a travelling bed or stretcher,

a folding-chair, and an india-rubber bath, all which she considers

as necessaries for a person in feeble health on a journey of such

long duration. This week has been spent in making acquaintances in

Tokiyo, seeing some characteristic sights, and in trying to get

light on my tour; but little seems known by foreigners of northern

Japan, and a Government department, on being applied to, returned

an itinerary, leaving out 140 miles of the route that I dream of

taking, on the ground of "insufficient information," on which Sir

Harry cheerily remarked, "You will have to get your information as

you go along, and that will be all the more interesting." Ah! but

how? I. L. B.

LETTER V

Kwan-non Temple--Uniformity of Temple Architecture--A Kuruma

Expedition--A Perpetual Festival--The Ni-o--The Limbo of Vanity--

Heathen Prayers--Binzuru--A Group of Devils--Archery Galleries--New

Japan--An Elegante.

H.B.M.'s LEGATION, YEDO,

June 9.

Once for all I will describe a Buddhist temple, and it shall be the

popular temple of Asakusa, which keeps fair and festival the whole

year round, and is dedicated to the "thousand-armed" Kwan-non, the

goddess of mercy. Writing generally, it may be said that in

design, roof, and general aspect, Japanese Buddhist temples are all

alike. The sacred architectural idea expresses itself in nearly

the same form always. There is a single or double-roofed gateway,

with highly-coloured figures in niches on either side; the paved

temple-court, with more or fewer stone or bronze lanterns; amainu,

or heavenly dogs, in stone on stone pedestals; stone sarcophagi,

roofed over or not, for holy water; a flight of steps; a portico,

continued as a verandah all round the temple; a roof of

tremendously disproportionate size and weight, with a peculiar

curve; a square or oblong hall divided by a railing from a

"chancel" with a high and low altar, and a shrine containing

Buddha, or the divinity to whom the chapel is dedicated; an

incense-burner, and a few ecclesiastical ornaments. The symbols,

idols, and adornments depend upon the sect to which the temple

belongs, or the wealth of its votaries, or the fancy of the

priests. Some temples are packed full of gods, shrines, banners,

bronzes, brasses, tablets, and ornaments, and others, like those of

the Monto sect, are so severely simple, that with scarcely an

alteration they might be used for Christian worship to-morrow.

The foundations consist of square stones on which the uprights

rest. These are of elm, and are united at intervals by

longitudinal pieces. The great size and enormous weight of the

roofs arise from the trusses being formed of one heavy frame being

built upon another in diminishing squares till the top is reached,

the main beams being formed of very large timbers put on in their

natural state. They are either very heavily and ornamentally

tiled, or covered with sheet copper ornamented with gold, or

thatched to a depth of from one to three feet, with fine shingles

or bark. The casing of the walls on the outside is usually thick

elm planking either lacquered or unpainted, and that of the inside

is of thin, finely-planed and bevelled planking of the beautiful

wood of the Retinospora obtusa. The lining of the roof is in flat

panels, and where it is supported by pillars they are invariably

circular, and formed of the straight, finely-grained stem of the

Retinospora obtusa. The projecting ends of the roof-beams under

the eaves are either elaborately carved, lacquered in dull red, or

covered with copper, as are the joints of the beams. Very few

nails are used, the timbers being very beautifully joined by

mortices and dovetails, other methods of junction being unknown.

Mr. Chamberlain and I went in a kuruma hurried along by three

liveried coolies, through the three miles of crowded streets which

lie between the Legation and Asakusa, once a village, but now

incorporated with this monster city, to the broad street leading to

the Adzuma Bridge over the Sumida river, one of the few stone

bridges in Tokiyo, which connects east Tokiyo, an uninteresting

region, containing many canals, storehouses, timber-yards, and

inferior yashikis, with the rest of the city. This street,

marvellously thronged with pedestrians and kurumas, is the terminus

of a number of city "stage lines," and twenty wretched-looking

covered waggons, with still more wretched ponies, were drawn up in

the middle, waiting for passengers. Just there plenty of real

Tokiyo life is to be seen, for near a shrine of popular pilgrimage

there are always numerous places of amusement, innocent and

vicious, and the vicinity of this temple is full of restaurants,

tea-houses, minor theatres, and the resorts of dancing and singing

girls.

A broad-paved avenue, only open to foot passengers, leads from this

street to the grand entrance, a colossal two-storied double-roofed

mon, or gate, painted a rich dull red. On either side of this

avenue are lines of booths--which make a brilliant and lavish

display of their contents--toy-shops, shops for smoking apparatus,

and shops for the sale of ornamental hair-pins predominating.

Nearer the gate are booths for the sale of rosaries for prayer,

sleeve and bosom idols of brass and wood in small shrines, amulet

bags, representations of the jolly-looking Daikoku, the god of

wealth, the most popular of the household gods of Japan, shrines,

memorial tablets, cheap ex votos, sacred bells, candlesticks, and

incense-burners, and all the endless and various articles connected

with Buddhist devotion, public and private. Every day is a

festival-day at Asakusa; the temple is dedicated to the most

popular of the great divinities; it is the most popular of

religious resorts; and whether he be Buddhist, Shintoist, or

Christian, no stranger comes to the capital without making a visit

to its crowded courts or a purchase at its tempting booths. Not to

be an exception, I invested in bouquets of firework flowers, fifty

flowers for 2 sen, or 1d., each of which, as it slowly consumes,

throws off fiery coruscations, shaped like the most beautiful of

snow crystals. I was also tempted by small boxes at 2 sen each,

containing what look like little slips of withered pith, but which,

on being dropped into water, expand into trees and flowers.

Down a paved passage on the right there is an artificial river, not

over clean, with a bridge formed of one curved stone, from which a

flight of steps leads up to a small temple with a magnificent

bronze bell. At the entrance several women were praying. In the

same direction are two fine bronze Buddhas, seated figures, one

with clasped hands, the other holding a lotus, both with "The light

of the world" upon their brows. The grand red gateway into the

actual temple courts has an extremely imposing effect, and besides,

it is the portal to the first great heathen temple that I have

seen, and it made me think of another temple whose courts were

equally crowded with buyers and sellers, and of a "whip of small

cords" in the hand of One who claimed both the temple and its

courts as His "Father's House." Not with less righteous wrath

would the gentle founder of Buddhism purify the unsanctified courts

of Asakusa. Hundreds of men, women, and children passed to and fro

through the gateway in incessant streams, and so they are passing

through every daylight hour of every day in the year, thousands

becoming tens of thousands on the great matsuri days, when the

mikoshi, or sacred car, containing certain symbols of the god, is

exhibited, and after sacred mimes and dances have been performed,

is carried in a magnificent, antique procession to the shore and

back again. Under the gateway on either side are the Ni-o, or two

kings, gigantic figures in flowing robes, one red and with an open

mouth, representing the Yo, or male principle of Chinese

philosophy, the other green and with the mouth firmly closed,

representing the In, or female principle. They are hideous

creatures, with protruding eyes, and faces and figures distorted

and corrupted into a high degree of exaggerated and convulsive

action. These figures guard the gates of most of the larger

temples, and small prints of them are pasted over the doors of

houses to protect them against burglars. Attached to the grating

in front were a number of straw sandals, hung up by people who pray

that their limbs may be as muscular as those of the Ni-o.

Passing through this gate we were in the temple court proper, and

in front of the temple itself, a building of imposing height and

size, of a dull red colour, with a grand roof of heavy iron grey

tiles, with a sweeping curve which gives grace as well as grandeur.

The timbers and supports are solid and of great size, but, in

common with all Japanese temples, whether Buddhist or Shinto, the

edifice is entirely of wood. A broad flight of narrow, steep,

brass-bound steps lead up to the porch, which is formed by a number

of circular pillars supporting a very lofty roof, from which paper

lanterns ten feet long are hanging. A gallery runs from this round

the temple, under cover of the eaves. There is an outer temple,

unmatted, and an inner one behind a grating, into which those who

choose to pay for the privilege of praying in comparative privacy,

or of having prayers said for them by the priests, can pass.

In the outer temple the noise, confusion, and perpetual motion, are

bewildering. Crowds on clattering clogs pass in and out; pigeons,

of which hundreds live in the porch, fly over your head, and the

whirring of their wings mingles with the tinkling of bells, the

beating of drums and gongs, the high-pitched drone of the priests,

the low murmur of prayers, the rippling laughter of girls, the

harsh voices of men, and the general buzz of a multitude. There is

very much that is highly grotesque at first sight. Men squat on

the floor selling amulets, rosaries, printed prayers, incense

sticks, and other wares. Ex votos of all kinds hang on the wall

and on the great round pillars. Many of these are rude Japanese

pictures. The subject of one is the blowing-up of a steamer in the

Sumidagawa with the loss of 100 lives, when the donor was saved by

the grace of Kwan-non. Numbers of memorials are from people who

offered up prayers here, and have been restored to health or

wealth. Others are from junk men whose lives have been in peril.

There are scores of men's queues and a few dusty braids of women's

hair offered on account of vows or prayers, usually for sick

relatives, and among them all, on the left hand, are a large mirror

in a gaudily gilt frame and a framed picture of the P. M. S. China!

Above this incongruous collection are splendid wood carvings and

frescoes of angels, among which the pigeons find a home free from

molestation.

Near the entrance there is a superb incense-burner in the most

massive style of the older bronzes, with a mythical beast rampant

upon it, and in high relief round it the Japanese signs of the

zodiac--the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, serpent, horse, goat,

monkey, cock, dog, and hog. Clouds of incense rise continually

from the perforations round the edge, and a black-toothed woman who

keeps it burning is perpetually receiving small coins from the

worshippers, who then pass on to the front of the altar to pray.

The high altar, and indeed all that I should regard as properly the

temple, are protected by a screen of coarsely-netted iron wire.

This holy of holies is full of shrines and gods, gigantic

candlesticks, colossal lotuses of gilded silver, offerings, lamps,

lacquer, litany books, gongs, drums, bells, and all the mysterious

symbols of a faith which is a system of morals and metaphysics to

the educated and initiated, and an idolatrous superstition to the

masses. In this interior the light was dim, the lamps burned low,

the atmosphere was heavy with incense, and amidst its fumes shaven

priests in chasubles and stoles moved noiselessly over the soft

matting round the high altar on which Kwan-non is enshrined,

lighting candles, striking bells, and murmuring prayers. In front

of the screen is the treasury, a wooden chest 14 feet by 10, with a

deep slit, into which all the worshippers cast copper coins with a

ceaseless clinking sound.

There, too, they pray, if that can be called prayer which

frequently consists only in the repetition of an uncomprehended

phrase in a foreign tongue, bowing the head, raising the hands and

rubbing them, murmuring a few words, telling beads, clapping the

hands, bowing again, and then passing out or on to another shrine

to repeat the same form. Merchants in silk clothing, soldiers in

shabby French uniforms, farmers, coolies in "vile raiment,"

mothers, maidens, swells in European clothes, even the samurai

policemen, bow before the goddess of mercy. Most of the prayers

were offered rapidly, a mere momentary interlude in the gurgle of

careless talk, and without a pretence of reverence; but some of the

petitioners obviously brought real woes in simple "faith."

In one shrine there is a large idol, spotted all over with pellets

of paper, and hundreds of these are sticking to the wire netting

which protects him. A worshipper writes his petition on paper, or,

better still, has it written for him by the priest, chews it to a

pulp, and spits it at the divinity. If, having been well aimed, it

passes through the wire and sticks, it is a good omen, if it lodges

in the netting the prayer has probably been unheard. The Ni-o and

some of the gods outside the temple are similarly disfigured. On

the left there is a shrine with a screen, to the bars of which

innumerable prayers have been tied. On the right, accessible to

all, sits Binzuru, one of Buddha's original sixteen disciples. His

face and appearance have been calm and amiable, with something of

the quiet dignity of an elderly country gentleman of the reign of

George III.; but he is now worn and defaced, and has not much more

of eyes, nose, and mouth than the Sphinx; and the polished, red

lacquer has disappeared from his hands and feet, for Binzuru is a

great medicine god, and centuries of sick people have rubbed his

face and limbs, and then have rubbed their own. A young woman went

up to him, rubbed the back of his neck, and then rubbed her own.

Then a modest-looking girl, leading an ancient woman with badly

inflamed eyelids and paralysed arms, rubbed his eyelids, and then

gently stroked the closed eyelids of the crone. Then a coolie,

with a swelled knee, applied himself vigorously to Binzuru's knee,

and more gently to his own. Remember, this is the great temple of

the populace, and "not many rich, not many noble, not many mighty,"

enter its dim, dirty, crowded halls. {5}

But the great temple to Kwan-non is not the only sight of Asakusa.

Outside it are countless shrines and temples, huge stone Amainu, or

heavenly dogs, on rude blocks of stone, large cisterns of stone and

bronze with and without canopies, containing water for the

ablutions of the worshippers, cast iron Amainu on hewn stone

pedestals--a recent gift--bronze and stone lanterns, a stone

prayer-wheel in a stone post, figures of Buddha with the serene

countenance of one who rests from his labours, stone idols, on

which devotees have pasted slips of paper inscribed with prayers,

with sticks of incense rising out of the ashes of hundreds of

former sticks smouldering before them, blocks of hewn stone with

Chinese and Sanskrit inscriptions, an eight-sided temple in which

are figures of the "Five Hundred Disciples" of Buddha, a temple

with the roof and upper part of the walls richly coloured, the

circular Shinto mirror in an inner shrine, a bronze treasury

outside with a bell, which is rung to attract the god's attention,

a striking, five-storied pagoda, with much red lacquer, and the

ends of the roof-beams very boldly carved, its heavy eaves fringed

with wind bells, and its uppermost roof terminating in a graceful

copper spiral of great height, with the "sacred pearl" surrounded

by flames for its finial. Near it, as near most temples, is an

upright frame of plain wood with tablets, on which are inscribed

the names of donors to the temple, and the amount of their gifts.

There is a handsome stone-floored temple to the south-east of the

main building, to which we were the sole visitors. It is lofty and

very richly decorated. In the centre is an octagonal revolving

room, or rather shrine, of rich red lacquer most gorgeously

ornamented. It rests on a frame of carved black lacquer, and has a

lacquer gallery running round it, on which several richly decorated

doors open. On the application of several shoulders to this

gallery the shrine rotates. It is, in fact, a revolving library of

the Buddhist Scriptures, and a single turn is equivalent to a

single pious perusal of them. It is an exceedingly beautiful

specimen of ancient decorative lacquer work. At the back part of

the temple is a draped brass figure of Buddha, with one hand

raised--a dignified piece of casting. All the Buddhas have Hindoo

features, and the graceful drapery and oriental repose which have

been imported from India contrast singularly with the grotesque

extravagances of the indigenous Japanese conceptions. In the same

temple are four monstrously extravagant figures carved in wood,

life-size, with clawed toes on their feet, and two great fangs in

addition to the teeth in each mouth. The heads of all are

surrounded with flames, and are backed by golden circlets. They

are extravagantly clothed in garments which look as if they were

agitated by a violent wind; they wear helmets and partial suits of

armour, and hold in their right hands something between a monarch's

sceptre and a priest's staff. They have goggle eyes and open

mouths, and their faces are in distorted and exaggerated action.

One, painted bright red, tramples on a writhing devil painted

bright pink; another, painted emerald green, tramples on a sea-

green devil, an indigo blue monster tramples on a sky-blue fiend,

and a bright pink monster treads under his clawed feet a flesh-

coloured demon. I cannot give you any idea of the hideousness of

their aspect, and was much inclined to sympathise with the more

innocent-looking fiends whom they were maltreating. They occur

very frequently in Buddhist temples, and are said by some to be

assistant-torturers to Yemma, the lord of hell, and are called by

others "The gods of the Four Quarters."

The temple grounds are a most extraordinary sight. No English fair

in the palmiest days of fairs ever presented such an array of

attractions. Behind the temple are archery galleries in numbers,

where girls, hardly so modest-looking as usual, smile and smirk,

and bring straw-coloured tea in dainty cups, and tasteless

sweetmeats on lacquer trays, and smoke their tiny pipes, and offer

you bows of slender bamboo strips, two feet long, with rests for

the arrows, and tiny cherry-wood arrows, bone-tipped, and feathered

red, blue, and white, and smilingly, but quite unobtrusively, ask

you to try your skill or luck at a target hanging in front of a

square drum, flanked by red cushions. A click, a boom, or a hardly

audible "thud," indicate the result. Nearly all the archers were

grown-up men, and many of them spend hours at a time in this

childish sport.

All over the grounds booths with the usual charcoal fire, copper

boiler, iron kettle of curious workmanship, tiny cups, fragrant

aroma of tea, and winsome, graceful girls, invite you to drink and

rest, and more solid but less inviting refreshments are also to be

had. Rows of pretty paper lanterns decorate all the stalls. Then

there are photograph galleries, mimic tea-gardens, tableaux in

which a large number of groups of life-size figures with

appropriate scenery are put into motion by a creaking wheel of

great size, matted lounges for rest, stands with saucers of rice,

beans and peas for offerings to the gods, the pigeons, and the two

sacred horses, Albino ponies, with pink eyes and noses, revoltingly

greedy creatures, eating all day long and still craving for more.

There are booths for singing and dancing, and under one a

professional story-teller was reciting to a densely packed crowd

one of the old, popular stories of crime. There are booths where

for a few rin you may have the pleasure of feeding some very ugly

and greedy apes, or of watching mangy monkeys which have been

taught to prostrate themselves Japanese fashion.

This letter is far too long, but to pass over Asakusa and its

novelties when the impression of them is fresh would be to omit one

of the most interesting sights in Japan. On the way back we passed

red mail carts like those in London, a squadron of cavalry in

European uniforms and with European saddles, and the carriage of

the Minister of Marine, an English brougham with a pair of horses

in English harness, and an escort of six troopers--a painful

precaution adopted since the political assassination of Okubo, the

Home Minister, three weeks ago. So the old and the new in this

great city contrast with and jostle each other. The Mikado and his

ministers, naval and military officers and men, the whole of the

civil officials and the police, wear European clothes, as well as a

number of dissipated-looking young men who aspire to represent

"young Japan." Carriages and houses in English style, with

carpets, chairs, and tables, are becoming increasingly numerous,

and the bad taste which regulates the purchase of foreign

furnishings is as marked as the good taste which everywhere

presides over the adornment of the houses in purely Japanese style.

Happily these expensive and unbecoming innovations have scarcely

affected female dress, and some ladies who adopted our fashions

have given them up because of their discomfort and manifold

difficulties and complications.

The Empress on State occasions appears in scarlet satin hakama, and

flowing robes, and she and the Court ladies invariably wear the

national costume. I have only seen two ladies in European dress;

and this was at a dinner-party here, and they were the wives of Mr.

Mori, the go-ahead Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, and of the

Japanese Consul at Hong Kong; and both by long residence abroad

have learned to wear it with ease. The wife of Saigo, the Minister

of Education, called one day in an exquisite Japanese dress of

dove-coloured silk crepe, with a pale pink under-dress of the same

material, which showed a little at the neck and sleeves. Her

girdle was of rich dove-coloured silk, with a ghost of a pale pink

blossom hovering upon it here and there. She had no frills or

fripperies of any description, or ornaments, except a single pin in

her chignon, and, with a sweet and charming face, she looked as

graceful and dignified in her Japanese costume as she would have

looked exactly the reverse in ours. Their costume has one striking

advantage over ours. A woman is perfectly CLOTHED if she has one

garment and a girdle on, and perfectly DRESSED if she has two.

There is a difference in features and expression--much exaggerated,

however, by Japanese artists--between the faces of high-born women

and those of the middle and lower classes. I decline to admire

fat-faces, pug noses, thick lips, long eyes, turned up at the outer

corners, and complexions which owe much to powder and paint. The

habit of painting the lips with a reddish-yellow pigment, and of

heavily powdering the face and throat with pearl powder, is a

repulsive one. But it is hard to pronounce any unfavourable

criticism on women who have so much kindly grace of manner. I. L.

B.

LETTER VI

Fears--Travelling Equipments--Passports--Coolie Costume--A Yedo

Diorama--Rice-Fields--Tea-Houses--A Traveller's Reception--The Inn

at Kasukabe--Lack of Privacy--A Concourse of Noises--A Nocturnal

Alarm--A Vision of Policemen--A Budget from Yedo.

KASUKABE, June 10.

From the date you will see that I have started on my long journey,

though not upon the "unbeaten tracks" which I hope to take after

leaving Nikko, and my first evening alone in the midst of this

crowded Asian life is strange, almost fearful. I have suffered

from nervousness all day--the fear of being frightened, of being

rudely mobbed, as threatened by Mr. Campbell of Islay, of giving

offence by transgressing the rules of Japanese politeness--of, I

know not what! Ito is my sole reliance, and he may prove a "broken

reed." I often wished to give up my project, but was ashamed of my

cowardice when, on the best authority, I received assurances of its

safety. {6}

The preparations were finished yesterday, and my outfit weighed 110

lbs., which, with Ito's weight of 90 lbs., is as much as can be

carried by an average Japanese horse. My two painted wicker boxes

lined with paper and with waterproof covers are convenient for the

two sides of a pack-horse. I have a folding-chair--for in a

Japanese house there is nothing but the floor to sit upon, and not

even a solid wall to lean against--an air-pillow for kuruma

travelling, an india-rubber bath, sheets, a blanket, and last, and

more important than all else, a canvas stretcher on light poles,

which can be put together in two minutes; and being 2.5 feet high

is supposed to be secure from fleas. The "Food Question" has been

solved by a modified rejection of all advice! I have only brought

a small supply of Liebig's extract of meat, 4 lbs. of raisins, some

chocolate, both for eating and drinking, and some brandy in case of

need. I have my own Mexican saddle and bridle, a reasonable

quantity of clothes, including a loose wrapper for wearing in the

evenings, some candles, Mr. Brunton's large map of Japan, volumes

of the Transactions of the English Asiatic Society, and Mr. Satow's

Anglo-Japanese Dictionary. My travelling dress is a short costume

of dust-coloured striped tweed, with strong laced boots of

unblacked leather, and a Japanese hat, shaped like a large inverted

bowl, of light bamboo plait, with a white cotton cover, and a very

light frame inside, which fits round the brow and leaves a space of

1.5 inches between the hat and the head for the free circulation of

air. It only weighs 2.5 ounces, and is infinitely to be preferred

to a heavy pith helmet, and, light as it is, it protects the head

so thoroughly, that, though the sun has been unclouded all day and

the mercury at 86 degrees, no other protection has been necessary.

My money is in bundles of 50 yen, and 50, 20, and 10 sen notes,

besides which I have some rouleaux of copper coins. I have a bag

for my passport, which hangs to my waist. All my luggage, with the

exception of my saddle, which I use for a footstool, goes into one

kuruma, and Ito, who is limited to 12 lbs., takes his along with

him.

I have three kurumas, which are to go to Nikko, ninety miles, in

three days, without change of runners, for about eleven shillings

each.

Passports usually define the route over which the foreigner is to

travel, but in this case Sir H. Parkes has obtained one which is

practically unrestricted, for it permits me to travel through all

Japan north of Tokiyo and in Yezo without specifying any route.

This precious document, without which I should be liable to be

arrested and forwarded to my consul, is of course in Japanese, but

the cover gives in English the regulations under which it is

issued. A passport must be applied for, for reasons of "health,

botanical research, or scientific investigation." Its bearer must

not light fires in woods, attend fires on horseback, trespass on

fields, enclosures, or game-preserves, scribble on temples,

shrines, or walls, drive fast on a narrow road, or disregard

notices of "No thoroughfare." He must "conduct himself in an

orderly and conciliating manner towards the Japanese authorities

and people;" he "must produce his passport to any officials who may

demand it," under pain of arrest; and while in the interior "is

forbidden to shoot, trade, to conclude mercantile contracts with

Japanese, or to rent houses or rooms for a longer period than his

journey requires."

NIKKO, June 13.--This is one of the paradises of Japan! It is a

proverbial saying, "He who has not seen Nikko must not use the word

kek'ko" (splendid, delicious, beautiful); but of this more

hereafter. My attempt to write to you from Kasukabe failed, owing

to the onslaught of an army of fleas, which compelled me to retreat

to my stretcher, and the last two nights, for this and other

reasons, writing has been out of the question.

I left the Legation at 11 am. on Monday and reached Kasukabe at 5

p.m., the runners keeping up an easy trot the whole journey of

twenty-three miles; but the halts for smoking and eating were

frequent.

These kuruma-runners wore short blue cotton drawers, girdles with

tobacco pouch and pipe attached, short blue cotton shirts with wide

sleeves, and open in front, reaching to their waists, and blue

cotton handkerchiefs knotted round their heads, except when the sun

was very hot, when they took the flat flag discs, two feet in

diameter, which always hang behind kurumas, and are used either in

sun or rain, and tied them on their heads. They wore straw

sandals, which had to be replaced twice on the way. Blue and white

towels hung from the shafts to wipe away the sweat, which ran

profusely down the lean, brown bodies. The upper garment always

flew behind them, displaying chests and backs elaborately tattooed

with dragons and fishes. Tattooing has recently been prohibited;

but it was not only a favourite adornment, but a substitute for

perishable clothing.

Most of the men of the lower classes wear their hair in a very ugly

fashion,--the front and top of the head being shaved, the long hair

from the back and sides being drawn up and tied, then waxed, tied

again, and cut short off, the stiff queue being brought forward and

laid, pointing forwards, along the back part of the top of the

head. This top-knot is shaped much like a short clay pipe. The

shaving and dressing the hair thus require the skill of a

professional barber. Formerly the hair was worn in this way by the

samurai, in order that the helmet might fit comfortably, but it is

now the style of the lower classes mostly and by no means

invariably.

Blithely, at a merry trot, the coolies hurried us away from the

kindly group in the Legation porch, across the inner moat and along

the inner drive of the castle, past gateways and retaining walls of

Cyclopean masonry, across the second moat, along miles of streets

of sheds and shops, all grey, thronged with foot-passengers and

kurumas, with pack-horses loaded two or three feet above their

backs, the arches of their saddles red and gilded lacquer, their

frontlets of red leather, their "shoes" straw sandals, their heads

tied tightly to the saddle-girth on either side, great white cloths

figured with mythical beasts in blue hanging down loosely under

their bodies; with coolies dragging heavy loads to the guttural cry

of Hai! huida! with children whose heads were shaved in hideous

patterns; and now and then, as if to point a moral lesson in the

midst of the whirling diorama, a funeral passed through the throng,

with a priest in rich robes, mumbling prayers, a covered barrel

containing the corpse, and a train of mourners in blue dresses with

white wings. Then we came to the fringe of Yedo, where the houses

cease to be continuous, but all that day there was little interval

between them. All had open fronts, so that the occupations of the

inmates, the "domestic life" in fact, were perfectly visible. Many

of these houses were roadside chayas, or tea-houses, and nearly all

sold sweet-meats, dried fish, pickles, mochi, or uncooked cakes of

rice dough, dried persimmons, rain hats, or straw shoes for man or

beast. The road, though wide enough for two carriages (of which we

saw none), was not good, and the ditches on both sides were

frequently neither clean nor sweet. Must I write it? The houses

were mean, poor, shabby, often even squalid, the smells were bad,

and the people looked ugly, shabby, and poor, though all were

working at something or other.

The country is a dead level, and mainly an artificial mud flat or

swamp, in whose fertile ooze various aquatic birds were wading, and

in which hundreds of men and women were wading too, above their

knees in slush; for this plain of Yedo is mainly a great rice-

field, and this is the busy season of rice-planting; for here, in

the sense in which we understand it, they do not "cast their bread

upon the waters." There are eight or nine leading varieties of

rice grown in Japan, all of which, except an upland species,

require mud, water, and much puddling and nasty work. Rice is the

staple food and the wealth of Japan. Its revenues were estimated

in rice. Rice is grown almost wherever irrigation is possible.

The rice-fields are usually very small and of all shapes. A

quarter of an acre is a good-sized field. The rice crop planted in

June is not reaped till November, but in the meantime it needs to

be "puddled" three times, i.e. for all the people to turn into the

slush, and grub out all the weeds and tangled aquatic plants, which

weave themselves from tuft to tuft, and puddle up the mud afresh

round the roots. It grows in water till it is ripe, when the

fields are dried off. An acre of the best land produces annually

about fifty-four bushels of rice, and of the worst about thirty.

On the plain of Yedo, besides the nearly continuous villages along

the causewayed road, there are islands, as they may be called, of

villages surrounded by trees, and hundreds of pleasant oases on

which wheat ready for the sickle, onions, millet, beans, and peas,

were flourishing. There were lotus ponds too, in which the

glorious lily, Nelumbo nucifera, is being grown for the

sacrilegious purpose of being eaten! Its splendid classical leaves

are already a foot above the water.

After running cheerily for several miles my men bowled me into a

tea-house, where they ate and smoked while I sat in the garden,

which consisted of baked mud, smooth stepping-stones, a little pond

with some goldfish, a deformed pine, and a stone lantern. Observe

that foreigners are wrong in calling the Japanese houses of

entertainment indiscriminately "tea-houses." A tea-house or chaya

is a house at which you can obtain tea and other refreshments,

rooms to eat them in, and attendance. That which to some extent

answers to an hotel is a yadoya, which provides sleeping

accommodation and food as required. The licenses are different.

Tea-houses are of all grades, from the three-storied erections, gay

with flags and lanterns, in the great cities and at places of

popular resort, down to the road-side tea-house, as represented in

the engraving, with three or four lounges of dark-coloured wood

under its eaves, usually occupied by naked coolies in all attitudes

of easiness and repose. The floor is raised about eighteen inches

above the ground, and in these tea-houses is frequently a matted

platform with a recess called the doma, literally "earth-space," in

the middle, round which runs a ledge of polished wood called the

itama, or "board space," on which travellers sit while they bathe

their soiled feet with the water which is immediately brought to

them; for neither with soiled feet nor in foreign shoes must one

advance one step on the matted floor. On one side of the doma is

the kitchen, with its one or two charcoal fires, where the coolies

lounge on the mats and take their food and smoke, and on the other

the family pursue their avocations. In almost the smallest tea-

house there are one or two rooms at the back, but all the life and

interest are in the open front. In the small tea-houses there is

only an irori, a square hole in the floor, full of sand or white

ash, on which the live charcoal for cooking purposes is placed, and

small racks for food and eating utensils; but in the large ones

there is a row of charcoal stoves, and the walls are garnished up

to the roof with shelves, and the lacquer tables and lacquer and

china ware used by the guests. The large tea-houses contain the

possibilities for a number of rooms which can be extemporised at

once by sliding paper panels, called fusuma, along grooves in the

floor and in the ceiling or cross-beams.

When we stopped at wayside tea-houses the runners bathed their

feet, rinsed their mouths, and ate rice, pickles, salt fish, and

"broth of abominable things," after which they smoked their tiny

pipes, which give them three whiffs for each filling. As soon as I

got out at any of these, one smiling girl brought me the tabako-

bon, a square wood or lacquer tray, with a china or bamboo

charcoal-holder and ash-pot upon it, and another presented me with

a zen, a small lacquer table about six inches high, with a tiny

teapot with a hollow handle at right angles with the spout, holding

about an English tea-cupful, and two cups without handles or

saucers, with a capacity of from ten to twenty thimblefuls each.

The hot water is merely allowed to rest a minute on the tea-leaves,

and the infusion is a clear straw-coloured liquid with a delicious

aroma and flavour, grateful and refreshing at all times. If

Japanese tea "stands," it acquires a coarse bitterness and an

unwholesome astringency. Milk and sugar are not used. A clean-

looking wooden or lacquer pail with a lid is kept in all tea-

houses, and though hot rice, except to order, is only ready three

times daily, the pail always contains cold rice, and the coolies

heat it by pouring hot tea over it. As you eat, a tea-house girl,

with this pail beside her, squats on the floor in front of you, and

fills your rice bowl till you say, "Hold, enough!" On this road it

is expected that you leave three or four sen on the tea-tray for a

rest of an hour or two and tea.

All day we travelled through rice swamps, along a much-frequented

road, as far as Kasukabe, a good-sized but miserable-looking town,

with its main street like one of the poorest streets in Tokiyo, and

halted for the night at a large yadoya, with downstairs and

upstairs rooms, crowds of travellers, and many evil smells. On

entering, the house-master or landlord, the teishi, folded his

hands and prostrated himself, touching the floor with his forehead

three times. It is a large, rambling old house, and fully thirty

servants were bustling about in the daidokoro, or great open

kitchen. I took a room upstairs (i.e. up a steep step-ladder of

dark, polished wood), with a balcony under the deep eaves. The

front of the house upstairs was one long room with only sides and a

front, but it was immediately divided into four by drawing sliding

screens or panels, covered with opaque wall papers, into their

proper grooves. A back was also improvised, but this was formed of

frames with panes of translucent paper, like our tissue paper, with

sundry holes and rents. This being done, I found myself the

possessor of a room about sixteen feet square, without hook, shelf,

rail, or anything on which to put anything--nothing, in short, but

a matted floor. Do not be misled by the use of this word matting.

Japanese house-mats, tatami, are as neat, refined, and soft a

covering for the floor as the finest Axminster carpet. They are 5

feet 9 inches long, 3 feet broad, and 2.5 inches thick. The frame

is solidly made of coarse straw, and this is covered with very fine

woven matting, as nearly white as possible, and each mat is usually

bound with dark blue cloth. Temples and rooms are measured by the

number of mats they contain, and rooms must be built for the mats,

as they are never cut to the rooms. They are always level with the

polished grooves or ledges which surround the floor. They are soft

and elastic, and the finer qualities are very beautiful. They are

as expensive as the best Brussels carpet, and the Japanese take

great pride in them, and are much aggrieved by the way in which

some thoughtless foreigners stamp over them with dirty boots.

Unfortunately they harbour myriads of fleas.

Outside my room an open balcony with many similiar rooms ran round

a forlorn aggregate of dilapidated shingle roofs and water-butts.

These rooms were all full. Ito asked me for instructions once for

all, put up my stretcher under a large mosquito net of coarse green

canvas with a fusty smell, filled my bath, brought me some tea,

rice, and eggs, took my passport to be copied by the house-master,

and departed, I know not whither. I tried to write to you, but

fleas and mosquitoes prevented it, and besides, the fusuma were

frequently noiselessly drawn apart, and several pairs of dark,

elongated eyes surveyed me through the cracks; for there were two

Japanese families in the room to the right, and five men in that to

the left. I closed the sliding windows, with translucent paper for

window panes, called shoji, and went to bed, but the lack of

privacy was fearful, and I have not yet sufficient trust in my

fellow-creatures to be comfortable without locks, walls, or doors!

Eyes were constantly applied to the sides of the room, a girl twice

drew aside the shoji between it and the corridor; a man, who I

afterwards found was a blind man, offering his services as a

shampooer, came in and said some (of course) unintelligible words,

and the new noises were perfectly bewildering. On one side a man

recited Buddhist prayers in a high key; on the other a girl was

twanging a samisen, a species of guitar; the house was full of

talking and splashing, drums and tom-toms were beaten outside;

there were street cries innumerable, and the whistling of the blind

shampooers, and the resonant clap of the fire-watchman who

perambulates all Japanese villages, and beats two pieces of wood

together in token of his vigilance, were intolerable. It was a

life of which I knew nothing, and the mystery was more alarming

than attractive; my money was lying about, and nothing seemed

easier than to slide a hand through the fusuma and appropriate it.

Ito told me that the well was badly contaminated, the odours were

fearful; illness was to be feared as well as robbery! So

unreasonably I reasoned! {7}

My bed is merely a piece of canvas nailed to two wooden bars. When

I lay down the canvas burst away from the lower row of nails with a

series of cracks, and sank gradually till I found myself lying on a

sharp-edged pole which connects the two pair of trestles, and the

helpless victim of fleas and mosquitoes. I lay for three hours,

not daring to stir lest I should bring the canvas altogether down,

becoming more and more nervous every moment, and then Ito called

outside the shoji, "It would be best, Miss Bird, that I should see

you." What horror can this be? I thought, and was not reassured

when he added, "Here's a messenger from the Legation and two

policemen want to speak to you." On arriving I had done the

correct thing in giving the house-master my passport, which,

according to law, he had copied into his book, and had sent a

duplicate copy to the police-station, and this intrusion near

midnight was as unaccountable as it was unwarrantable.

Nevertheless the appearance of the two mannikins in European

uniforms, with the familiar batons and bull's-eye lanterns, and

with manners which were respectful without being deferential, gave

me immediate relief. I should have welcomed twenty of their

species, for their presence assured me of the fact that I am known

and registered, and that a Government which, for special reasons,

is anxious to impress foreigners with its power and omniscience is

responsible for my safety.

While they spelt through my passport by their dim lantern I opened

the Yedo parcel, and found that it contained a tin of lemon sugar,

a most kind note from Sir Harry Parkes, and a packet of letters

from you. While I was attempting to open the letters, Ito, the

policemen, and the lantern glided out of my room, and I lay

uneasily till daylight, with the letters and telegram, for which I

had been yearning for six weeks, on my bed unopened!

Already I can laugh at my fears and misfortunes, as I hope you

will. A traveller must buy his own experience, and success or

failure depends mainly on personal idiosyncrasies. Many matters

will be remedied by experience as I go on, and I shall acquire the

habit of feeling secure; but lack of privacy, bad smells, and the

torments of fleas and mosquitoes are, I fear, irremediable evils.

I. L. B.

LETTER VI--(Continued)

A Coolie falls ill--Peasant Costume--Varieties in Threshing--The

Tochigi yadoya--Farming Villages--A Beautiful Region--An In

Memoriam Avenue--A Doll's Street--Nikko--The Journey's End--Coolie

Kindliness.

By seven the next morning the rice was eaten, the room as bare as

if it had never been occupied, the bill of 80 sen paid, the house-

master and servants with many sayo naras, or farewells, had

prostrated themselves, and we were away in the kurumas at a rapid

trot. At the first halt my runner, a kindly, good-natured

creature, but absolutely hideous, was seized with pain and

vomiting, owing, he said, to drinking the bad water at Kasukabe,

and was left behind. He pleased me much by the honest independent

way in which he provided a substitute, strictly adhering to his

bargain, and never asking for a gratuity on account of his illness.

He had been so kind and helpful that I felt quite sad at leaving

him there ill,--only a coolie, to be sure, only an atom among the

34,000,000 of the Empire, but not less precious to our Father in

heaven than any other. It was a brilliant day, with the mercury 86

degrees in the shade, but the heat was not oppressive. At noon we

reached the Tone, and I rode on a coolie's tattooed shoulders

through the shallow part, and then, with the kurumas, some ill-

disposed pack-horses, and a number of travellers, crossed in a

flat-bottomed boat. The boatmen, travellers, and cultivators, were

nearly or altogether without clothes, but the richer farmers worked

in the fields in curved bamboo hats as large as umbrellas, kimonos

with large sleeves not girt up, and large fans attached to their

girdles. Many of the travellers whom we met were without hats, but

shielded the front of the head by holding a fan between it and the

sun. Probably the inconvenience of the national costume for

working men partly accounts for the general practice of getting rid

of it. It is such a hindrance, even in walking, that most

pedestrians have "their loins girded up" by taking the middle of

the hem at the bottom of the kimono and tucking it under the

girdle. This, in the case of many, shows woven, tight-fitting,

elastic, white cotton pantaloons, reaching to the ankles. After

ferrying another river at a village from which a steamer plies to

Tokiyo, the country became much more pleasing, the rice-fields

fewer, the trees, houses, and barns larger, and, in the distance,

high hills loomed faintly through the haze. Much of the wheat, of

which they don't make bread, but vermicelli, is already being

carried. You see wheat stacks, ten feet high, moving slowly, and

while you are wondering, you become aware of four feet moving below

them; for all the crop is carried on horses' if not on human backs.

I went to see several threshing-floors,--clean, open spaces outside

barns,--where the grain is laid on mats and threshed by two or four

men with heavy revolving flails. Another method is for women to

beat out the grain on racks of split bamboo laid lengthwise; and I

saw yet a third practised both in the fields and barn-yards, in

which women pass handfuls of stalks backwards through a sort of

carding instrument with sharp iron teeth placed in a slanting

position, which cuts off the ears, leaving the stalk unbruised.

This is probably "the sharp threshing instrument having teeth"

mentioned by Isaiah. The ears are then rubbed between the hands.

In this region the wheat was winnowed altogether by hand, and after

the wind had driven the chaff away, the grain was laid out on mats

to dry. Sickles are not used, but the reaper takes a handful of

stalks and cuts them off close to the ground with a short, straight

knife, fixed at a right angle with the handle. The wheat is sown

in rows with wide spaces between them, which are utilised for beans

and other crops, and no sooner is it removed than daikon (Raphanus

sativus), cucumbers, or some other vegetable, takes its place, as

the land under careful tillage and copious manuring bears two, and

even three, crops, in the year. The soil is trenched for wheat as

for all crops except rice, not a weed is to be seen, and the whole

country looks like a well-kept garden. The barns in this district

are very handsome, and many of their grand roofs have that concave

sweep with which we are familiar in the pagoda. The eaves are

often eight feet deep, and the thatch three feet thick. Several of

the farm-yards have handsome gateways like the ancient "lychgates"

of some of our English churchyards much magnified. As animals are

not used for milk, draught, or food, and there are no pasture

lands, both the country and the farm-yards have a singular silence

and an inanimate look; a mean-looking dog and a few fowls being the

only representatives of domestic animal life. I long for the

lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep.

At six we reached Tochigi, a large town, formerly the castle town

of a daimiyo. Its special manufacture is rope of many kinds, a

great deal of hemp being grown in the neighbourhood. Many of the

roofs are tiled, and the town has a more solid and handsome

appearance than those that we had previously passed through. But

from Kasukabe to Tochigi was from bad to worse. I nearly abandoned

Japanese travelling altogether, and, if last night had not been a

great improvement, I think I should have gone ignominiously back to

Tokiyo. The yadoya was a very large one, and, as sixty guests had

arrived before me, there was no choice of accommodation, and I had

to be contented with a room enclosed on all sides not by fusuma but

shoji, and with barely room for my bed, bath, and chair, under a

fusty green mosquito net which was a perfect nest of fleas. One

side of the room was against a much-frequented passage, and another

opened on a small yard upon which three opposite rooms also opened,

crowded with some not very sober or decorous travellers. The shoji

were full of holes, and often at each hole I saw a human eye.

Privacy was a luxury not even to be recalled. Besides the constant

application of eyes to the shoji, the servants, who were very noisy

and rough, looked into my room constantly without any pretext; the

host, a bright, pleasant-looking man, did the same; jugglers,

musicians, blind shampooers, and singing girls, all pushed the

screens aside; and I began to think that Mr. Campbell was right,

and that a lady should not travel alone in Japan. Ito, who had the

room next to mine, suggested that robbery was quite likely, and

asked to be allowed to take charge of my money, but did not decamp

with it during the night! I lay down on my precarious stretcher

before eight, but as the night advanced the din of the house

increased till it became truly diabolical, and never ceased till

after one. Drums, tom-toms, and cymbals were beaten; kotos and

samisens screeched and twanged; geishas (professional women with

the accomplishments of dancing, singing, and playing) danced,--

accompanied by songs whose jerking discords were most laughable;

story-tellers recited tales in a high key, and the running about

and splashing close to my room never ceased. Late at night my

precarious shoji were accidentally thrown down, revealing a scene

of great hilarity, in which a number of people were bathing and

throwing water over each other.

The noise of departures began at daylight, and I was glad to leave

at seven. Before you go the fusuma are slidden back, and what was

your room becomes part of a great, open, matted space--an

arrangement which effectually prevents fustiness. Though the road

was up a slight incline, and the men were too tired to trot, we

made thirty miles in nine hours. The kindliness and courtesy of

the coolies to me and to each other was a constant source of

pleasure to me. It is most amusing to see the elaborate politeness

of the greetings of men clothed only in hats and maros. The hat is

invariably removed when they speak to each other, and three

profound bows are never omitted.

Soon after leaving the yadoya we passed through a wide street with

the largest and handsomest houses I have yet seen on both sides.

They were all open in front; their highly-polished floors and

passages looked like still water; the kakemonos, or wall-pictures,

on their side-walls were extremely beautiful; and their mats were

very fine and white. There were large gardens at the back, with

fountains and flowers, and streams, crossed by light stone bridges,

sometimes flowed through the houses. From the signs I supposed

them to be yadoyas, but on asking Ito why we had not put up at one

of them, he replied that they were all kashitsukeya, or tea-houses

of disreputable character--a very sad fact. {8}

As we journeyed the country became prettier and prettier, rolling

up to abrupt wooded hills with mountains in the clouds behind. The

farming villages are comfortable and embowered in wood, and the

richer farmers seclude their dwellings by closely-clipped hedges,

or rather screens, two feet wide, and often twenty feet high. Tea

grew near every house, and its leaves were being gathered and dried

on mats. Signs of silk culture began to appear in shrubberies of

mulberry trees, and white and sulphur yellow cocoons were lying in

the sun along the road in flat trays. Numbers of women sat in the

fronts of the houses weaving cotton cloth fifteen inches wide, and

cotton yarn, mostly imported from England, was being dyed in all

the villages--the dye used being a native indigo, the Polygonum

tinctorium. Old women were spinning, and young and old usually

pursued their avocations with wise-looking babies tucked into the

backs of their dresses, and peering cunningly over their shoulders.

Even little girls of seven and eight were playing at children's

games with babies on their backs, and those who were too small to

carry real ones had big dolls strapped on in similar fashion.

Innumerable villages, crowded houses, and babies in all, give one

the impression of a very populous country.

As the day wore on in its brightness and glory the pictures became

more varied and beautiful. Great snow-slashed mountains looked

over the foothills, on whose steep sides the dark blue green of

pine and cryptomeria was lighted up by the spring tints of

deciduous trees. There were groves of cryptomeria on small hills

crowned by Shinto shrines, approached by grand flights of stone

stairs. The red gold of the harvest fields contrasted with the

fresh green and exquisite leafage of the hemp; rose and white

azaleas lighted up the copse-woods; and when the broad road passed

into the colossal avenue of cryptomeria which overshadows the way

to the sacred shrines of Nikko, and tremulous sunbeams and shadows

flecked the grass, I felt that Japan was beautiful, and that the

mud flats of Yedo were only an ugly dream!

Two roads lead to Nikko. I avoided the one usually taken by

Utsunomiya, and by doing so lost the most magnificent of the two

avenues, which extends for nearly fifty miles along the great

highway called the Oshiu-kaido. Along the Reiheishi-kaido, the

road by which I came, it extends for thirty miles, and the two,

broken frequently by villages, converge upon the village of

Imaichi, eight miles from Nikko, where they unite, and only

terminate at the entrance of the town. They are said to have been

planted as an offering to the buried Shoguns by a man who was too

poor to place a bronze lantern at their shrines. A grander

monument could not have been devised, and they are probably the

grandest things of their kind in the world. The avenue of the

Reiheishi-kaido is a good carriage road with sloping banks eight

feet high, covered with grass and ferns. At the top of these are

the cryptomeria, then two grassy walks, and between these and the

cultivation a screen of saplings and brushwood. A great many of

the trees become two at four feet from the ground. Many of the

stems are twenty-seven feet in girth; they do not diminish or

branch till they have reached a height of from 50 to 60 feet, and

the appearance of altitude is aided by the longitudinal splitting

of the reddish coloured bark into strips about two inches wide.

The trees are pyramidal, and at a little distance resemble cedars.

There is a deep solemnity about this glorious avenue with its broad

shade and dancing lights, and the rare glimpses of high mountains.

Instinct alone would tell one that it leads to something which must

be grand and beautiful like itself. It is broken occasionally by

small villages with big bells suspended between double poles; by

wayside shrines with offerings of rags and flowers; by stone

effigies of Buddha and his disciples, mostly defaced or overthrown,

all wearing the same expression of beatified rest and indifference

to mundane affairs; and by temples of lacquered wood falling to

decay, whose bells sent their surpassingly sweet tones far on the

evening air.

Imaichi, where the two stately aisles unite, is a long uphill

street, with a clear mountain stream enclosed in a stone channel,

and crossed by hewn stone slabs running down the middle. In a room

built over the stream, and commanding a view up and down the

street, two policemen sat writing. It looks a dull place without

much traffic, as if oppressed by the stateliness of the avenues

below it and the shrines above it, but it has a quiet yadoya, where

I had a good night's rest, although my canvas bed was nearly on the

ground. We left early this morning in drizzling rain, and went

straight up hill under the cryptomeria for eight miles. The

vegetation is as profuse as one would expect in so damp and hot a

summer climate, and from the prodigious rainfall of the mountains;

every stone is covered with moss, and the road-sides are green with

the Protococcus viridis and several species of Marchantia. We were

among the foothills of the Nantaizan mountains at a height of 1000

feet, abrupt in their forms, wooded to their summits, and noisy

with the dash and tumble of a thousand streams. The long street of

Hachiishi, with its steep-roofed, deep-eaved houses, its warm

colouring, and its steep roadway with steps at intervals, has a

sort of Swiss picturesqueness as you enter it, as you must, on

foot, while your kurumas are hauled and lifted up the steps; nor is

the resemblance given by steep roofs, pines, and mountains patched

with coniferae, altogether lost as you ascend the steep street, and

see wood carvings and quaint baskets of wood and grass offered

everywhere for sale. It is a truly dull, quaint street, and the

people come out to stare at a foreigner as if foreigners had not

become common events since 1870, when Sir H. and Lady Parkes, the

first Europeans who were permitted to visit Nikko, took up their

abode in the Imperial Hombo. It is a doll's street with small low

houses, so finely matted, so exquisitely clean, so finically neat,

so light and delicate, that even when I entered them without my

boots I felt like a "bull in a china shop," as if my mere weight

must smash through and destroy. The street is so painfully clean

that I should no more think of walking over it in muddy boots than

over a drawing-room carpet. It has a silent mountain look, and

most of its shops sell specialties, lacquer work, boxes of

sweetmeats made of black beans and sugar, all sorts of boxes,

trays, cups, and stands, made of plain, polished wood, and more

grotesque articles made from the roots of trees.

It was not part of my plan to stay at the beautiful yadoya which

receives foreigners in Hachiishi, and I sent Ito half a mile

farther with a note in Japanese to the owner of the house where I

now am, while I sat on a rocky eminence at the top of the street,

unmolested by anybody, looking over to the solemn groves upon the

mountains, where the two greatest of the Shoguns "sleep in glory."

Below, the rushing Daiyagawa, swollen by the night's rain,

thundered through a narrow gorge. Beyond, colossal flights of

stone stairs stretch mysteriously away among cryptomeria groves,

above which tower the Nikkosan mountains. Just where the torrent

finds its impetuosity checked by two stone walls, it is spanned by

a bridge, 84 feet long by 18 wide, of dull red lacquer, resting on

two stone piers on either side, connected by two transverse stone

beams. A welcome bit of colour it is amidst the masses of dark

greens and soft greys, though there is nothing imposing in its

structure, and its interest consists in being the Mihashi, or

Sacred Bridge, built in 1636, formerly open only to the Shoguns,

the envoy of the Mikado, and to pilgrims twice a year. Both its

gates are locked. Grand and lonely Nikko looks, the home of rain

and mist. Kuruma roads end here, and if you wish to go any

farther, you must either walk, ride, or be carried.

Ito was long away, and the coolies kept addressing me in Japanese,

which made me feel helpless and solitary, and eventually they

shouldered my baggage, and, descending a flight of steps, we

crossed the river by the secular bridge, and shortly met my host,

Kanaya, a very bright, pleasant-looking man, who bowed nearly to

the earth. Terraced roads in every direction lead through

cryptomerias to the shrines; and this one passes many a stately

enclosure, but leads away from the temples, and though it is the

highway to Chiuzenjii, a place of popular pilgrimage, Yumoto, a

place of popular resort, and several other villages, it is very

rugged, and, having flights of stone steps at intervals, is only

practicable for horses and pedestrians.

At the house, with the appearance of which I was at once delighted,

I regretfully parted with my coolies, who had served me kindly and

faithfully. They had paid me many little attentions, such as

always beating the dust out of my dress, inflating my air-pillow,

and bringing me flowers, and were always grateful when I walked up

hills; and just now, after going for a frolic to the mountains,

they called to wish me good-bye, bringing branches of azaleas. I.

L. B.

LETTER VII

A Japanese Idyll--Musical Stillness -My Rooms--Floral Decorations-

-Kanaya and his Household--Table Equipments.

KANAYA'S, NIKKO, June 15.

I don't know what to write about my house. It is a Japanese idyll;

there is nothing within or without which does not please the eye,

and, after the din of yadoyas, its silence, musical with the dash

of waters and the twitter of birds, is truly refreshing. It is a

simple but irregular two-storied pavilion, standing on a stone-

faced terrace approached by a flight of stone steps. The garden is

well laid out, and, as peonies, irises, and azaleas are now in

blossom, it is very bright. The mountain, with its lower part

covered with red azaleas, rises just behind, and a stream which

tumbles down it supplies the house with water, both cold and pure,

and another, after forming a miniature cascade, passes under the

house and through a fish-pond with rocky islets into the river

below. The grey village of Irimichi lies on the other side of the

road, shut in with the rushing Daiya, and beyond it are high,

broken hills, richly wooded, and slashed with ravines and

waterfalls.

Kanaya's sister, a very sweet, refined-looking woman, met me at the

door and divested me of my boots. The two verandahs are highly

polished, so are the entrance and the stairs which lead to my room,

and the mats are so fine and white that I almost fear to walk over

them, even in my stockings. The polished stairs lead to a highly

polished, broad verandah with a beautiful view, from which you

enter one large room, which, being too large, was at once made into

two. Four highly polished steps lead from this into an exquisite

room at the back, which Ito occupies, and another polished

staircase into the bath-house and garden. The whole front of my

room is composed of shoji, which slide back during the day. The

ceiling is of light wood crossed by bars of dark wood, and the

posts which support it are of dark polished wood. The panels are

of wrinkled sky-blue paper splashed with gold. At one end are two

alcoves with floors of polished wood, called tokonoma. In one

hangs a kakemono, or wall-picture, a painting of a blossoming

branch of the cherry on white silk--a perfect piece of art, which

in itself fills the room with freshness and beauty. The artist who

painted it painted nothing but cherry blossoms, and fell in the

rebellion. On a shelf in the other alcove is a very valuable

cabinet with sliding doors, on which peonies are painted on a gold

ground. A single spray of rose azalea in a pure white vase hanging

on one of the polished posts, and a single iris in another, are the

only decorations. The mats are very fine and white, but the only

furniture is a folding screen with some suggestions of landscape in

Indian ink. I almost wish that the rooms were a little less

exquisite, for I am in constant dread of spilling the ink,

indenting the mats, or tearing the paper windows. Downstairs there

is a room equally beautiful, and a large space where all the

domestic avocations are carried on. There is a kura, or fire-proof

storehouse, with a tiled roof, on the right of the house.

Kanaya leads the discords at the Shinto shrines; but his duties are

few, and he is chiefly occupied in perpetually embellishing his

house and garden. His mother, a venerable old lady, and his

sister, the sweetest and most graceful Japanese woman but one that

I have seen, live with him. She moves about the house like a

floating fairy, and her voice has music in its tones. A half-

witted servant-man and the sister's boy and girl complete the

family. Kanaya is the chief man in the village, and is very

intelligent and apparently well educated. He has divorced his

wife, and his sister has practically divorced her husband. Of

late, to help his income, he has let these charming rooms to

foreigners who have brought letters to him, and he is very anxious

to meet their views, while his good taste leads him to avoid

Europeanising his beautiful home.

Supper came up on a zen, or small table six inches high, of old

gold lacquer, with the rice in a gold lacquer bowl, and the teapot

and cup were fine Kaga porcelain. For my two rooms, with rice and

tea, I pay 2s. a day. Ito forages for me, and can occasionally get

chickens at 10d. each, and a dish of trout for 6d., and eggs are

always to be had for 1d. each. It is extremely interesting to live

in a private house and to see the externalities, at least, of

domestic life in a Japanese middle-class home. I. L. B.

LETTER VIII

The Beauties of Nikko--The Burial of Iyeyasu--The Approach to the

Great Shrines--The Yomei Gate--Gorgeous Decorations--Simplicity of

the Mausoleum--The Shrine of Iyemitsu--Religious Art of Japan and

India--An Earthquake--Beauties of Wood-carving.

KANAYA'S, NIKKO, June 21.

I have been at Nikko for nine days, and am therefore entitled to

use the word "Kek'ko!"

Nikko means "sunny splendour," and its beauties are celebrated in

poetry and art all over Japan. Mountains for a great part of the

year clothed or patched with snow, piled in great ranges round

Nantaizan, their monarch, worshipped as a god; forests of

magnificent timber; ravines and passes scarcely explored; dark

green lakes sleeping in endless serenity; the deep abyss of Kegon,

into which the waters of Chiuzenjii plunge from a height of 250

feet; the bright beauty of the falls of Kiri Furi, the loveliness

of the gardens of Dainichido; the sombre grandeur of the passes

through which the Daiyagawa forces its way from the upper regions;

a gorgeousness of azaleas and magnolias; and a luxuriousness of

vegetation perhaps unequalled in Japan, are only a few of the

attractions which surround the shrines of the two greatest Shoguns.

To a glorious resting-place on the hill-slope of Hotoke Iwa, sacred

since 767, when a Buddhist saint, called Shodo Shonin, visited it,

and declared the old Shinto deity of the mountain to be only a

manifestation of Buddha, Hidetada, the second Shogun of the

Tokugawa dynasty, conveyed the corpse of his father, Iyeyasu, in

1617. It was a splendid burial. An Imperial envoy, a priest of

the Mikado's family, court nobles from Kivoto, and hundreds of

daimiyos, captains, and nobles of inferior rank, took part in the

ceremony. An army of priests in rich robes during three days

intoned a sacred classic 10,000 times, and Iyeyasu was deified by a

decree of the Mikado under a name signifying "light of the east,

great incarnation of Buddha." The less important Shoguns of the

line of Tokugawa are buried in Uyeno and Shiba, in Yedo. Since the

restoration, and what may be called the disestablishment of

Buddhism, the shrine of Iyeyasu has been shorn of all its glories

of ritual and its magnificent Buddhist paraphernalia; the 200

priests who gave it splendour are scattered, and six Shinto priests

alternately attend upon it as much for the purpose of selling

tickets of admission as for any priestly duties.

All roads, bridges, and avenues here lead to these shrines, but the

grand approach is by the Red Bridge, and up a broad road with steps

at intervals and stone-faced embankments at each side, on the top

of which are belts of cryptomeria. At the summit of this ascent is

a fine granite torii, 27 feet 6 inches high, with columns 3 feet 6

inches in diameter, offered by the daimiyo of Chikuzen in 1618 from

his own quarries. After this come 118 magnificent bronze lanterns

on massive stone pedestals, each of which is inscribed with the

posthumous title of Iyeyasu, the name of the giver, and a legend of

the offering--all the gifts of daimiyo--a holy water cistern made

of a solid block of granite, and covered by a roof resting on

twenty square granite pillars, and a bronze bell, lantern, and

candelabra of marvellous workmanship, offered by the kings of Corea

and Liukiu. On the left is a five-storied pagoda, 104 feet high,

richly carved in wood and as richly gilded and painted. The signs

of the zodiac run round the lower story.

The grand entrance gate is at the top of a handsome flight of steps

forty yards from the torii. A looped white curtain with the

Mikado's crest in black, hangs partially over the gateway, in

which, beautiful as it is, one does not care to linger, to examine

the gilded amainu in niches, or the spirited carvings of tigers

under the eaves, for the view of the first court overwhelms one by

its magnificence and beauty. The whole style of the buildings, the

arrangements, the art of every kind, the thought which inspires the

whole, are exclusively Japanese, and the glimpse from the Ni-o gate

is a revelation of a previously undreamed-of beauty, both in form

and colour.

Round the neatly pebbled court, which is enclosed by a bright red

timber wall, are three gorgeous buildings, which contain the

treasures of the temple, a sumptuous stable for the three sacred

Albino horses, which are kept for the use of the god, a magnificent

granite cistern of holy water, fed from the Somendaki cascade, and

a highly decorated building, in which a complete collection of

Buddhist Scriptures is deposited. From this a flight of steps

leads into a smaller court containing a bell-tower "of marvellous

workmanship and ornamentation," a drum-tower, hardly less

beautiful, a shrine, the candelabra, bell, and lantern mentioned

before, and some very grand bronze lanterns.

From this court another flight of steps ascends to the Yomei gate,

whose splendour I contemplated day after day with increasing

astonishment. The white columns which support it have capitals

formed of great red-throated heads of the mythical Kirin. Above

the architrave is a projecting balcony which runs all round the

gateway with a railing carried by dragons' heads. In the centre

two white dragons fight eternally. Underneath, in high relief,

there are groups of children playing, then a network of richly

painted beams, and seven groups of Chinese sages. The high roof is

supported by gilded dragons' heads with crimson throats. In the

interior of the gateway there are side-niches painted white, which

are lined with gracefully designed arabesques founded on the botan

or peony. A piazza, whose outer walls of twenty-one compartments

are enriched with magnificent carvings of birds, flowers, and

trees, runs right and left, and encloses on three of its sides

another court, the fourth side of which is a terminal stone wall

built against the side of the hill. On the right are two decorated

buildings, one of which contains a stage for the performance of the

sacred dances, and the other an altar for the burning of cedar wood

incense. On the left is a building for the reception of the three

sacred cars which were used during festivals. To pass from court

to court is to pass from splendour to splendour; one is almost glad

to feel that this is the last, and that the strain on one's

capacity for admiration is nearly over.

In the middle is the sacred enclosure, formed of gilded trellis-

work with painted borders above and below, forming a square of

which each side measures 150 feet, and which contains the haiden or

chapel. Underneath the trellis work are groups of birds, with

backgrounds of grass, very boldly carved in wood and richly gilded

and painted. From the imposing entrance through a double avenue of

cryptomeria, among courts, gates, temples, shrines, pagodas,

colossal bells of bronze, and lanterns inlaid with gold, you pass

through this final court bewildered by magnificence, through golden

gates, into the dimness of a golden temple, and there is--simply a

black lacquer table with a circular metal mirror upon it.

Within is a hall finely matted, 42 feet wide by 27 from front to

back, with lofty apartments on each side, one for the Shogun and

the other "for his Holiness the Abbot." Both, of course, are

empty. The roof of the hall is panelled and richly frescoed. The

Shogun's room contains some very fine fusuma, on which kirin

(fabulous monsters) are depicted on a dead gold ground, and four

oak panels, 8 feet by 6, finely carved, with the phoenix in low

relief variously treated. In the Abbot's room there are similar

panels adorned with hawks spiritedly executed. The only

ecclesiastical ornament among the dim splendours of the chapel is

the plain gold gohei. Steps at the back lead into a chapel paved

with stone, with a fine panelled ceiling representing dragons on a

dark blue ground. Beyond this some gilded doors lead into the

principal chapel, containing four rooms which are not accessible;

but if they correspond with the outside, which is of highly

polished black lacquer relieved by gold, they must be severely

magnificent.

But not in any one of these gorgeous shrines did Iyeyasu decree

that his dust should rest. Re-entering the last court, it is

necessary to leave the enclosures altogether by passing through a

covered gateway in the eastern piazza into a stone gallery, green

with mosses and hepaticae. Within, wealth and art have created a

fairyland of gold and colour; without, Nature, at her stateliest,

has surrounded the great Shogun's tomb with a pomp of mournful

splendour. A staircase of 240 stone steps leads to the top of the

hill, where, above and behind all the stateliness of the shrines

raised in his honour, the dust of Iyeyasu sleeps in an unadorned

but Cyclopean tomb of stone and bronze, surmounted by a bronze urn.

In front is a stone table decorated with a bronze incense-burner, a

vase with lotus blossoms and leaves in brass, and a bronze stork

bearing a bronze candlestick in its mouth. A lofty stone wall,

surmounted by a balustrade, surrounds the simple but stately

enclosure, and cryptomeria of large size growing up the back of the

hill create perpetual twilight round it. Slant rays of sunshine

alone pass through them, no flower blooms or bird sings, only

silence and mournfulness surround the grave of the ablest and

greatest man that Japan has produced.

Impressed as I had been with the glorious workmanship in wood,

bronze, and lacquer, I scarcely admired less the masonry of the

vast retaining walls, the stone gallery, the staircase and its

balustrade, all put together without mortar or cement, and so

accurately fitted that the joints are scarcely affected by the

rain, damp, and aggressive vegetation of 260 years. The steps of

the staircase are fine monoliths, and the coping at the side, the

massive balustrade, and the heavy rail at the top, are cut out of

solid blocks of stone from 10 to 18 feet in length. Nor is the

workmanship of the great granite cistern for holy water less

remarkable. It is so carefully adjusted on its bed that the water

brought from a neighbouring cascade rises and pours over each edge

in such carefully equalised columns that, as Mr. Satow says, "it

seems to be a solid block of water rather than a piece of stone."

The temples of Iyemitsu are close to those of Iyeyasu, and though

somewhat less magnificent are even more bewildering, as they are

still in Buddhist hands, and are crowded with the gods of the

Buddhist Pantheon and the splendid paraphernalia of Buddhist

worship, in striking contrast to the simplicity of the lonely

Shinto mirror in the midst of the blaze of gold and colour. In the

grand entrance gate are gigantic Ni-o, the Buddhist Gog and Magog,

vermilion coloured, and with draperies painted in imitation of

flowered silk. A second pair, painted red and green, removed from

Iyemitsu's temple, are in niches within the gate. A flight of

steps leads to another gate, in whose gorgeous niches stand hideous

monsters, in human form, representing the gods of wind and thunder.

Wind has crystal eyes and a half-jolly, half-demoniacal expression.

He is painted green, and carries a wind-bag on his back, a long

sack tied at each end, with the ends brought over his shoulders and

held in his hands. The god of thunder is painted red, with purple

hair on end, and stands on clouds holding thunderbolts in his hand.

More steps, and another gate containing the Tenno, or gods of the

four quarters, boldly carved and in strong action, with long eye-

teeth, and at last the principal temple is reached. An old priest

who took me over it on my first visit, on passing the gods of wind

and thunder said, "We used to believe in these things, but we don't

now," and his manner in speaking of the other deities was rather

contemptuous. He requested me, however, to take off my hat as well

as my shoes at the door of the temple. Within there was a gorgeous

shrine, and when an acolyte drew aside the curtain of cloth of gold

the interior was equally imposing, containing Buddha and two other

figures of gilded brass, seated cross-legged on lotus-flowers, with

rows of petals several times repeated, and with that look of

eternal repose on their faces which is reproduced in the commonest

road-side images. In front of the shrine several candles were

burning, the offerings of some people who were having prayers said

for them, and the whole was lighted by two lamps burning low. On a

step of the altar a much-contorted devil was crouching uneasily,

for he was subjugated and, by a grim irony, made to carry a massive

incense-burner on his shoulders. In this temple there were more

than a hundred idols standing in rows, many of them life-size, some

of them trampling devils under their feet, but all hideous, partly

from the bright greens, vermilions, and blues with which they are

painted. Remarkable muscular development characterises all, and

the figures or faces are all in vigorous action of some kind,

generally grossly exaggerated.

While we were crossing the court there were two shocks of

earthquake; all the golden wind-bells which fringe the roofs rang

softly, and a number of priests ran into the temple and beat

various kinds of drums for the space of half an hour. Iyemitsu's

tomb is reached by flights of steps on the right of the chapel. It

is in the same style as Iyeyasu's, but the gates in front are of

bronze, and are inscribed with large Sanskrit characters in bright

brass. One of the most beautiful of the many views is from the

uppermost gate of the temple. The sun shone on my second visit and

brightened the spring tints of the trees on Hotoke Iwa, which was

vignetted by a frame of dark cryptomeria.

Some of the buildings are roofed with sheet-copper, but most of

them are tiled. Tiling, however, has been raised almost to the

dignity of a fine art in Japan. The tiles themselves are a coppery

grey, with a suggestion of metallic lustre about it. They are

slightly concave, and the joints are covered by others quite

convex, which come down like massive tubes from the ridge pole, and

terminate at the eaves with discs on which the Tokugawa badge is

emblazoned in gold, as it is everywhere on these shrines where it

would not be quite out of keeping. The roofs are so massive that

they require all the strength of the heavy carved timbers below,

and, like all else, they gleam with gold, or that which simulates

it.

The shrines are the most wonderful work of their kind in Japan. In

their stately setting of cryptomeria, few of which are less than 20

feet in girth at 3 feet from the ground, they take one prisoner by

their beauty, in defiance of all rules of western art, and compel

one to acknowledge the beauty of forms and combinations of colour

hitherto unknown, and that lacquered wood is capable of lending

itself to the expression of a very high idea in art. Gold has been

used in profusion, and black, dull red, and white, with a breadth

and lavishness quite unique. The bronze fret-work alone is a

study, and the wood-carving needs weeks of earnest work for the

mastery of its ideas and details. One screen or railing only has

sixty panels, each 4 feet long, carved with marvellous boldness and

depth in open work, representing peacocks, pheasants, storks,

lotuses, peonies, bamboos, and foliage. The fidelity to form and

colour in the birds, and the reproduction of the glory of motion,

could not be excelled.

Yet the flowers please me even better. Truly the artist has

revelled in his work, and has carved and painted with joy. The

lotus leaf retains its dewy bloom, the peony its shades of creamy

white, the bamboo leaf still trembles on its graceful stem, in

contrast to the rigid needles of the pine, and countless corollas,

in all the perfect colouring of passionate life, unfold themselves

amidst the leafage of the gorgeous tracery. These carvings are

from 10 to 15 inches deep, and single feathers in the tails of the

pheasants stand out fully 6 inches in front of peonies nearly as

deep.

The details fade from my memory daily as I leave the shrines, and

in their place are picturesque masses of black and red lacquer and

gold, gilded doors opening without noise, halls laid with matting

so soft that not a footfall sounds, across whose twilight the

sunbeams fall aslant on richly arabesqued walls and panels carved

with birds and flowers, and on ceilings panelled and wrought with

elaborate art, of inner shrines of gold, and golden lilies six feet

high, and curtains of gold brocade, and incense fumes, and colossal

bells and golden ridge poles; of the mythical fauna, kirin, dragon,

and howo, of elephants, apes, and tigers, strangely mingled with

flowers and trees, and golden tracery, and diaper work on a gold

ground, and lacquer screens, and pagodas, and groves of bronze

lanterns, and shaven priests in gold brocade, and Shinto attendants

in black lacquer caps, and gleams of sunlit gold here and there,

and simple monumental urns, and a mountain-side covered with a

cryptomeria forest, with rose azaleas lighting up its solemn shade.

I. L. B.

LETTER IX

A Japanese Pack-Horse and Pack-Saddle--Yadoya and Attendant--A

Native Watering-Place--The Sulphur Baths--A "Squeeze."

YASHIMAYA, YUMOTO, NIKKOZAN MOUNTAINS,

June 22.

To-day I have made an experimental journey on horseback, have done

fifteen miles in eight hours of continuous travelling, and have

encountered for the first time the Japanese pack-horse--an animal

of which many unpleasing stories are told, and which has hitherto

been as mythical to me as the kirin, or dragon. I have neither

been kicked, bitten, nor pitched off, however, for mares are used

exclusively in this district, gentle creatures about fourteen hands

high, with weak hind-quarters, and heads nearly concealed by shaggy

manes and forelocks. They are led by a rope round the nose, and go

barefoot, except on stony ground, when the mago, or man who leads

them, ties straw sandals on their feet. The pack-saddle is

composed of two packs of straw eight inches thick, faced with red,

and connected before and behind by strong oak arches gaily painted

or lacquered. There is for a girth a rope loosely tied under the

body, and the security of the load depends on a crupper, usually a

piece of bamboo attached to the saddle by ropes strung with wooden

counters, and another rope round the neck, into which you put your

foot as you scramble over the high front upon the top of the

erection. The load must be carefully balanced or it comes to

grief, and the mago handles it all over first, and, if an accurate

division of weight is impossible, adds a stone to one side or the

other. Here, women who wear enormous rain hats and gird their

kimonos over tight blue trousers, both load the horses and lead

them. I dropped upon my loaded horse from the top of a wall, the

ridges, bars, tags, and knotted rigging of the saddle being

smoothed over by a folded futon, or wadded cotton quilt, and I was

then fourteen inches above the animal's back, with my feet hanging

over his neck. You must balance yourself carefully, or you bring

the whole erection over; but balancing soon becomes a matter of

habit. If the horse does not stumble, the pack-saddle is tolerable

on level ground, but most severe on the spine in going up hill, and

so intolerable in going down that I was relieved when I found that

I had slid over the horse's head into a mud-hole; and you are quite

helpless, as he does not understand a bridle, if you have one, and

blindly follows his leader, who trudges on six feet in front of

him.

The hard day's journey ended in an exquisite yadoya, beautiful

within and without, and more fit for fairies than for travel-soiled

mortals. The fusuma are light planed wood with a sweet scent, the

matting nearly white, the balconies polished pine. On entering, a

smiling girl brought me some plum-flower tea with a delicate almond

flavour, a sweetmeat made of beans and sugar, and a lacquer bowl of

frozen snow. After making a difficult meal from a fowl of much

experience, I spent the evening out of doors, as a Japanese

watering-place is an interesting novelty.

There is scarcely room between the lake and the mountains for the

picturesque village with its trim neat houses, one above another,

built of reddish cedar newly planed. The snow lies ten feet deep

here in winter, and on October 10 the people wrap their beautiful

dwellings up in coarse matting, not even leaving the roofs

uncovered, and go to the low country till May 10, leaving one man

in charge, who is relieved once a week. Were the houses mine I

should be tempted to wrap them up on every rainy day! I did quite

the wrong thing in riding here. It is proper to be carried up in a

kago, or covered basket.

The village consists of two short streets, 8 feet wide composed

entirely of yadoyas of various grades, with a picturesquely varied

frontage of deep eaves, graceful balconies, rows of Chinese

lanterns, and open lower fronts. The place is full of people, and

the four bathing-sheds were crowded. Some energetic invalids bathe

twelve times a day! Every one who was walking about carried a blue

towel over his arm, and the rails of the balconies were covered

with blue towels hanging to dry. There can be very little

amusement. The mountains rise at once from the village, and are so

covered with jungle that one can only walk in the short streets or

along the track by which I came. There is one covered boat for

excursions on the lake, and a few geishas were playing the samisen;

but, as gaming is illegal, and there is no place of public resort

except the bathing-sheds, people must spend nearly all their time

in bathing, sleeping, smoking, and eating. The great spring is

beyond the village, in a square tank in a mound. It bubbles up

with much strength, giving off fetid fumes. There are broad boards

laid at intervals across it, and people crippled with rheumatism go

and lie for hours upon them for the advantage of the sulphurous

steam. The temperature of the spring is 130 degrees F.; but after

the water has travelled to the village, along an open wooden pipe,

it is only 84 degrees. Yumoto is over 4000 feet high, and very

cold.

IRIMICHI.--Before leaving Yumoto I saw the modus operandi of a

"squeeze." I asked for the bill, when, instead of giving it to me,

the host ran upstairs and asked Ito how much it should be, the two

dividing the overcharge. Your servant gets a "squeeze" on

everything you buy, and on your hotel expenses, and, as it is

managed very adroitly, and you cannot prevent it, it is best not to

worry about it so long as it keeps within reasonable limits. I. L.

B.

LETTER X

Peaceful Monotony--A Japanese School--A Dismal Ditty--Punishment--A

Children's Party--A Juvenile Belle--Female Names--A Juvenile Drama-

-Needlework--Calligraphy--Arranging Flowers--Kanaya--Daily Routine-

-An Evening's Entertainment--Planning Routes--The God-shelf.

IRIMICHI, Nikko, June 23.

My peacefully monotonous life here is nearly at an end. The people

are so quiet and kindly, though almost too still, and I have

learned to know something of the externals of village life, and

have become quite fond of the place.

The village of Irimichi, which epitomises for me at present the

village life of Japan, consists of about three hundred houses built

along three roads, across which steps in fours and threes are

placed at intervals. Down the middle of each a rapid stream runs

in a stone channel, and this gives endless amusement to the

children, specially to the boys, who devise many ingenious models

and mechanical toys, which are put in motion by water-wheels. But

at 7 a.m. a drum beats to summon the children to a school whose

buildings would not discredit any school-board at home. Too much

Europeanised I thought it, and the children looked very

uncomfortable sitting on high benches in front of desks, instead of

squatting, native fashion. The school apparatus is very good, and

there are fine maps on the walls. The teacher, a man about twenty-

five, made very free use of the black-board, and questioned his

pupils with much rapidity. The best answer moved its giver to the

head of the class, as with us. Obedience is the foundation of the

Japanese social order, and with children accustomed to

unquestioning obedience at home the teacher has no trouble in

securing quietness, attention, and docility. There was almost a

painful earnestness in the old-fashioned faces which pored over the

school-books; even such a rare event as the entrance of a foreigner

failed to distract these childish students. The younger pupils

were taught chiefly by object lessons, and the older were exercised

in reading geographical and historical books aloud, a very high key

being adopted, and a most disagreeable tone, both with the Chinese

and Japanese pronunciation. Arithmetic and the elements of some of

the branches of natural philosophy are also taught. The children

recited a verse of poetry which I understood contained the whole of

the simple syllabary. It has been translated thus:-

"Colour and perfume vanish away.

What can be lasting in this world?

To-day disappears in the abyss of nothingness;

It is but the passing image of a dream, and causes only a slight

trouble."

It is the echo of the wearied sensualist's cry, "Vanity of

vanities, all is vanity," and indicates the singular Oriental

distaste for life, but is a dismal ditty for young children to

learn. The Chinese classics, formerly the basis of Japanese

education, are now mainly taught as a vehicle for conveying a

knowledge of the Chinese character, in acquiring even a moderate

acquaintance with which the children undergo a great deal of

useless toil.

The penalties for bad conduct used to be a few blows with a switch

on the front of the leg, or a slight burn with the moxa on the

forefinger--still a common punishment in households; but I

understood the teacher to say that detention in the school-house is

the only punishment now resorted to, and he expressed great

disapprobation of our plan of imposing an added task. When twelve

o'clock came the children marched in orderly fashion out of the

school grounds, the boys in one division and the girls in another,

after which they quietly dispersed.

On going home the children dine, and in the evening in nearly every

house you hear the monotonous hum of the preparation of lessons.

After dinner they are liberated for play, but the girls often hang

about the house with babies on their backs the whole afternoon

nursing dolls. One evening I met a procession of sixty boys and

girls, all carrying white flags with black balls, except the

leader, who carried a white flag with a gilded ball, and they sang,

or rather howled, as they walked; but the other amusements have

been of a most sedentary kind. The mechanical toys, worked by

water-wheels in the stream, are most fascinating.

Formal children's parties have been given in this house, for which

formal invitations, in the name of the house-child, a girl of

twelve, are sent out. About 3 p.m. the guests arrive, frequently

attended by servants; and this child, Haru, receives them at the

top of the stone steps, and conducts each into the reception room,

where they are arranged according to some well-understood rules of

precedence. Haru's hair is drawn back, raised in front, and

gathered into a double loop, in which some scarlet crepe is

twisted. Her face and throat are much whitened, the paint

terminating in three points at the back of the neck, from which all

the short hair has been carefully extracted with pincers. Her lips

are slightly touched with red paint, and her face looks like that

of a cheap doll. She wears a blue, flowered silk kimono, with

sleeves touching the ground, a blue girdle lined with scarlet, and

a fold of scarlet crepe lies between her painted neck and her

kimono. On her little feet she wears white tabi, socks of cotton

cloth, with a separate place for the great toe, so as to allow the

scarlet-covered thongs of the finely lacquered clogs, which she

puts on when she stands on the stone steps to receive her guests,

to pass between it and the smaller toes. All the other little

ladies were dressed in the same style, and all looked like ill-

executed dolls. She met them with very formal but graceful bows.

When they were all assembled, she and her very graceful mother,

squatting before each, presented tea and sweetmeats on lacquer

trays, and then they played at very quiet and polite games till

dusk. They addressed each other by their names with the honorific

prefix O, only used in the case of women, and the respectful affix

San; thus Haru becomes O-Haru-San, which is equivalent to "Miss."

A mistress of a house is addressed as O-Kami-San, and O-Kusuma--

something like "my lady"--is used to married ladies. Women have no

surnames; thus you do not speak of Mrs. Saguchi, but of the wife of

Saguchi San; and you would address her as O-Kusuma. Among the

children's names were Haru, Spring; Yuki, Snow; Hana, Blossom;

Kiku, Chrysanthemum; Gin, Silver.

One of their games was most amusing, and was played with some

spirit and much dignity. It consisted in one child feigning

sickness and another playing the doctor, and the pompousness and

gravity of the latter, and the distress and weakness of the former,

were most successfully imitated. Unfortunately the doctor killed

his patient, who counterfeited the death-sleep very effectively

with her whitened face; and then followed the funeral and the

mourning. They dramatise thus weddings, dinner-parties, and many

other of the events of life. The dignity and self-possession of

these children are wonderful. The fact is that their initiation

into all that is required by the rules of Japanese etiquette begins

as soon as they can speak, so that by the time they are ten years

old they know exactly what to do and avoid under all possible

circumstances. Before they went away tea and sweetmeats were again

handed round, and, as it is neither etiquette to refuse them or to

leave anything behind that you have once taken, several of the

small ladies slipped the residue into their capacious sleeves. On

departing the same formal courtesies were used as on arriving.

Yuki, Haru's mother, speaks, acts, and moves with a charming

gracefulness. Except at night, and when friends drop in to

afternoon tea, as they often do, she is always either at domestic

avocations, such as cleaning, sewing, or cooking, or planting

vegetables, or weeding them. All Japanese girls learn to sew and

to make their own clothes, but there are none of the mysteries and

difficulties which make the sewing lesson a thing of dread with us.

The kimono, haori, and girdle, and even the long hanging sleeves,

have only parallel seams, and these are only tacked or basted, as

the garments, when washed, are taken to pieces, and each piece,

after being very slightly stiffened, is stretched upon a board to

dry. There is no underclothing, with its bands, frills, gussets,

and button-holes; the poorer women wear none, and those above them

wear, like Yuki, an under-dress of a frothy-looking silk crepe, as

simply made as the upper one. There are circulating libraries

here, as in most villages, and in the evening both Yuki and Haru

read love stories, or accounts of ancient heroes and heroines,

dressed up to suit the popular taste, written in the easiest

possible style. Ito has about ten volumes of novels in his room,

and spends half the night in reading them.

Yuki's son, a lad of thirteen, often comes to my room to display

his skill in writing the Chinese character. He is a very bright

boy, and shows considerable talent for drawing. Indeed, it is only

a short step from writing to drawing. Giotto's O hardly involved

more breadth and vigour of touch than some of these characters.

They are written with a camel's-hair brush dipped in Indian ink,

instead of a pen, and this boy, with two or three vigorous touches,

produces characters a foot long, such as are mounted and hung as

tablets outside the different shops. Yuki plays the samisen, which

may be regarded as the national female instrument, and Haru goes to

a teacher daily for lessons on the same.

The art of arranging flowers is taught in manuals, the study of

which forms part of a girl's education, and there is scarcely a day

in which my room is not newly decorated. It is an education to me;

I am beginning to appreciate the extreme beauty of solitude in

decoration. In the alcove hangs a kakemono of exquisite beauty, a

single blossoming branch of the cherry. On one panel of a folding

screen there is a single iris. The vases which hang so gracefully

on the polished posts contain each a single peony, a single iris, a

single azalea, stalk, leaves, and corolla--all displayed in their

full beauty. Can anything be more grotesque and barbarous than our

"florists' bouquets," a series of concentric rings of flowers of

divers colours, bordered by maidenhair and a piece of stiff lace

paper, in which stems, leaves, and even petals are brutally

crushed, and the grace and individuality of each flower

systematically destroyed?

Kanaya is the chief man in this village, besides being the leader

of the dissonant squeaks and discords which represent music at the

Shinto festivals, and in some mysterious back region he compounds

and sells drugs. Since I have been here the beautification of his

garden has been his chief object, and he has made a very

respectable waterfall, a rushing stream, a small lake, a rustic

bamboo bridge, and several grass banks, and has transplanted

several large trees. He kindly goes out with me a good deal, and,

as he is very intelligent, and Ito is proving an excellent, and, I

think, a faithful interpreter, I find it very pleasant to be here.

They rise at daylight, fold up the wadded quilts or futons on and

under which they have slept, and put them and the wooden pillows,

much like stereoscopes in shape, with little rolls of paper or

wadding on the top, into a press with a sliding door, sweep the

mats carefully, dust all the woodwork and the verandahs, open the

amado--wooden shutters which, by sliding in a groove along the edge

of the verandah, box in the whole house at night, and retire into

an ornamental projection in the day--and throw the paper windows

back. Breakfast follows, then domestic avocations, dinner at one,

and sewing, gardening, and visiting till six, when they take the

evening meal.

Visitors usually arrive soon afterwards, and stay till eleven or

twelve. Japanese chess, story-telling, and the samisen fill up the

early part of the evening, but later, an agonising performance,

which they call singing, begins, which sounds like the very essence

of heathenishness, and consists mainly in a prolonged vibrating

"No." As soon as I hear it I feel as if I were among savages.

Sake, or rice beer, is always passed round before the visitors

leave, in little cups with the gods of luck at the bottom of them.

Sake, when heated, mounts readily to the head, and a single small

cup excites the half-witted man-servant to some very foolish

musical performances. I am sorry to write it, but his master and

mistress take great pleasure in seeing him make a fool of himself,

and Ito, who is from policy a total abstainer, goes into

convulsions of laughter.

One evening I was invited to join the family, and they entertained

me by showing me picture and guide books. Most Japanese provinces

have their guide-books, illustrated by wood-cuts of the most

striking objects, and giving itineraries, names of yadoyas, and

other local information. One volume of pictures, very finely

executed on silk, was more than a century old. Old gold lacquer

and china, and some pieces of antique embroidered silk, were also

produced for my benefit, and some musical instruments of great

beauty, said to be more than two centuries old. None of these

treasures are kept in the house, but in the kura, or fireproof

storehouse, close by. The rooms are not encumbered by ornaments; a

single kakemono, or fine piece of lacquer or china, appears for a

few days and then makes way for something else; so they have

variety as well as simplicity, and each object is enjoyed in its

turn without distraction.

Kanaya and his sister often pay me an evening visit, and, with

Brunton's map on the floor, we project astonishing routes to

Niigata, which are usually abruptly abandoned on finding a

mountain-chain in the way with never a road over it. The life of

these people seems to pass easily enough, but Kanaya deplores the

want of money; he would like to be rich, and intends to build a

hotel for foreigners.

The only vestige of religion in his house is the kamidana, or god-

shelf, on which stands a wooden shrine like a Shinto temple, which

contains the memorial tablets to deceased relations. Each morning

a sprig of evergreen and a little rice and sake are placed before

it, and every evening a lighted lamp.

LETTER X--(Continued)

Darkness visible--Nikko Shops--Girls and Matrons--Night and Sleep--

Parental Love--Childish Docility--Hair-dressing--Skin Diseases.

I don't wonder that the Japanese rise early, for their evenings are

cheerless, owing to the dismal illumination. In this and other

houses the lamp consists of a square or circular lacquer stand,

with four uprights, 2.5 feet high, and panes of white paper. A

flatted iron dish is suspended in this full of oil, with the pith

of a rush with a weight in the centre laid across it, and one of

the projecting ends is lighted. This wretched apparatus is called

an andon, and round its wretched "darkness visible" the family

huddles--the children to play games and learn lessons, and the

women to sew; for the Japanese daylight is short and the houses are

dark. Almost more deplorable is a candlestick of the same height

as the andon, with a spike at the top which fits into a hole at the

bottom of a "farthing candle" of vegetable wax, with a thick wick

made of rolled paper, which requires constant snuffing, and, after

giving for a short time a dim and jerky light, expires with a bad

smell. Lamps, burning mineral oils, native and imported, are being

manufactured on a large scale, but, apart from the peril connected

with them, the carriage of oil into country districts is very

expensive. No Japanese would think of sleeping without having an

andon burning all night in his room.

These villages are full of shops. There is scarcely a house which

does not sell something. Where the buyers come from, and how a

profit can be made, is a mystery. Many of the things are eatables,

such as dried fishes, 1.5 inch long, impaled on sticks; cakes,

sweetmeats composed of rice, flour, and very little sugar; circular

lumps of rice dough, called mochi; roots boiled in brine; a white

jelly made from beans; and ropes, straw shoes for men and horses,

straw cloaks, paper umbrellas, paper waterproofs, hair-pins, tooth-

picks, tobacco pipes, paper mouchoirs, and numbers of other trifles

made of bamboo, straw, grass, and wood. These goods are on stands,

and in the room behind, open to the street, all the domestic

avocations are going on, and the housewife is usually to be seen

boiling water or sewing with a baby tucked into the back of her

dress. A lucifer factory has recently been put up, and in many

house fronts men are cutting up wood into lengths for matches. In

others they are husking rice, a very laborious process, in which

the grain is pounded in a mortar sunk in the floor by a flat-ended

wooden pestle attached to a long horizontal lever, which is worked

by the feet of a man, invariably naked, who stands at the other

extremity.

In some women are weaving, in others spinning cotton. Usually

there are three or four together--the mother, the eldest son's

wife, and one or two unmarried girls. The girls marry at sixteen,

and shortly these comely, rosy, wholesome-looking creatures pass

into haggard, middle-aged women with vacant faces, owing to the

blackening of the teeth and removal of the eyebrows, which, if they

do not follow betrothal, are resorted to on the birth of the first

child. In other houses women are at their toilet, blackening their

teeth before circular metal mirrors placed in folding stands on the

mats, or performing ablutions, unclothed to the waist. Early the

village is very silent, while the children are at school; their

return enlivens it a little, but they are quiet even at play; at

sunset the men return, and things are a little livelier; you hear a

good deal of splashing in baths, and after that they carry about

and play with their younger children, while the older ones prepare

lessons for the following day by reciting them in a high,

monotonous twang. At dark the paper windows are drawn, the amado,

or external wooden shutters, are closed, the lamp is lighted before

the family shrine, supper is eaten, the children play at quiet

games round the andon; and about ten the quilts and wooden pillows

are produced from the press, the amado are bolted, and the family

lies down to sleep in one room. Small trays of food and the

tabako-bon are always within reach of adult sleepers, and one grows

quite accustomed to hear the sound of ashes being knocked out of

the pipe at intervals during the night. The children sit up as

late as their parents, and are included in all their conversation.

I never saw people take so much delight in their offspring,

carrying them about, or holding their hands in walking, watching

and entering into their games, supplying them constantly with new

toys, taking them to picnics and festivals, never being content to

be without them, and treating other people's children also with a

suitable measure of affection and attention. Both fathers and

mothers take a pride in their children. It is most amusing about

six every morning to see twelve or fourteen men sitting on a low

wall, each with a child under two years in his arms, fondling and

playing with it, and showing off its physique and intelligence. To

judge from appearances, the children form the chief topic at this

morning gathering. At night, after the houses are shut up, looking

through the long fringe of rope or rattan which conceals the

sliding door, you see the father, who wears nothing but a maro in

"the bosom of his family," bending his ugly, kindly face over a

gentle-looking baby, and the mother, who more often than not has

dropped the kimono from her shoulders, enfolding two children

destitute of clothing in her arms. For some reasons they prefer

boys, but certainly girls are equally petted and loved. The

children, though for our ideas too gentle and formal, are very

prepossessing in looks and behaviour. They are so perfectly docile

and obedient, so ready to help their parents, so good to the little

ones, and, in the many hours which I have spent in watching them at

play, I have never heard an angry word or seen a sour look or act.

But they are little men and women rather than children, and their

old-fashioned appearance is greatly aided by their dress, which, as

I have remarked before, is the same as that of adults.

There are, however, various styles of dressing the hair of girls,

by which you can form a pretty accurate estimate of any girl's age

up to her marriage, when the coiffure undergoes a definite change.

The boys all look top-heavy and their heads of an abnormal size,

partly from a hideous practice of shaving the head altogether for

the first three years. After this the hair is allowed to grow in

three tufts, one over each ear, and the other at the back of the

neck; as often, however, a tuft is grown at the top of the back of

the head. At ten the crown alone is shaved and a forelock is worn,

and at fifteen, when the boy assumes the responsibilities of

manhood, his hair is allowed to grow like that of a man. The grave

dignity of these boys, with the grotesque patterns on their big

heads, is most amusing.

Would that these much-exposed skulls were always smooth and clean!

It is painful to see the prevalence of such repulsive maladies as

scabies, scald-head, ringworm, sore eyes, and unwholesome-looking

eruptions, and fully 30 per cent of the village people are badly

seamed with smallpox.

LETTER X--(Completed)

Shops and Shopping--The Barber's Shop--A Paper Waterproof--Ito's

Vanity--Preparations for the Journey--Transport and Prices--Money

and Measurements.

I have had to do a little shopping in Hachiishi for my journey.

The shop-fronts, you must understand, are all open, and at the

height of the floor, about two feet from the ground, there is a

broad ledge of polished wood on which you sit down. A woman

everlastingly boiling water on a bronze hibachi, or brazier,

shifting the embers about deftly with brass tongs like chopsticks,

and with a baby looking calmly over her shoulders, is the

shopwoman; but she remains indifferent till she imagines that you

have a definite purpose of buying, when she comes forward bowing to

the ground, and I politely rise and bow too. Then I or Ito ask the

price of a thing, and she names it, very likely asking 4s. for what

ought to sell at 6d. You say 3s., she laughs and says 3s. 6d.; you

say 2s., she laughs again and says 3s., offering you the tabako-

bon. Eventually the matter is compromised by your giving her 1s.,

at which she appears quite delighted. With a profusion of bows and

"sayo naras" on each side, you go away with the pleasant feeling of

having given an industrious woman twice as much as the thing was

worth to her, and less than what it is worth to you!

There are several barbers' shops, and the evening seems a very busy

time with them. This operation partakes of the general want of

privacy of the life of the village, and is performed in the raised

open front of the shop. Soap is not used, and the process is a

painful one. The victims let their garments fall to their waists,

and each holds in his left hand a lacquered tray to receive the

croppings. The ugly Japanese face at this time wears a most

grotesque expression of stolid resignation as it is held and pulled

about by the operator, who turns it in all directions, that he may

judge of the effect that he is producing. The shaving the face

till it is smooth and shiny, and the cutting, waxing, and tying of

the queue with twine made of paper, are among the evening sights of

Nikko.

Lacquer and things curiously carved in wood are the great

attractions of the shops, but they interest me far less than the

objects of utility in Japanese daily life, with their ingenuity of

contrivance and perfection of adaptation and workmanship. A seed

shop, where seeds are truly idealised, attracts me daily. Thirty

varieties are offered for sale, as various in form as they are in

colour, and arranged most artistically on stands, while some are

put up in packages decorated with what one may call a facsimile of

the root, leaves, and flower, in water-colours. A lad usually lies

on the mat behind executing these very creditable pictures--for

such they are--with a few bold and apparently careless strokes with

his brush. He gladly sold me a peony as a scrap for a screen for 3

sen. My purchases, with this exception, were necessaries only--a

paper waterproof cloak, "a circular," black outside and yellow

inside, made of square sheets of oiled paper cemented together, and

some large sheets of the same for covering my baggage; and I

succeeded in getting Ito out of his obnoxious black wide-awake into

a basin-shaped hat like mine, for, ugly as I think him, he has a

large share of personal vanity, whitens his teeth, and powders his

face carefully before a mirror, and is in great dread of sunburn.

He powders his hands too, and polishes his nails, and never goes

out without gloves.

To-morrow I leave luxury behind and plunge into the interior,

hoping to emerge somehow upon the Sea of Japan. No information can

be got here except about the route to Niigata, which I have decided

not to take, so, after much study of Brunton's map, I have fixed

upon one place, and have said positively, "I go to Tajima." If I

reach it I can get farther, but all I can learn is, "It's a very

bad road, it's all among the mountains." Ito, who has a great

regard for his own comforts, tries to dissuade me from going by

saying that I shall lose mine, but, as these kind people have

ingeniously repaired my bed by doubling the canvas and lacing it

into holes in the side poles, {9} and as I have lived for the last

three days on rice, eggs, and coarse vermicelli about the thickness

and colour of earth-worms, this prospect does not appal me! In

Japan there is a Land Transport Company, called Riku-un-kaisha,

with a head-office in Tokiyo, and branches in various towns and

villages. It arranges for the transport of travellers and

merchandise by pack-horses and coolies at certain fixed rates, and

gives receipts in due form. It hires the horses from the farmers,

and makes a moderate profit on each transaction, but saves the

traveller from difficulties, delays, and extortions. The prices

vary considerably in different districts, and are regulated by the

price of forage, the state of the roads, and the number of hireable

horses. For a ri, nearly 2.5 miles, they charge from 6 to 10 sen

for a horse and the man who leads it, for a kuruma with one man

from 4 to 9 sen for the same distance, and for baggage coolies

about the same. [This Transport Company is admirably organised. I

employed it in journeys of over 1200 miles, and always found it

efficient and reliable.] I intend to make use of it always, much

against Ito's wishes, who reckoned on many a prospective "squeeze"

in dealings with the farmers.

My journey will now be entirely over "unbeaten tracks," and will

lead through what may be called "Old Japan;" and as it will be

natural to use Japanese words for money and distances, for which

there are no English terms, I give them here. A yen is a note

representing a dollar, or about 3s. 7d. of our money; a sen is

something less than a halfpenny; a rin is a thin round coin of iron

or bronze, with a square hole in the middle, of which 10 make a

sen, and 1000 a yen; and a tempo is a handsome oval bronze coin

with a hole in the centre, of which 5 make 4 sen. Distances are

measured by ri, cho, and ken. Six feet make one ken, sixty ken one

cho, and thirty-six cho one ri, or nearly 2.5 English miles. When

I write of a road I mean a bridle-path from four to eight feet

wide, kuruma roads being specified as such. I. L. B.

LETTER XI

Comfort disappears--Fine Scenery--An Alarm--A Farm-house--An

unusual Costume--Bridling a Horse--Female Dress and Ugliness--

Babies--My Mago--Beauties of the Kinugawa--Fujihara--My Servant--

Horse-shoes--An absurd Mistake.

FUJIHARA, June 24.

Ito's informants were right. Comfort was left behind at Nikko!

A little woman brought two depressed-looking mares at six this

morning; my saddle and bridle were put on one, and Ito and the

baggage on the other; my hosts and I exchanged cordial good wishes

and obeisances, and, with the women dragging my sorry mare by a

rope round her nose, we left the glorious shrines and solemn

cryptomeria groves of Nikko behind, passed down its long, clean

street, and where the In Memoriam avenue is densest and darkest

turned off to the left by a path like the bed of a brook, which

afterwards, as a most atrocious trail, wound about among the rough

boulders of the Daiya, which it crosses often on temporary bridges

of timbers covered with branches and soil. After crossing one of

the low spurs of the Nikkosan mountains, we wound among ravines

whose steep sides are clothed with maple, oak, magnolia, elm, pine,

and cryptomeria, linked together by festoons of the redundant

Wistaria chinensis, and brightened by azalea and syringa clusters.

Every vista was blocked by some grand mountain, waterfalls

thundered, bright streams glanced through the trees, and in the

glorious sunshine of June the country looked most beautiful.

We travelled less than a ri an hour, as it was a mere flounder

either among rocks or in deep mud, the woman in her girt-up dress

and straw sandals trudging bravely along, till she suddenly flung

away the rope, cried out, and ran backwards, perfectly scared by a

big grey snake, with red spots, much embarrassed by a large frog

which he would not let go, though, like most of his kind, he was

alarmed by human approach, and made desperate efforts to swallow

his victim and wriggle into the bushes. After crawling for three

hours we dismounted at the mountain farm of Kohiaku, on the edge of

a rice valley, and the woman counted her packages to see that they

were all right, and without waiting for a gratuity turned homewards

with her horses. I pitched my chair in the verandah of a house

near a few poor dwellings inhabited by peasants with large

families, the house being in the barn-yard of a rich sake maker. I

waited an hour, grew famished, got some weak tea and boiled barley,

waited another hour, and yet another, for all the horses were

eating leaves on the mountains. There was a little stir. Men

carried sheaves of barley home on their backs, and stacked them

under the eaves. Children, with barely the rudiments of clothing,

stood and watched me hour after hour, and adults were not ashamed

to join the group, for they had never seen a foreign woman, a fork,

or a spoon. Do you remember a sentence in Dr. Macgregor's last

sermon? "What strange sights some of you will see!" Could there

be a stranger one than a decent-looking middle-aged man lying on

his chest in the verandah, raised on his elbows, and intently

reading a book, clothed only in a pair of spectacles? Besides that

curious piece of still life, women frequently drew water from a

well by the primitive contrivance of a beam suspended across an

upright, with the bucket at one end and a stone at the other.

When the horses arrived the men said they could not put on the

bridle, but, after much talk, it was managed by two of them

violently forcing open the jaws of the animal, while a third seized

a propitious moment for slipping the bit into her mouth. At the

next change a bridle was a thing unheard of, and when I suggested

that the creature would open her mouth voluntarily if the bit were

pressed close to her teeth, the standers-by mockingly said, "No

horse ever opens his mouth except to eat or to bite," and were only

convinced after I had put on the bridle myself. The new horses had

a rocking gait like camels, and I was glad to dispense with them at

Kisagoi, a small upland hamlet, a very poor place, with poverty-

stricken houses, children very dirty and sorely afflicted by skin

maladies, and women with complexions and features hardened by

severe work and much wood smoke into positive ugliness, and with

figures anything but statuesque.

I write the truth as I see it, and if my accounts conflict with

those of tourists who write of the Tokaido and Nakasendo, of Lake

Biwa and Hakone, it does not follow that either is inaccurate. But

truly this is a new Japan to me, of which no books have given me

any idea, and it is not fairyland. The men may be said to wear

nothing. Few of the women wear anything but a short petticoat

wound tightly round them, or blue cotton trousers very tight in the

legs and baggy at the top, with a blue cotton garment open to the

waist tucked into the band, and a blue cotton handkerchief knotted

round the head. From the dress no notion of the sex of the wearer

could be gained, nor from the faces, if it were not for the shaven

eyebrows and black teeth. The short petticoat is truly barbarous-

looking, and when a woman has a nude baby on her back or in her

arms, and stands staring vacantly at the foreigner, I can hardly

believe myself in "civilised" Japan. A good-sized child, strong

enough to hold up his head, sees the world right cheerfully looking

over his mother's shoulders, but it is a constant distress to me to

see small children of six and seven years old lugging on their

backs gristly babies, whose shorn heads are frizzling in the sun

and "wobbling" about as though they must drop off, their eyes, as

nurses say, "looking over their heads." A number of silk-worms are

kept in this region, and in the open barns groups of men in

nature's costume, and women unclothed to their waists, were busy

stripping mulberry branches. The houses were all poor, and the

people dirty both in their clothing and persons. Some of the

younger women might possibly have been comely, if soap and water

had been plentifully applied to their faces; but soap is not used,

and such washing as the garments get is only the rubbing them a

little with sand in a running stream. I will give you an amusing

instance of the way in which one may make absurd mistakes. I heard

many stories of the viciousness and aggressiveness of pack-horses,

and was told that they were muzzled to prevent them from pasturing

upon the haunches of their companions and making vicious snatches

at men. Now, I find that the muzzle is only to prevent them from

eating as they travel. Mares are used exclusively in this region,

and they are the gentlest of their race. If you have the weight of

baggage reckoned at one horse-load, though it should turn out that

the weight is too great for a weakly animal, and the Transport

agent distributes it among two or even three horses, you only pay

for one; and though our cortege on leaving Kisagoi consisted of

four small, shock-headed mares who could hardly see through their

bushy forelocks, with three active foals, and one woman and three

girls to lead them, I only paid for two horses at 7 sen a ri.

My mago, with her toil-hardened, thoroughly good-natured face

rendered hideous by black teeth, wore straw sandals, blue cotton

trousers with a vest tucked into them, as poor and worn as they

could be, and a blue cotton towel knotted round her head. As the

sky looked threatening she carried a straw rain-cloak, a thatch of

two connected capes, one fastening at the neck, the other at the

waist, and a flat hat of flags, 2.5 feet in diameter, hung at her

back like a shield. Up and down, over rocks and through deep mud,

she trudged with a steady stride, turning her kind, ugly face at

intervals to see if the girls were following. I like the firm

hardy gait which this unbecoming costume permits better than the

painful shuffle imposed upon the more civilised women by their

tight skirts and high clogs.

From Kohiaku the road passed through an irregular grassy valley

between densely-wooded hills, the valley itself timbered with park-

like clumps of pine and Spanish chestnuts; but on leaving Kisagoi

the scenery changed. A steep rocky tract brought us to the

Kinugawa, a clear rushing river, which has cut its way deeply

through coloured rock, and is crossed at a considerable height by a

bridge with an alarmingly steep curve, from which there is a fine

view of high mountains, and among them Futarayama, to which some of

the most ancient Shinto legends are attached. We rode for some

time within hearing of the Kinugawa, catching magnificent glimpses

of it frequently--turbulent and locked in by walls of porphyry, or

widening and calming and spreading its aquamarine waters over great

slabs of pink and green rock, lighted fitfully by the sun, or

spanned by rainbows, or pausing to rest in deep shady pools, but

always beautiful. The mountains through which it forces its way on

the other side are precipitous and wooded to their summits with

coniferae, while the less abrupt side, along which the tract is

carried, curves into green knolls in its lower slopes, sprinkled

with grand Spanish chestnuts scarcely yet in blossom, with maples

which have not yet lost the scarlet which they wear in spring as

well as autumn, and with many flowering trees and shrubs which are

new to me, and with an undergrowth of red azaleas, syringa, blue

hydrangea--the very blue of heaven--yellow raspberries, ferns,

clematis, white and yellow lilies, blue irises, and fifty other

trees and shrubs entangled and festooned by the wistaria, whose

beautiful foliage is as common as is that of the bramble with us.

The redundancy of the vegetation was truly tropical, and the

brilliancy and variety of its living greens, dripping with recent

rain, were enhanced by the slant rays of the afternoon sun.

The few hamlets we passed are of farm-houses only, the deep-eaved

roofs covering in one sweep dwelling-house, barn, and stable. In

every barn unclothed people were pursuing various industries. We

met strings of pack-mares, tied head and tail, loaded with rice and

sake, and men and women carrying large creels full of mulberry

leaves. The ravine grew more and more beautiful, and an ascent

through a dark wood of arrowy cryptomeria brought us to this

village exquisitely situated, where a number of miniature ravines,

industriously terraced for rice, come down upon the great chasm of

the Kinugawa. Eleven hours of travelling have brought me eighteen

miles!

IKARI, June 25.--Fujihara has forty-six farm-houses and a yadoya--

all dark, damp, dirty, and draughty, a combination of dwelling-

house, barn, and stable. The yadoya consisted of a daidokoro, or

open kitchen, and stable below, and a small loft above, capable of

division, and I found on returning from a walk six Japanese in

extreme deshabille occupying the part through which I had to pass.

On this being remedied I sat down to write, but was soon driven

upon the balcony, under the eaves, by myriads of fleas, which

hopped out of the mats as sandhoppers do out of the sea sand, and

even in the balcony, hopped over my letter. There were two outer

walls of hairy mud with living creatures crawling in the cracks;

cobwebs hung from the uncovered rafters. The mats were brown with

age and dirt, the rice was musty, and only partially cleaned, the

eggs had seen better days, and the tea was musty.

I saw everything out of doors with Ito--the patient industry, the

exquisitely situated village, the evening avocations, the quiet

dulness--and then contemplated it all from my balcony and read the

sentence (from a paper in the Transactions of the Asiatic Society)

which had led me to devise this journey, "There is a most

exquisitely picturesque, but difficult, route up the course of the

Kinugawa, which seems almost as unknown to Japanese as to

foreigners." There was a pure lemon-coloured sky above, and slush

a foot deep below. A road, at this time a quagmire, intersected by

a rapid stream, crossed in many places by planks, runs through the

village. This stream is at once "lavatory" and "drinking

fountain." People come back from their work, sit on the planks,

take off their muddy clothes and wring them out, and bathe their

feet in the current. On either side are the dwellings, in front of

which are much-decayed manure heaps, and the women were engaged in

breaking them up and treading them into a pulp with their bare

feet. All wear the vest and trousers at their work, but only the

short petticoats in their houses, and I saw several respectable

mothers of families cross the road and pay visits in this garment

only, without any sense of impropriety. The younger children wear

nothing but a string and an amulet. The persons, clothing, and

houses are alive with vermin, and if the word squalor can be

applied to independent and industrious people, they were squalid.

Beetles, spiders, and wood-lice held a carnival in my room after

dark, and the presence of horses in the same house brought a number

of horseflies. I sprinkled my stretcher with insect powder, but my

blanket had been on the floor for one minute, and fleas rendered

sleep impossible. The night was very long. The andon went out,

leaving a strong smell of rancid oil. The primitive Japanese dog--

a cream-coloured wolfish-looking animal, the size of a collie, very

noisy and aggressive, but as cowardly as bullies usually are--was

in great force in Fujihara, and the barking, growling, and

quarrelling of these useless curs continued at intervals until

daylight; and when they were not quarrelling, they were howling.

Torrents of rain fell, obliging me to move my bed from place to

place to get out of the drip. At five Ito came and entreated me to

leave, whimpering, "I've had no sleep; there are thousands and

thousands of fleas!" He has travelled by another route to the

Tsugaru Strait through the interior, and says that he would not

have believed that there was such a place in Japan, and that people

in Yokohama will not believe it when he tells them of it and of the

costume of the women. He is "ashamed for a foreigner to see such a

place," he says. His cleverness in travelling and his singular

intelligence surprise me daily. He is very anxious to speak GOOD

English, as distinguished from "common" English, and to get new

words, with their correct pronunciation and spelling. Each day he

puts down in his note-book all the words that I use that he does

not quite understand, and in the evening brings them to me and puts

down their meaning and spelling with their Japanese equivalents.

He speaks English already far better than many professional

interpreters, but would be more pleasing if he had not picked up

some American vulgarisms and free-and-easy ways. It is so

important to me to have a good interpreter, or I should not have

engaged so young and inexperienced a servant; but he is so clever

that he is now able to be cook, laundryman, and general attendant,

as well as courier and interpreter, and I think it is far easier

for me than if he were an older man. I am trying to manage him,

because I saw that he meant to manage me, specially in the matter

of "squeezes." He is intensely Japanese, his patriotism has all

the weakness and strength of personal vanity, and he thinks

everything inferior that is foreign. Our manners, eyes, and modes

of eating appear simply odious to him. He delights in retailing

stories of the bad manners of Englishmen, describes them as

"roaring out ohio to every one on the road," frightening the tea-

house nymphs, kicking or slapping their coolies, stamping over

white mats in muddy boots, acting generally like ill-bred Satyrs,

exciting an ill-concealed hatred in simple country districts, and

bringing themselves and their country into contempt and ridicule.

{10} He is very anxious about my good behaviour, and as I am

equally anxious to be courteous everywhere in Japanese fashion, and

not to violate the general rules of Japanese etiquette, I take his

suggestions as to what I ought to do and avoid in very good part,

and my bows are growing more profound every day! The people are so

kind and courteous, that it is truly brutal in foreigners not to be

kind and courteous to them. You will observe that I am entirely

dependent on Ito, not only for travelling arrangements, but for

making inquiries, gaining information, and even for companionship,

such as it is; and our being mutually embarked on a hard and

adventurous journey will, I hope, make us mutually kind and

considerate. Nominally, he is a Shintoist, which means nothing.

At Nikko I read to him the earlier chapters of St. Luke, and when I

came to the story of the Prodigal Son I was interrupted by a

somewhat scornful laugh and the remark, "Why, all this is our

Buddha over again!"

To-day's journey, though very rough, has been rather pleasant. The

rain moderated at noon, and I left Fujihara on foot, wearing my

American "mountain dress" and Wellington boots,--the only costume

in which ladies can enjoy pedestrian or pack-horse travelling in

this country,--with a light straw mat--the waterproof of the

region--hanging over my shoulders, and so we plodded on with two

baggage horses through the ankle-deep mud, till the rain cleared

off, the mountains looked through the mist, the augmented Kinugawa

thundered below, and enjoyment became possible, even in my half-fed

condition. Eventually I mounted a pack-saddle, and we crossed a

spur of Takadayama at a height of 2100 feet on a well-devised

series of zigzags, eight of which in one place could be seen one

below another. The forest there is not so dense as usual, and the

lower mountain slopes are sprinkled with noble Spanish chestnuts.

The descent was steep and slippery, the horse had tender feet, and,

after stumbling badly, eventually came down, and I went over his

head, to the great distress of the kindly female mago. The straw

shoes tied with wisps round the pasterns are a great nuisance. The

"shoe strings" are always coming untied, and the shoes only wear

about two ri on soft ground, and less than one on hard. They keep

the feet so soft and spongy that the horses can't walk without them

at all, and as soon as they get thin your horse begins to stumble,

the mago gets uneasy, and presently you stop; four shoes, which are

hanging from the saddle, are soaked in water and are tied on with

much coaxing, raising the animal fully an inch above the ground.

Anything more temporary and clumsy could not be devised. The

bridle paths are strewn with them, and the children collect them in

heaps to decay for manure. They cost 3 or 4 sen the set, and in

every village men spend their leisure time in making them.

At the next stage, called Takahara, we got one horse for the

baggage, crossed the river and the ravine, and by a steep climb

reached a solitary yadoya with the usual open front and irori,

round which a number of people, old and young, were sitting. When

I arrived a whole bevy of nice-looking girls took to flight, but

were soon recalled by a word from Ito to their elders. Lady

Parkes, on a side-saddle and in a riding-habit, has been taken for

a man till the people saw her hair, and a young friend of mine, who

is very pretty and has a beautiful complexion, when travelling

lately with her husband, was supposed to be a man who had shaven

off his beard. I wear a hat, which is a thing only worn by women

in the fields as a protection from sun and rain, my eyebrows are

unshaven, and my teeth are unblackened, so these girls supposed me

to be a foreign man. Ito in explanation said, "They haven't seen

any, but everybody brings them tales how rude foreigners are to

girls, and they are awful scared." There was nothing eatable but

rice and eggs, and I ate them under the concentrated stare of

eighteen pairs of dark eyes. The hot springs, to which many people

afflicted with sores resort, are by the river, at the bottom of a

rude flight of steps, in an open shed, but I could not ascertain

their temperature, as a number of men and women were sitting in the

water. They bathe four times a day, and remain for an hour at a

time.

We left for the five miles' walk to Ikari in a torrent of rain by a

newly-made path completely shut in with the cascading Kinugawa, and

carried along sometimes low, sometimes high, on props projecting

over it from the face of the rock. I do not expect to see anything

lovelier in Japan.

The river, always crystal-blue or crystal-green, largely increased

in volume by the rains, forces itself through gates of brightly-

coloured rock, by which its progress is repeatedly arrested, and

rarely lingers for rest in all its sparkling, rushing course. It

is walled in by high mountains, gloriously wooded and cleft by dark

ravines, down which torrents were tumbling in great drifts of foam,

crashing and booming, boom and crash multiplied by many an echo,

and every ravine afforded glimpses far back of more mountains,

clefts, and waterfalls, and such over-abundant vegetation that I

welcomed the sight of a gray cliff or bare face of rock. Along the

path there were fascinating details, composed of the manifold

greenery which revels in damp heat, ferns, mosses, confervae,

fungi, trailers, shading tiny rills which dropped down into

grottoes feathery with the exquisite Trichomanes radicans, or

drooped over the rustic path and hung into the river, and overhead

the finely incised and almost feathery foliage of several varieties

of maple admitted the light only as a green mist. The spring tints

have not yet darkened into the monotone of summer, rose azaleas

still light the hillsides, and masses of cryptomeria give depth and

shadow. Still, beautiful as it all is, one sighs for something

which shall satisfy one's craving for startling individuality and

grace of form, as in the coco-palm and banana of the tropics. The

featheriness of the maple, and the arrowy straightness and

pyramidal form of the cryptomeria, please me better than all else;

but why criticise? Ten minutes of sunshine would transform the

whole into fairyland.

There were no houses and no people. Leaving this beautiful river

we crossed a spur of a hill, where all the trees were matted

together by a very fragrant white honeysuckle, and came down upon

an open valley where a quiet stream joins the loud-tongued

Kinugawa, and another mile brought us to this beautifully-situated

hamlet of twenty-five houses, surrounded by mountains, and close to

a mountain stream called the Okawa. The names of Japanese rivers

give one very little geographical information from their want of

continuity. A river changes its name several times in a course of

thirty or forty miles, according to the districts through which it

passes. This is my old friend the Kinugawa, up which I have been

travelling for two days. Want of space is a great aid to the

picturesque. Ikari is crowded together on a hill slope, and its

short, primitive-looking street, with its warm browns and greys, is

quite attractive in "the clear shining after rain." My halting-

place is at the express office at the top of the hill--a place like

a big barn, with horses at one end and a living-room at the other,

and in the centre much produce awaiting transport, and a group of

people stripping mulberry branches. The nearest daimiyo used to

halt here on his way to Tokiyo, so there are two rooms for

travellers, called daimiyos' rooms, fifteen feet high, handsomely

ceiled in dark wood, the shoji of such fine work as to merit the

name of fret-work, the fusuma artistically decorated, the mats

clean and fine, and in the alcove a sword-rack of old gold lacquer.

Mine is the inner room, and Ito and four travellers occupy the

outer one. Though very dark, it is luxury after last night. The

rest of the house is given up to the rearing of silk-worms. The

house-masters here and at Fujihara are not used to passports, and

Ito, who is posing as a town-bred youth, has explained and copied

mine, all the village men assembling to hear it read aloud. He

does not know the word used for "scientific investigation," but, in

the idea of increasing his own importance by exaggerating mine, I

hear him telling the people that I am gakusha, i.e. learned! There

is no police-station here, but every month policemen pay

domiciliary visits to these outlying yadoyas and examine the

register of visitors.

This is a much neater place than the last, but the people look

stupid and apathetic, and I wonder what they think of the men who

have abolished the daimiyo and the feudal regime, have raised the

eta to citizenship, and are hurrying the empire forward on the

tracks of western civilisation!

Since shingle has given place to thatch there is much to admire in

the villages, with their steep roofs, deep eaves and balconies, the

warm russet of roofs and walls, the quaint confusion of the

farmhouses, the hedges of camellia and pomegranate, the bamboo

clumps and persimmon orchards, and (in spite of dirt and bad

smells) the generally satisfied look of the peasant proprietors.

No food can be got here except rice and eggs, and I am haunted by

memories of the fowls and fish of Nikko, to say nothing of the

"flesh pots" of the Legation, and

"--a sorrow's crown of sorrow

Is remembering happier things!"

The mercury falls to 70 degrees at night, and I generally awake

from cold at 3 a.m., for my blankets are only summer ones, and I

dare not supplement them with a quilt, either for sleeping on or

under, because of the fleas which it contains. I usually retire

about 7.30, for there is almost no twilight, and very little

inducement for sitting up by the dimness of candle or andon, and I

have found these days of riding on slow, rolling, stumbling horses

very severe, and if I were anything of a walker, should certainly

prefer pedestrianism. I. L. B.

LETTER XII

A Fantastic Jumble--The "Quiver" of Poverty--The Water-shed--From

Bad to Worse--The Rice Planter's Holiday--A Diseased Crowd--Amateur

Doctoring--Want of Cleanliness--Rapid Eating--Premature Old Age.

KURUMATOGE, June 30.

After the hard travelling of six days the rest of Sunday in a quiet

place at a high elevation is truly delightful! Mountains and

passes, valleys and rice swamps, forests and rice swamps, villages

and rice swamps; poverty, industry, dirt, ruinous temples,

prostrate Buddhas, strings of straw-shod pack-horses; long, grey,

featureless streets, and quiet, staring crowds, are all jumbled up

fantastically in my memory. Fine weather accompanied me through

beautiful scenery from Ikari to Yokokawa, where I ate my lunch in

the street to avoid the innumerable fleas of the tea-house, with a

circle round me of nearly all the inhabitants. At first the

children, both old and young, were so frightened that they ran

away, but by degrees they timidly came back, clinging to the skirts

of their parents (skirts, in this case, being a metaphorical

expression), running away again as often as I looked at them. The

crowd was filthy and squalid beyond description. Why should the

"quiver" of poverty be so very full? one asks as one looks at the

swarms of gentle, naked, old-fashioned children, born to a heritage

of hard toil, to be, like their parents, devoured by vermin, and

pressed hard for taxes. A horse kicked off my saddle before it was

girthed, the crowd scattered right and left, and work, which had

been suspended for two hours to stare at the foreigner, began

again.

A long ascent took us to the top of a pass 2500 feet in height, a

projecting spur not 30 feet wide, with a grand view of mountains

and ravines, and a maze of involved streams, which unite in a

vigorous torrent, whose course we followed for some hours, till it

expanded into a quiet river, lounging lazily through a rice swamp

of considerable extent. The map is blank in this region, but I

judged, as I afterwards found rightly, that at that pass we had

crossed the water-shed, and that the streams thenceforward no

longer fall into the Pacific, but into the Sea of Japan. At

Itosawa the horses produced stumbled so intolerably that I walked

the last stage, and reached Kayashima, a miserable village of

fifty-seven houses, so exhausted that I could not go farther, and

was obliged to put up with worse accommodation even than at

Fujihara, with less strength for its hardships.

The yadoya was simply awful. The daidokoro had a large wood fire

burning in a trench, filling the whole place with stinging smoke,

from which my room, which was merely screened off by some

dilapidated shoji, was not exempt. The rafters were black and

shiny with soot and moisture. The house-master, who knelt

persistently on the floor of my room till he was dislodged by Ito,

apologised for the dirt of his house, as well he might. Stifling,

dark, and smoky, as my room was, I had to close the paper windows,

owing to the crowd which assembled in the street. There was

neither rice nor soy, and Ito, who values his own comfort, began to

speak to the house-master and servants loudly and roughly, and to

throw my things about--a style of acting which I promptly

terminated, for nothing could be more hurtful to a foreigner, or

more unkind to the people, than for a servant to be rude and

bullying; and the man was most polite, and never approached me but

on bended knees. When I gave him my passport, as the custom is, he

touched his forehead with it, and then touched the earth with his

forehead.

I found nothing that I could eat except black beans and boiled

cucumbers. The room was dark, dirty, vile, noisy, and poisoned by

sewage odours, as rooms unfortunately are very apt to be. At the

end of the rice planting there is a holiday for two days, when many

offerings are made to Inari, the god of rice farmers; and the

holiday-makers kept up their revel all night, and drums, stationary

and peripatetic, were constantly beaten in such a way as to prevent

sleep.

A little boy, the house-master's son, was suffering from a very bad

cough, and a few drops of chlorodyne which I gave him allayed it so

completely that the cure was noised abroad in the earliest hours of

the next morning, and by five o'clock nearly the whole population

was assembled outside my room, with much whispering and shuffling

of shoeless feet, and applications of eyes to the many holes in the

paper windows. When I drew aside the shoji I was disconcerted by

the painful sight which presented itself, for the people were

pressing one upon another, fathers and mothers holding naked

children covered with skin-disease, or with scald-head, or

ringworm, daughters leading mothers nearly blind, men exhibiting

painful sores, children blinking with eyes infested by flies and

nearly closed with ophthalmia; and all, sick and well, in truly

"vile raiment," lamentably dirty and swarming with vermin, the sick

asking for medicine, and the well either bringing the sick or

gratifying an apathetic curiosity. Sadly I told them that I did

not understand their manifold "diseases and torments," and that, if

I did, I had no stock of medicines, and that in my own country the

constant washing of clothes, and the constant application of water

to the skin, accompanied by friction with clean cloths, would be

much relied upon by doctors for the cure and prevention of similar

cutaneous diseases. To pacify them I made some ointment of animal

fat and flowers of sulphur, extracted with difficulty from some

man's hoard, and told them how to apply it to some of the worst

cases. The horse, being unused to a girth, became fidgety as it

was being saddled, creating a STAMPEDE among the crowd, and the

mago would not touch it again. They are as much afraid of their

gentle mares as if they were panthers. All the children followed

me for a considerable distance, and a good many of the adults made

an excuse for going in the same direction.

These people wear no linen, and their clothes, which are seldom

washed, are constantly worn, night and day, as long as they will

hold together. They seal up their houses as hermetically as they

can at night, and herd together in numbers in one sleeping-room,

with its atmosphere vitiated, to begin with, by charcoal and

tobacco fumes, huddled up in their dirty garments in wadded quilts,

which are kept during the day in close cupboards, and are seldom

washed from one year's end to another. The tatami, beneath a

tolerably fair exterior, swarm with insect life, and are

receptacles of dust, organic matters, etc. The hair, which is

loaded with oil and bandoline, is dressed once a week, or less

often in these districts, and it is unnecessary to enter into any

details regarding the distressing results, and much besides may be

left to the imagination. The persons of the people, especially of

the children, are infested with vermin, and one fruitful source of

skin sores is the irritation arising from this cause. The floors

of houses, being concealed by mats, are laid down carelessly with

gaps between the boards, and, as the damp earth is only 18 inches

or 2 feet below, emanations of all kinds enter the mats and pass

into the rooms.

The houses in this region (and I believe everywhere) are

hermetically sealed at night, both in summer and winter, the amado,

which are made without ventilators, literally boxing them in, so

that, unless they are falling to pieces, which is rarely the case,

none of the air vitiated by the breathing of many persons, by the

emanations from their bodies and clothing, by the miasmata produced

by defective domestic arrangements, and by the fumes from charcoal

hibachi, can ever be renewed. Exercise is seldom taken from

choice, and, unless the women work in the fields, they hang over

charcoal fumes the whole day for five months of the year, engaged

in interminable processes of cooking, or in the attempt to get

warm. Much of the food of the peasantry is raw or half-raw salt

fish, and vegetables rendered indigestible by being coarsely

pickled, all bolted with the most marvellous rapidity, as if the

one object of life were to rush through a meal in the shortest

possible time. The married women look as if they had never known

youth, and their skin is apt to be like tanned leather. At

Kayashima I asked the house-master's wife, who looked about fifty,

how old she was (a polite question in Japan), and she replied

twenty-two--one of many similar surprises. Her boy was five years

old, and was still unweaned.

This digression disposes of one aspect of the population. {11}

LETTER XII--(Concluded)

A Japanese Ferry--A Corrugated Road--The Pass of Sanno--Various

Vegetation--An Unattractive Undergrowth--Preponderance of Men.

We changed horses at Tajima, formerly a daimiyo's residence, and,

for a Japanese town, rather picturesque. It makes and exports

clogs, coarse pottery, coarse lacquer, and coarse baskets.

After travelling through rice-fields varying from thirty yards

square to a quarter of an acre, with the tops of the dykes utilised

by planting dwarf beans along them, we came to a large river, the

Arakai, along whose affluents we had been tramping for two days,

and, after passing through several filthy villages, thronged with

filthy and industrious inhabitants, crossed it in a scow. High

forks planted securely in the bank on either side sustained a rope

formed of several strands of the wistaria knotted together. One

man hauled on this hand over hand, another poled at the stern, and

the rapid current did the rest. In this fashion we have crossed

many rivers subsequently. Tariffs of charges are posted at all

ferries, as well as at all bridges where charges are made, and a

man sits in an office to receive the money.

The country was really very beautiful. The views were wider and

finer than on the previous days, taking in great sweeps of peaked

mountains, wooded to their summits, and from the top of the Pass of

Sanno the clustered peaks were glorified into unearthly beauty in a

golden mist of evening sunshine. I slept at a house combining silk

farm, post office, express office, and daimiyo's rooms, at the

hamlet of Ouchi, prettily situated in a valley with mountainous

surroundings, and, leaving early on the following morning, had a

very grand ride, passing in a crateriform cavity the pretty little

lake of Oyake, and then ascending the magnificent pass of Ichikawa.

We turned off what, by ironical courtesy, is called the main road,

upon a villainous track, consisting of a series of lateral

corrugations, about a foot broad, with depressions between them

more than a foot deep, formed by the invariable treading of the

pack-horses in each other's footsteps. Each hole was a quagmire of

tenacious mud, the ascent of 2400 feet was very steep, and the mago

adjured the animals the whole time with Hai! Hai! Hai! which is

supposed to suggest to them that extreme caution is requisite.

Their shoes were always coming untied, and they wore out two sets

in four miles. The top of the pass, like that of a great many

others, is a narrow ridge, on the farther side of which the track

dips abruptly into a tremendous ravine, along whose side we

descended for a mile or so in company with a river whose

reverberating thunder drowned all attempts at speech. A glorious

view it was, looking down between the wooded precipices to a

rolling wooded plain, lying in depths of indigo shadow, bounded by

ranges of wooded mountains, and overtopped by heights heavily

splotched with snow! The vegetation was significant of a milder

climate. The magnolia and bamboo re-appeared, and tropical ferns

mingled with the beautiful blue hydrangea, the yellow Japan lily,

and the great blue campanula. There was an ocean of trees

entangled with a beautiful trailer (Actinidia polygama) with a

profusion of white leaves, which, at a distance, look like great

clusters of white blossoms. But the rank undergrowth of the

forests of this region is not attractive. Many of its component

parts deserve the name of weeds, being gawky, ragged umbels, coarse

docks, rank nettles, and many other things which I don't know, and

never wish to see again. Near the end of this descent my mare took

the bit between her teeth and carried me at an ungainly gallop into

the beautifully situated, precipitous village of Ichikawa, which is

absolutely saturated with moisture by the spray of a fine waterfall

which tumbles through the middle of it, and its trees and road-side

are green with the Protococcus viridis. The Transport Agent there

was a woman. Women keep yadoyas and shops, and cultivate farms as

freely as men. Boards giving the number of inhabitants, male and

female, and the number of horses and bullocks, are put up in each

village, and I noticed in Ichikawa, as everywhere hitherto, that

men preponderate. {12} I. L. B.

LETTER XIII

The Plain of Wakamatsu--Light Costume--The Takata Crowd--A Congress

of Schoolmasters--Timidity of a Crowd--Bad Roads--Vicious Horses--

Mountain Scenery--A Picturesque Inn--Swallowing a Fish-bone--

Poverty and Suicide--An Inn-kitchen--England Unknown!--My Breakfast

Disappears.

KURUMATOGE, June 30.

A short ride took us from Ichikawa to a plain about eleven miles

broad by eighteen long. The large town of Wakamatsu stands near

its southern end, and it is sprinkled with towns and villages. The

great lake of Iniwashiro is not far off. The plain is rich and

fertile. In the distance the steep roofs of its villages, with

their groves, look very picturesque. As usual not a fence or gate

is to be seen, or any other hedge than the tall one used as a

screen for the dwellings of the richer farmers.

Bad roads and bad horses detracted from my enjoyment. One hour of

a good horse would have carried me across the plain; as it was,

seven weary hours were expended upon it. The day degenerated, and

closed in still, hot rain; the air was stifling and electric, the

saddle slipped constantly from being too big, the shoes were more

than usually troublesome, the horseflies tormented, and the men and

horses crawled. The rice-fields were undergoing a second process

of puddling, and many of the men engaged in it wore only a hat, and

a fan attached to the girdle.

An avenue of cryptomeria and two handsome and somewhat gilded

Buddhist temples denoted the approach to a place of some

importance, and such Takata is, as being a large town with a

considerable trade in silk, rope, and minjin, and the residence of

one of the higher officials of the ken or prefecture. The street

is a mile long, and every house is a shop. The general aspect is

mean and forlorn. In these little-travelled districts, as soon as

one reaches the margin of a town, the first man one meets turns and

flies down the street, calling out the Japanese equivalent of

"Here's a foreigner!" and soon blind and seeing, old and young,

clothed and naked, gather together. At the yadoya the crowd

assembled in such force that the house-master removed me to some

pretty rooms in a garden; but then the adults climbed on the house-

roofs which overlooked it, and the children on a palisade at the

end, which broke down under their weight, and admitted the whole

inundation; so that I had to close the shoji, with the fatiguing

consciousness during the whole time of nominal rest of a multitude

surging outside. Then five policemen in black alpaca frock-coats

and white trousers invaded my precarious privacy, desiring to see

my passport--a demand never made before except where I halted for

the night. In their European clothes they cannot bow with Japanese

punctiliousness, but they were very polite, and expressed great

annoyance at the crowd, and dispersed it; but they had hardly

disappeared when it gathered again. When I went out I found fully

1000 people helping me to realise how the crowded cities of Judea

sent forth people clothed much as these are when the Miracle-Worker

from Galilee arrived, but not what the fatigue of the crowding and

buzzing must have been to One who had been preaching and working

during the long day. These Japanese crowds, however, are quiet and

gentle, and never press rudely upon one. I could not find it in my

heart to complain of them except to you. Four of the policemen

returned, and escorted me to the outskirts of the town. The noise

made by 1000 people shuffling along in clogs is like the clatter of

a hail-storm.

After this there was a dismal tramp of five hours through rice-

fields. The moist climate and the fatigue of this manner of

travelling are deteriorating my health, and the pain in my spine,

which has been daily increasing, was so severe that I could neither

ride nor walk for more than twenty minutes at a time; and the pace

was so slow that it was six when we reached Bange, a commercial

town of 5000 people, literally in the rice swamp, mean, filthy,

damp, and decaying, and full of an overpowering stench from black,

slimy ditches. The mercury was 84 degrees, and hot rain fell fast

through the motionless air. We dismounted in a shed full of bales

of dried fish, which gave off an overpowering odour, and wet and

dirty people crowded in to stare at the foreigner till the air

seemed unbreathable.

But there were signs of progress. A three days' congress of

schoolmasters was being held; candidates for vacant situations were

being examined; there were lengthy educational discussions going

on, specially on the subject of the value of the Chinese classics

as a part of education; and every inn was crowded.

Bange was malarious: there was so much malarious fever that the

Government had sent additional medical assistance; the hills were

only a ri off, and it seemed essential to go on. But not a horse

could be got till 10 p.m.; the road was worse than the one I had

travelled; the pain became more acute, and I more exhausted, and I

was obliged to remain. Then followed a weary hour, in which the

Express Agent's five emissaries were searching for a room, and

considerably after dark I found myself in a rambling old over-

crowded yadoya, where my room was mainly built on piles above

stagnant water, and the mosquitoes were in such swarms as to make

the air dense, and after a feverish and miserable night I was glad

to get up early and depart.

Fully 2000 people had assembled. After I was mounted I was on the

point of removing my Dollond from the case, which hung on the

saddle horn, when a regular stampede occurred, old and young

running as fast as they possibly could, children being knocked down

in the haste of their elders. Ito said that they thought I was

taking out a pistol to frighten them, and I made him explain what

the object really was, for they are a gentle, harmless people, whom

one would not annoy without sincere regret. In many European

countries, and certainly in some parts of our own, a solitary lady-

traveller in a foreign dress would be exposed to rudeness, insult,

and extortion, if not to actual danger; but I have not met with a

single instance of incivility or real overcharge, and there is no

rudeness even about the crowding. The mago are anxious that I

should not get wet or be frightened, and very scrupulous in seeing

that all straps and loose things are safe at the end of the

journey, and, instead of hanging about asking for gratuities, or

stopping to drink and gossip, they quickly unload the horses, get a

paper from the Transport Agent, and go home. Only yesterday a

strap was missing, and, though it was after dark, the man went back

a ri for it, and refused to take some sen which I wished to give

him, saying he was responsible for delivering everything right at

the journey's end. They are so kind and courteous to each other,

which is very pleasing. Ito is not pleasing or polite in his

manner to me, but when he speaks to his own people he cannot free

himself from the shackles of etiquette, and bows as profoundly and

uses as many polite phrases as anybody else.

In an hour the malarious plain was crossed, and we have been among

piles of mountains ever since. The infamous road was so slippery

that my horse fell several times, and the baggage horse, with Ito

upon him, rolled head over heels, sending his miscellaneous pack in

all directions. Good roads are really the most pressing need of

Japan. It would be far better if the Government were to enrich the

country by such a remunerative outlay as making passable roads for

the transport of goods through the interior, than to impoverish it

by buying ironclads in England, and indulging in expensive western

vanities.

That so horrible a road should have so good a bridge as that by

which we crossed the broad river Agano is surprising. It consists

of twelve large scows, each one secured to a strong cable of

plaited wistari, which crosses the river at a great height, so as

to allow of the scows and the plank bridge which they carry rising

and falling with the twelve feet variation of the water.

Ito's disaster kept him back for an hour, and I sat meanwhile on a

rice sack in the hamlet of Katakado, a collection of steep-roofed

houses huddled together in a height above the Agano. It was one

mob of pack-horses, over 200 of them, biting, squealing, and

kicking. Before I could dismount, one vicious creature struck at

me violently, but only hit the great wooden stirrup. I could

hardly find any place out of the range of hoofs or teeth. My

baggage horse showed great fury after he was unloaded. He attacked

people right and left with his teeth, struck out savagely with his

fore feet, lashed out with his hind ones, and tried to pin his

master up against a wall.

Leaving this fractious scene we struck again through the mountains.

Their ranges were interminable, and every view from every fresh

ridge grander than the last, for we were now near the lofty range

of the Aidzu Mountains, and the double-peaked Bandaisan, the abrupt

precipices of Itoyasan, and the grand mass of Miyojintake in the

south-west, with their vast snow-fields and snow-filled ravines,

were all visible at once. These summits of naked rock or dazzling

snow, rising above the smothering greenery of the lower ranges into

a heaven of delicious blue, gave exactly that individuality and

emphasis which, to my thinking, Japanese scenery usually lacks.

Riding on first, I arrived alone at the little town of Nozawa, to

encounter the curiosity of a crowd; and, after a rest, we had a

very pleasant walk of three miles along the side of a ridge above a

rapid river with fine grey cliffs on its farther side, with a grand

view of the Aidzu giants, violet coloured in a golden sunset.

At dusk we came upon the picturesque village of Nojiri, on the

margin of a rice valley, but I shrank from spending Sunday in a

hole, and, having spied a solitary house on the very brow of a hill

1500 feet higher, I dragged out the information that it was a tea-

house, and came up to it. It took three-quarters of an hour to

climb the series of precipitous zigzags by which this remarkable

pass is surmounted; darkness came on, accompanied by thunder and

lightning, and just as we arrived a tremendous zigzag of blue flame

lit up the house and its interior, showing a large group sitting

round a wood fire, and then all was thick darkness again. It had a

most startling effect. This house is magnificently situated,

almost hanging over the edge of the knife-like ridge of the pass of

Kuruma, on which it is situated. It is the only yadoya I have been

at from which there has been any view. The villages are nearly

always in the valleys, and the best rooms are at the back, and have

their prospects limited by the paling of the conventional garden.

If it were not for the fleas, which are here in legions, I should

stay longer, for the view of the Aidzu snow is delicious, and, as

there are only two other houses, one can ramble without being

mobbed.

In one a child two and a half years old swallowed a fish-bone last

night, and has been suffering and crying all day, and the grief of

the mother so won Ito's sympathy that he took me to see her. She

had walked up and down with it for eighteen hours, but never

thought of looking into its throat, and was very unwilling that I

should do so. The bone was visible, and easily removed with a

crochet needle. An hour later the mother sent a tray with a

quantity of cakes and coarse confectionery upon it as a present,

with the piece of dried seaweed which always accompanies a gift.

Before night seven people with sore legs applied for "advice." The

sores were all superficial and all alike, and their owners said

that they had been produced by the incessant rubbing of the bites

of ants.

On this summer day the country looks as prosperous as it is

beautiful, and one would not think that acute poverty could exist

in the steep-roofed village of Nojiri, which nestles at the foot of

the hill; but two hempen ropes dangling from a cryptomeria just

below tell the sad tale of an elderly man who hanged himself two

days ago, because he was too poor to provide for a large family;

and the house-mistress and Ito tell me that when a man who has a

young family gets too old or feeble for work he often destroys

himself.

My hostess is a widow with a family, a good-natured, bustling

woman, with a great love of talk. All day her house is open all

round, having literally no walls. The roof and solitary upper room

are supported on posts, and my ladder almost touches the kitchen

fire. During the day-time the large matted area under the roof has

no divisions, and groups of travellers and magos lie about, for

every one who has toiled up either side of Kurumatoge takes a cup

of "tea with eating," and the house-mistress is busy the whole day.

A big well is near the fire. Of course there is no furniture; but

a shelf runs under the roof, on which there is a Buddhist god-

house, with two black idols in it, one of them being that much-

worshipped divinity, Daikoku, the god of wealth. Besides a rack

for kitchen utensils, there is only a stand on which are six large

brown dishes with food for sale--salt shell-fish, in a black

liquid, dried trout impaled on sticks, sea slugs in soy, a paste

made of pounded roots, and green cakes made of the slimy river

confervae, pressed and dried--all ill-favoured and unsavoury

viands. This afternoon a man without clothes was treading flour

paste on a mat, a traveller in a blue silk robe was lying on the

floor smoking, and five women in loose attire, with elaborate

chignons and blackened teeth, were squatting round the fire. At

the house-mistress's request I wrote a eulogistic description of

the view from her house, and read it in English, Ito translating

it, to the very great satisfaction of the assemblage. Then I was

asked to write on four fans. The woman has never heard of England.

It is not "a name to conjure with" in these wilds. Neither has she

heard of America. She knows of Russia as a great power, and, of

course, of China, but there her knowledge ends, though she has been

at Tokiyo and Kiyoto.

July 1.--I was just falling asleep last night, in spite of

mosquitoes and fleas, when I was roused by much talking and loud

outcries of poultry; and Ito, carrying a screaming, refractory hen,

and a man and woman whom he had with difficulty bribed to part with

it, appeared by my bed. I feebly said I would have it boiled for

breakfast, but when Ito called me this morning he told me with a

most rueful face that just as he was going to kill it it had

escaped to the woods! In order to understand my feelings you must

have experienced what it is not to have tasted fish, flesh, or

fowl, for ten days! The alternative was eggs and some of the paste

which the man was treading yesterday on the mat cut into strips and

boiled! It was coarse flour and buckwheat, so, you see, I have

learned not to be particular!

I. L. B.

LETTER XIV

An Infamous Road--Monotonous Greenery--Abysmal Dirt--Low Lives--The

Tsugawa Yadoya--Politeness--A Shipping Port--A Barbarian Devil.

TSUGAWA, July 2.

Yesterday's journey was one of the most severe I have yet had, for

in ten hours of hard travelling I only accomplished fifteen miles.

The road from Kurumatoge westwards is so infamous that the stages

are sometimes little more than a mile. Yet it is by it, so far at

least as the Tsugawa river, that the produce and manufactures of

the rich plain of Aidzu, with its numerous towns, and of a very

large interior district, must find an outlet at Niigata. In

defiance of all modern ideas, it goes straight up and straight down

hill, at a gradient that I should be afraid to hazard a guess at,

and at present it is a perfect quagmire, into which great stones

have been thrown, some of which have subsided edgewise, and others

have disappeared altogether. It is the very worst road I ever rode

over, and that is saying a good deal! Kurumatoge was the last of

seventeen mountain-passes, over 2000 feet high, which I have

crossed since leaving Nikko. Between it and Tsugawa the scenery,

though on a smaller scale, is of much the same character as

hitherto--hills wooded to their tops, cleft by ravines which open

out occasionally to divulge more distant ranges, all smothered in

greenery, which, when I am ill-pleased, I am inclined to call "rank

vegetation." Oh that an abrupt scaur, or a strip of flaming

desert, or something salient and brilliant, would break in, however

discordantly, upon this monotony of green!

The villages of that district must, I think, have reached the

lowest abyss of filthiness in Hozawa and Saikaiyama. Fowls, dogs,

horses, and people herded together in sheds black with wood smoke,

and manure heaps drained into the wells. No young boy wore any

clothing. Few of the men wore anything but the maro, the women

were unclothed to their waists and such clothing as they had was

very dirty, and held together by mere force of habit. The adults

were covered with inflamed bites of insects, and the children with

skin-disease. Their houses were dirty, and, as they squatted on

their heels, or lay face downwards, they looked little better than

savages. Their appearance and the want of delicacy of their habits

are simply abominable, and in the latter respect they contrast to

great disadvantage with several savage peoples that I have been

among. If I had kept to Nikko, Hakone, Miyanoshita, and similar

places visited by foreigners with less time, I should have formed a

very different impression. Is their spiritual condition, I often

wonder, much higher than their physical one? They are courteous,

kindly, industrious, and free from gross crimes; but, from the

conversations that I have had with Japanese, and from much that I

see, I judge that their standard of foundational morality is very

low, and that life is neither truthful nor pure.

I put up here at a crowded yadoya, where they have given me two

cheerful rooms in the garden, away from the crowd. Ito's great

desire on arriving at any place is to shut me up in my room and

keep me a close prisoner till the start the next morning; but here

I emancipated myself, and enjoyed myself very much sitting in the

daidokoro. The house-master is of the samurai, or two-sworded

class, now, as such, extinct. His face is longer, his lips

thinner, and his nose straighter and more prominent than those of

the lower class, and there is a difference in his manner and

bearing. I have had a great deal of interesting conversation with

him.

In the same open space his clerk was writing at a lacquer desk of

the stereotyped form--a low bench with the ends rolled over--a

woman was tailoring, coolies were washing their feet on the itama,

and several more were squatting round the irori smoking and

drinking tea. A coolie servant washed some rice for my dinner, but

before doing so took off his clothes, and the woman who cooked it

let her kimono fall to her waist before she began to work, as is

customary among respectable women. The house-master's wife and Ito

talked about me unguardedly. I asked what they were saying. "She

says," said he, "that you are very polite--for a foreigner," he

added. I asked what she meant, and found that it was because I

took off my boots before I stepped on the matting, and bowed when

they handed me the tabako-bon.

We walked through the town to find something eatable for to-

morrow's river journey, but only succeeded in getting wafers made

of white of egg and sugar, balls made of sugar and barley flour,

and beans coated with sugar. Thatch, with its picturesqueness, has

disappeared, and the Tsugawa roofs are of strips of bark weighted

with large stones; but, as the houses turn their gable ends to the

street, and there is a promenade the whole way under the eaves, and

the street turns twice at right angles and terminates in temple

grounds on a bank above the river, it is less monotonous than most

Japanese towns. It is a place of 3000 people, and a good deal of

produce is shipped from hence to Niigata by the river. To-day it

is thronged with pack-horses. I was much mobbed, and one child

formed the solitary exception to the general rule of politeness by

calling me a name equivalent to the Chinese Fan Kwai, "foreign;"

but he was severely chidden, and a policeman has just called with

an apology. A slice of fresh salmon has been produced, and I think

I never tasted anything so delicious. I have finished the first

part of my land journey, and leave for Niigata by boat to-morrow

morning.

I. L. B.

LETTER XV

A Hurry--The Tsugawa Packet-boat--Running the Rapids--Fantastic

Scenery--The River-life--Vineyards--Drying Barley--Summer Silence--

The Outskirts of Niigata--The Church Mission House.

NIIGATA, July 4.

The boat for Niigata was to leave at eight, but at five Ito roused

me by saying they were going at once, as it was full, and we left

in haste, the house-master running to the river with one of my

large baskets on his back to "speed the parting guest." Two rivers

unite to form a stream over whose beauty I would gladly have

lingered, and the morning, singularly rich and tender in its

colouring, ripened into a glorious day of light without glare, and

heat without oppressiveness. The "packet" was a stoutly-built

boat, 45 feet long by 6 broad, propelled by one man sculling at the

stern, and another pulling a short broad-bladed oar, which worked

in a wistaria loop at the bow. It had a croquet mallet handle

about 18 inches long, to which the man gave a wriggling turn at

each stroke. Both rower and sculler stood the whole time, clad in

umbrella hats. The fore part and centre carried bags of rice and

crates of pottery, and the hinder part had a thatched roof which,

when we started, sheltered twenty-five Japanese, but we dropped

them at hamlets on the river, and reached Niigata with only three.

I had my chair on the top of the cargo, and found the voyage a

delightful change from the fatiguing crawl through quagmires at the

rate of from 15 to 18 miles a day. This trip is called "running

the rapids of the Tsugawa," because for about twelve miles the

river, hemmed in by lofty cliffs, studded with visible and sunken

rocks, making several abrupt turns and shallowing in many places,

hurries a boat swiftly downwards; and it is said that it requires

long practice, skill, and coolness on the part of the boatmen to

prevent grave and frequent accidents. But if they are rapids, they

are on a small scale, and look anything but formidable. With the

river at its present height the boats run down forty-five miles in

eight hours, charging only 30 sen, or 1s. 3d., but it takes from

five to seven days to get up, and much hard work in poling and

towing.

The boat had a thoroughly "native" look, with its bronzed crew,

thatched roof, and the umbrella hats of all its passengers hanging

on the mast. I enjoyed every hour of the day. It was luxury to

drop quietly down the stream, the air was delicious, and, having

heard nothing of it, the beauty of the Tsugawa came upon me as a

pleasant surprise, besides that every mile brought me nearer the

hoped-for home letters. Almost as soon as we left Tsugawa the

downward passage was apparently barred by fantastic mountains,

which just opened their rocky gates wide enough to let us through,

and then closed again. Pinnacles and needles of bare, flushed rock

rose out of luxuriant vegetation--Quiraing without its bareness,

the Rhine without its ruins, and more beautiful than both. There

were mountains connected by ridges no broader than a horse's back,

others with great gray buttresses, deep chasms cleft by streams,

temples with pagoda roofs on heights, sunny villages with deep-

thatched roofs hidden away among blossoming trees, and through

rifts in the nearer ranges glimpses of snowy mountains.

After a rapid run of twelve miles through this enchanting scenery,

the remaining course of the Tsugawa is that of a broad, full stream

winding marvellously through a wooded and tolerably level country,

partially surrounded by snowy mountains. The river life was very

pretty. Canoes abounded, some loaded with vegetables, some with

wheat, others with boys and girls returning from school. Sampans

with their white puckered sails in flotillas of a dozen at a time

crawled up the deep water, or were towed through the shallows by

crews frolicking and shouting. Then the scene changed to a broad

and deep river, with a peculiar alluvial smell from the quantity of

vegetable matter held in suspension, flowing calmly between densely

wooded, bamboo-fringed banks, just high enough to conceal the

surrounding country. No houses, or nearly none, are to be seen,

but signs of a continuity of population abound. Every hundred

yards almost there is a narrow path to the river through the

jungle, with a canoe moored at its foot. Erections like gallows,

with a swinging bamboo, with a bucket at one end and a stone at the

other, occurring continually, show the vicinity of households

dependent upon the river for their water supply. Wherever the

banks admitted of it, horses were being washed by having water

poured over their backs with a dipper, naked children were rolling

in the mud, and cackling of poultry, human voices, and sounds of

industry, were ever floating towards us from the dense greenery of

the shores, making one feel without seeing that the margin was very

populous. Except the boatmen and myself, no one was awake during

the hot, silent afternoon--it was dreamy and delicious.

Occasionally, as we floated down, vineyards were visible with the

vines trained on horizontal trellises, or bamboo rails, often forty

feet long, nailed horizontally on cryptomeria to a height of twenty

feet, on which small sheaves of barley were placed astride to dry

till the frame was full

More forest, more dreams, then the forest and the abundant

vegetation altogether disappeared, the river opened out among low

lands and banks of shingle and sand, and by three we were on the

outskirts of Niigata, whose low houses,--with rows of stones upon

their roofs, spread over a stretch of sand, beyond which is a sandy

roll with some clumps of firs. Tea-houses with many balconies

studded the river-side, and pleasure-parties were enjoying

themselves with geishas and sake, but, on the whole, the water-side

streets are shabby and tumble down, and the landward side of the

great city of western Japan is certainly disappointing; and it was

difficult to believe it a Treaty Port, for the sea was not in

sight, and there were no consular flags flying. We poled along one

of the numerous canals, which are the carriage-ways for produce and

goods, among hundreds of loaded boats, landed in the heart of the

city, and, as the result of repeated inquiries, eventually reached

the Church Mission House, an unshaded wooden building without

verandahs, close to the Government Buildings, where I was most

kindly welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Fyson.

The house is plain, simple, and inconveniently small; but doors and

walls are great luxuries, and you cannot imagine how pleasing the

ways of a refined European household are after the eternal

babblement and indecorum of the Japanese.

ITINERARY OF ROUTE FROM NIKKO TO NIIGATA

(Kinugawa Route.)

From Tokiyo to

No. of houses. Ri. Cho

Nikko 36

Kohiaku 6 2 18

Kisagoi 19 1 18

Fujihara 46 2 19

Takahara 15 2 10

Ikari 25 2

Nakamiyo 10 1 24

Yokokawa 2O 2 21

Itosawa 38 2 34

Kayashima 57 1 4

Tajima 25O 1 21

Toyonari 120 2 12

Atomi 34 1

Ouchi 27 2 12

Ichikawa 7 2 22

Takata 42O 2 11

Bange 910 3 4

Katakado 50 1 20

Nosawa 306 3 24

Nojiri 110 1 27

Kurumatoge 3 9

Hozawa 20 1 14

Torige 21 1

Sakaiyama 28 24

Tsugawa 615 2 18

Niigata 50,000 souls 18

Ri. 101 6

About 247 miles.

LETTER XVI

Abominable Weather--Insect Pests--Absence of Foreign Trade--A

Refractory River--Progress--The Japanese City--Water Highways--

Niigata Gardens--Ruth Fyson--The Winter Climate--A Population in

Wadding.

NIIGATA, July 9.

I have spent over a week in Niigata, and leave it regretfully to-

morrow, rather for the sake of the friends I have made than for its

own interests. I never experienced a week of more abominable

weather. The sun has been seen just once, the mountains, which are

thirty miles off, not at all. The clouds are a brownish grey, the

air moist and motionless, and the mercury has varied from 82

degrees in the day to 80 degrees at night. The household is

afflicted with lassitude and loss of appetite. Evening does not

bring coolness, but myriads of flying, creeping, jumping, running

creatures, all with power to hurt, which replace the day

mosquitoes, villains with spotted legs, which bite and poison one

without the warning hum. The night mosquitoes are legion. There

are no walks except in the streets and the public gardens, for

Niigata is built on a sand spit, hot and bare. Neither can you get

a view of it without climbing to the top of a wooden look-out.

Niigata is a Treaty Port without foreign trade, and almost without

foreign residents. Not a foreign ship visited the port either last

year or this. There are only two foreign firms, and these are

German, and only eighteen foreigners, of which number, except the

missionaries, nearly all are in Government employment. Its river,

the Shinano, is the largest in Japan, and it and its affluents

bring down a prodigious volume of water. But Japanese rivers are

much choked with sand and shingle washed down from the mountains.

In all that I have seen, except those which are physically limited

by walls of hard rock, a river-bed is a waste of sand, boulders,

and shingle, through the middle of which, among sand-banks and

shallows, the river proper takes its devious course. In the

freshets, which occur to a greater or less extent every year,

enormous volumes of water pour over these wastes, carrying sand and

detritus down to the mouths, which are all obstructed by bars. Of

these rivers the Shinano, being the biggest, is the most

refractory, and has piled up a bar at its entrance through which

there is only a passage seven feet deep, which is perpetually

shallowing. The minds of engineers are much exercised upon the

Shinano, and the Government is most anxious to deepen the channel

and give Western Japan what it has not--a harbour; but the expense

of the necessary operation is enormous, and in the meantime a

limited ocean traffic is carried on by junks and by a few small

Japanese steamers which call outside. {13} There is a British

Vice-Consulate, but, except as a step, few would accept such a

dreary post or outpost.

But Niigata is a handsome, prosperous city of 50,000 inhabitants,

the capital of the wealthy province of Echigo, with a population of

one and a half millions, and is the seat of the Kenrei, or

provincial governor, of the chief law courts, of fine schools, a

hospital, and barracks. It is curious to find in such an excluded

town a school deserving the designation of a college, as it

includes intermediate, primary, and normal schools, an English

school with 150 pupils, organised by English and American teachers,

an engineering school, a geological museum, splendidly equipped

laboratories, and the newest and most approved scientific and

educational apparatus. The Government Buildings, which are grouped

near Mr. Fyson's, are of painted white wood, and are imposing from

their size and their innumerable glass windows. There is a large

hospital {14} arranged by a European doctor, with a medical school

attached, and it, the Kencho, the Saibancho, or Court House, the

schools, the barracks, and a large bank, which is rivalling them

all, have a go-ahead, Europeanised look, bold, staring, and

tasteless. There are large public gardens, very well laid out, and

with finely gravelled walks. There are 300 street lamps, which

burn the mineral oil of the district.

Yet, because the riotous Shinano persistently bars it out from the

sea, its natural highway, the capital of one of the richest

provinces of Japan is "left out in the cold," and the province

itself, which yields not only rice, silk, tea, hemp, ninjin, and

indigo, in large quantities, but gold, copper, coal, and petroleum,

has to send most of its produce to Yedo across ranges of mountains,

on the backs of pack-horses, by roads scarcely less infamous than

the one by which I came.

The Niigata of the Government, with its signs of progress in a

western direction, is quite unattractive-looking as compared with

the genuine Japanese Niigata, which is the neatest, cleanest, and

most comfortable-looking town I have yet seen, and altogether free

from the jostlement of a foreign settlement. It is renowned for

the beautiful tea-houses, which attract visitors from distant

places, and for the excellence of the theatres, and is the centre

of the recreation and pleasure of a large district. It is so

beautifully clean that, as at Nikko, I should feel reluctant to

walk upon its well-swept streets in muddy boots. It would afford a

good lesson to the Edinburgh authorities, for every vagrant bit of

straw, stick, or paper, is at once pounced upon and removed, and no

rubbish may stand for an instant in its streets except in a covered

box or bucket. It is correctly laid out in square divisions,

formed by five streets over a mile long, crossed by very numerous

short ones, and is intersected by canals, which are its real

roadways. I have not seen a pack-horse in the streets; everything

comes in by boat, and there are few houses in the city which cannot

have their goods delivered by canal very near to their doors.

These water-ways are busy all day, but in the early morning, when

the boats come in loaded with the vegetables, without which the

people could not exist for a day, the bustle is indescribable. The

cucumber boats just now are the great sight. The canals are

usually in the middle of the streets, and have fairly broad

roadways on both sides. They are much below the street level, and

their nearly perpendicular banks are neatly faced with wood, broken

at intervals by flights of stairs. They are bordered by trees,

among which are many weeping willows; and, as the river water runs

through them, keeping them quite sweet, and they are crossed at

short intervals by light bridges, they form a very attractive

feature of Niigata.

The houses have very steep roofs of shingle, weighted with stones,

and, as they are of very irregular heights, and all turn the steep

gables of the upper stories streetwards, the town has a

picturesqueness very unusual in Japan. The deep verandahs are

connected all along the streets, so as to form a sheltered

promenade when the snow lies deep in winter. With its canals with

their avenues of trees, its fine public gardens, and clean,

picturesque streets, it is a really attractive town; but its

improvements are recent, and were only lately completed by Mr.

Masakata Kusumoto, now Governor of Tokiyo. There is no appearance

of poverty in any part of the town, but if there be wealth, it is

carefully concealed. One marked feature of the city is the number

of streets of dwelling-houses with projecting windows of wooden

slats, through which the people can see without being seen, though

at night, when the andons are lit, we saw, as we walked from Dr.

Palm's, that in most cases families were sitting round the hibachi

in a deshabille of the scantiest kind.

The fronts are very narrow, and the houses extend backwards to an

amazing length, with gardens in which flowers, shrubs, and

mosquitoes are grown, and bridges are several times repeated, so as

to give the effect of fairyland as you look through from the

street. The principal apartments in all Japanese houses are at the

back, looking out on these miniature landscapes, for a landscape is

skilfully dwarfed into a space often not more than 30 feet square.

A lake, a rock-work, a bridge, a stone lantern, and a deformed

pine, are indispensable; but whenever circumstances and means admit

of it, quaintnesses of all kinds are introduced. Small pavilions,

retreats for tea-making, reading, sleeping in quiet and coolness,

fishing under cover, and drinking sake; bronze pagodas, cascades

falling from the mouths of bronze dragons; rock caves, with gold

and silver fish darting in and out; lakes with rocky islands,

streams crossed by green bridges, just high enough to allow a rat

or frog to pass under; lawns, and slabs of stone for crossing them

in wet weather, grottoes, hills, valleys, groves of miniature

palms, cycas, and bamboo; and dwarfed trees of many kinds, of

purplish and dull green hues, are cut into startling likenesses of

beasts and creeping things, or stretch distorted arms over tiny

lakes.

I have walked about a great deal in Niigata, and when with Mrs.

Fyson, who is the only European lady here at present, and her

little Ruth, a pretty Saxon child of three years old, we have been

followed by an immense crowd, as the sight of this fair creature,

with golden curls falling over her shoulders, is most fascinating.

Both men and women have gentle, winning ways with infants, and

Ruth, instead of being afraid of the crowds, smiles upon them, bows

in Japanese fashion, speaks to them in Japanese, and seems a little

disposed to leave her own people altogether. It is most difficult

to make her keep with us, and two or three times, on missing her

and looking back, we have seen her seated, native fashion, in a

ring in a crowd of several hundred people, receiving a homage and

admiration from which she was most unwillingly torn. The Japanese

have a perfect passion for children, but it is not good for

European children to be much with them, as they corrupt their

morals, and teach them to tell lies.

The climate of Niigata and of most of this great province contrasts

unpleasantly with the region on the other side of the mountains,

warmed by the gulf-stream of the North Pacific, in which the autumn

and winter, with their still atmosphere, bracing temperature, and

blue and sunny skies, are the most delightful seasons of the year.

Thirty-two days of snow-fall occur on an average. The canals and

rivers freeze, and even the rapid Shinano sometimes bears a horse.

In January and February the snow lies three or four feet deep, a

veil of clouds obscures the sky, people inhabit their upper rooms

to get any daylight, pack-horse traffic is suspended, pedestrians

go about with difficulty in rough snow-shoes, and for nearly six

months the coast is unsuitable for navigation, owing to the

prevalence of strong, cold, north-west winds. In this city people

in wadded clothes, with only their eyes exposed, creep about under

the verandahs. The population huddles round hibachis and shivers,

for the mercury, which rises to 92 degrees in summer, falls to 15

degrees in winter. And all this is in latitude 37 degrees 55'--

three degrees south of Naples! I. L. B.

LETTER XVII

The Canal-side at Niigata--Awful Loneliness--Courtesy--Dr. Palm's

Tandem--A Noisy Matsuri--A Jolting Journey--The Mountain Villages--

Winter Dismalness--An Out-of-the-world Hamlet--Crowded Dwellings--

Riding a Cow--"Drunk and Disorderly"--An Enforced Rest--Local

Discouragements--Heavy Loads--Absence of Beggary--Slow Travelling.

ICHINONO, July 12.

Two foreign ladies, two fair-haired foreign infants, a long-haired

foreign dog, and a foreign gentleman, who, without these

accompaniments, might have escaped notice, attracted a large but

kindly crowd to the canal side when I left Niigata. The natives

bore away the children on their shoulders, the Fysons walked to the

extremity of the canal to bid me good-bye, the sampan shot out upon

the broad, swirling flood of the Shinano, and an awful sense of

loneliness fell upon me. We crossed the Shinano, poled up the

narrow, embanked Shinkawa, had a desperate struggle with the

flooded Aganokawa, were much impeded by strings of nauseous manure-

boats on the narrow, discoloured Kajikawa, wondered at the

interminable melon and cucumber fields, and at the odd river life,

and, after hard poling for six hours, reached Kisaki, having

accomplished exactly ten miles. Then three kurumas with trotting

runners took us twenty miles at the low rate of 4.5 sen per ri. In

one place a board closed the road, but, on representing to the

chief man of the village that the traveller was a foreigner, he

courteously allowed me to pass, the Express Agent having

accompanied me thus far to see that I "got through all right." The

road was tolerably populous throughout the day's journey, and the

farming villages which extended much of the way--Tsuiji,

Kasayanage, Mono, and Mari--were neat, and many of the farms had

bamboo fences to screen them from the road. It was, on the whole,

a pleasant country, and the people, though little clothed, did not

look either poor or very dirty. The soil was very light and sandy.

There were, in fact, "pine barrens," sandy ridges with nothing on

them but spindly Scotch firs and fir scrub; but the sandy levels

between them, being heavily manured and cultivated like gardens,

bore splendid crops of cucumbers trained like peas, melons,

vegetable marrow, Arum esculentum, sweet potatoes, maize, tea,

tiger-lilies, beans, and onions; and extensive orchards with apples

and pears trained laterally on trellis-work eight feet high, were a

novelty in the landscape.

Though we were all day drawing nearer to mountains wooded to their

summits on the east, the amount of vegetation was not burdensome,

the rice swamps were few, and the air felt drier and less relaxing.

As my runners were trotting merrily over one of the pine barrens, I

met Dr. Palm returning from one of his medico-religious

expeditions, with a tandem of two naked coolies, who were going

over the ground at a great pace, and I wished that some of the most

staid directors of the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society could

have the shock of seeing him! I shall not see a European again for

some weeks. From Tsuiji, a very neat village, where we changed

kurumas, we were jolted along over a shingly road to Nakajo, a

considerable town just within treaty limits. The Japanese doctors

there, as in some other places, are Dr. Palm's cordial helpers, and

five or six of them, whom he regards as possessing the rare virtues

of candour, earnestness, and single-mindedness, and who have

studied English medical works, have clubbed together to establish a

dispensary, and, under Dr. Palm's instructions, are even carrying

out the antiseptic treatment successfully, after some ludicrous

failures!

We dashed through Nakajo as kuruma-runners always dash through

towns and villages, got out of it in a drizzle upon an avenue of

firs, three or four deep, which extends from Nakajo to Kurokawa,

and for some miles beyond were jolted over a damp valley on which

tea and rice alternated, crossed two branches of the shingly

Kurokawa on precarious bridges, rattled into the town of Kurokawa,

much decorated with flags and lanterns, where the people were all

congregated at a shrine where there was much drumming, and a few

girls, much painted and bedizened, were dancing or posturing on a

raised and covered platform, in honour of the god of the place,

whose matsuri or festival it was; and out again, to be mercilessly

jolted under the firs in the twilight to a solitary house where the

owner made some difficulty about receiving us, as his licence did

not begin till the next day, but eventually succumbed, and gave me

his one upstairs room, exactly five feet high, which hardly allowed

of my standing upright with my hat on. He then rendered it

suffocating by closing the amado, for the reason often given, that

if he left them open and the house was robbed, the police would not

only blame him severely, but would not take any trouble to recover

his property. He had no rice, so I indulged in a feast of

delicious cucumbers. I never saw so many eaten as in that

district. Children gnaw them all day long, and even babies on

their mothers' backs suck them with avidity. Just now they are

sold for a sen a dozen.

It is a mistake to arrive at a yadoya after dark. Even if the best

rooms are not full it takes fully an hour to get my food and the

room ready, and meanwhile I cannot employ my time usefully because

of the mosquitoes. There was heavy rain all night, accompanied by

the first wind that I have heard since landing; and the fitful

creaking of the pines and the drumming from the shrine made me glad

to get up at sunrise, or rather at daylight, for there has not been

a sunrise since I came, or a sunset either. That day we travelled

by Sekki to Kawaguchi in kurumas, i.e. we were sometimes bumped

over stones, sometimes deposited on the edge of a quagmire, and

asked to get out; and sometimes compelled to walk for two or three

miles at a time along the infamous bridle-track above the river

Arai, up which two men could hardly push and haul an empty vehicle;

and, as they often had to lift them bodily and carry them for some

distance, I was really glad when we reached the village of

Kawaguchi to find that they could go no farther, though, as we

could only get one horse, I had to walk the last stage in a torrent

of rain, poorly protected by my paper waterproof cloak.

We are now in the midst of the great central chain of the Japanese

mountains, which extends almost without a break for 900 miles, and

is from 40 to 100 miles in width, broken up into interminable

ranges traversable only by steep passes from 1000 to 5000 feet in

height, with innumerable rivers, ravines, and valleys, the heights

and ravines heavily timbered, the rivers impetuous and liable to

freshets, and the valleys invariably terraced for rice. It is in

the valleys that the villages are found, and regions more isolated

I have never seen, shut out by bad roads from the rest of Japan.

The houses are very poor, the summer costume of the men consists of

the maro only, and that of the women of trousers with an open

shirt, and when we reached Kurosawa last night it had dwindled to

trousers only. There is little traffic, and very few horses are

kept, one, two, or three constituting the live stock of a large

village. The shops, such as they are, contain the barest

necessaries of life. Millet and buckwheat rather than rice, with

the universal daikon, are the staples of diet The climate is wet in

summer and bitterly cold in winter. Even now it is comfortless

enough for the people to come in wet, just to warm the tips of

their fingers at the irori, stifled the while with the stinging

smoke, while the damp wind flaps the torn paper of the windows

about, and damp draughts sweep the ashes over the tatami until the

house is hermetically sealed at night. These people never know

anything of what we regard as comfort, and in the long winter, when

the wretched bridle-tracks are blocked by snow and the freezing

wind blows strong, and the families huddle round the smoky fire by

the doleful glimmer of the andon, without work, books, or play, to

shiver through the long evenings in chilly dreariness, and herd

together for warmth at night like animals, their condition must be

as miserable as anything short of grinding poverty can make it.

I saw things at their worst that night as I tramped into the hamlet

of Numa, down whose sloping street a swollen stream was running,

which the people were banking out of their houses. I was wet and

tired, and the woman at the one wretched yadoya met me, saying,

"I'm sorry it's very dirty and quite unfit for so honourable a

guest;" and she was right, for the one room was up a ladder, the

windows were in tatters, there was no charcoal for a hibachi, no

eggs, and the rice was so dirty and so full of a small black seed

as to be unfit to eat. Worse than all, there was no Transport

Office, the hamlet did not possess a horse, and it was only by

sending to a farmer five miles off, and by much bargaining, that I

got on the next morning. In estimating the number of people in a

given number of houses in Japan, it is usual to multiply the houses

by five, but I had the curiosity to walk through Numa and get Ito

to translate the tallies which hang outside all Japanese houses

with the names, number, and sexes of their inmates, and in twenty-

four houses there were 307 people! In some there were four

families--the grand-parents, the parents, the eldest son with his

wife and family, and a daughter or two with their husbands and

children. The eldest son, who inherits the house and land, almost

invariably brings his wife to his father's house, where she often

becomes little better than a slave to her mother-in-law. By rigid

custom she literally forsakes her own kindred, and her "filial

duty" is transferred to her husband's mother, who often takes a

dislike to her, and instigates her son to divorce her if she has no

children. My hostess had induced her son to divorce his wife, and

she could give no better reason for it than that she was lazy.

The Numa people, she said, had never seen a foreigner, so, though

the rain still fell heavily, they were astir in the early morning.

They wanted to hear me speak, so I gave my orders to Ito in public.

Yesterday was a most toilsome day, mainly spent in stumbling up and

sliding down the great passes of Futai, Takanasu, and Yenoiki, all

among forest-covered mountains, deeply cleft by forest-choked

ravines, with now and then one of the snowy peaks of Aidzu breaking

the monotony of the ocean of green. The horses' shoes were tied

and untied every few minutes, and we made just a mile an hour! At

last we were deposited in a most unpromising place in the hamlet of

Tamagawa, and were told that a rice merchant, after waiting for

three days, had got every horse in the country. At the end of two

hours' chaffering one baggage coolie was produced, some of the

things were put on the rice horses, and a steed with a pack-saddle

was produced for me in the shape of a plump and pretty little cow,

which carried me safely over the magnificent pass of Ori and down

to the town of Okimi, among rice-fields, where, in a drowning rain,

I was glad to get shelter with a number of coolies by a wood-fire

till another pack-cow was produced, and we walked on through the

rice-fields and up into the hills again to Kurosawa, where I had

intended to remain; but there was no inn, and the farm-house where

they take in travellers, besides being on the edge of a malarious

pond, and being dark and full of stinging smoke, was so awfully

dirty and full of living creatures, that, exhausted as I was, I was

obliged to go on. But it was growing dark, there was no Transport

Office, and for the first time the people were very slightly

extortionate, and drove Ito nearly to his wits' end. The peasants

do not like to be out after dark, for they are afraid of ghosts and

all sorts of devilments, and it was difficult to induce them to

start so late in the evening.

There was not a house clean enough to rest in, so I sat on a stone

and thought about the people for over an hour. Children with

scald-head, scabies, and sore eyes swarmed. Every woman carried a

baby on her back, and every child who could stagger under one

carried one too. Not one woman wore anything but cotton trousers.

One woman reeled about "drunk and disorderly." Ito sat on a stone

hiding his face in his hands, and when I asked him if he were ill,

he replied in a most lamentable voice, "I don't know what I am to

do, I'm so ashamed for you to see such things!" The boy is only

eighteen, and I pitied him. I asked him if women were often drunk,

and he said they were in Yokohama, but they usually kept in their

houses. He says that when their husbands give them money to pay

bills at the end of a month, they often spend it in sake, and that

they sometimes get sake in shops and have it put down as rice or

tea. "The old, old story!" I looked at the dirt and barbarism,

and asked if this were the Japan of which I had read. Yet a woman

in this unseemly costume firmly refused to take the 2 or 3 sen

which it is usual to leave at a place where you rest, because she

said that I had had water and not tea, and after I had forced it on

her, she returned it to Ito, and this redeeming incident sent me

away much comforted.

From Numa the distance here is only 1.5 ri, but it is over the

steep pass of Honoki, which is ascended and descended by hundreds

of rude stone steps, not pleasant in the dark. On this pass I saw

birches for the first time; at its foot we entered Yamagata ken by

a good bridge, and shortly reached this village, in which an

unpromising-looking farm-house is the only accommodation; but

though all the rooms but two are taken up with silk-worms, those

two are very good and look upon a miniature lake and rockery. The

one objection to my room is that to get either in or out of it I

must pass through the other, which is occupied by five tobacco

merchants who are waiting for transport, and who while away the

time by strumming on that instrument of dismay, the samisen. No

horses or cows can be got for me, so I am spending the day quietly

here, rather glad to rest, for I am much exhausted. When I am

suffering much from my spine Ito always gets into a fright and

thinks I am going to die, as he tells me when I am better, but

shows his anxiety by a short, surly manner, which is most

disagreeable. He thinks we shall never get through the interior!

Mr. Brunton's excellent map fails in this region, so it is only by

fixing on the well-known city of Yamagata and devising routes to it

that we get on. Half the evening is spent in consulting Japanese

maps, if we can get them, and in questioning the house-master and

Transport Agent, and any chance travellers; but the people know

nothing beyond the distance of a few ri, and the agents seldom tell

one anything beyond the next stage. When I inquire about the

"unbeaten tracks" that I wish to take, the answers are, "It's an

awful road through mountains," or "There are many bad rivers to

cross," or "There are none but farmers' houses to stop at." No

encouragement is ever given, but we get on, and shall get on, I

doubt not, though the hardships are not what I would desire in my

present state of health.

Very few horses are kept here. Cows and coolies carry much of the

merchandise, and women as well as men carry heavy loads. A baggage

coolie carries about 50 lbs., but here merchants carrying their own

goods from Yamagata actually carry from 90 to 140 lbs., and even

more. It is sickening to meet these poor fellows struggling over

the mountain-passes in evident distress. Last night five of them

were resting on the summit ridge of a pass gasping violently.

Their eyes were starting out; all their muscles, rendered painfully

visible by their leanness, were quivering; rills of blood from the

bite of insects, which they cannot drive away, were literally

running all over their naked bodies, washed away here and there by

copious perspiration. Truly "in the sweat of their brows" they

were eating bread and earning an honest living for their families!

Suffering and hard-worked as they were, they were quite

independent. I have not seen a beggar or beggary in this strange

country. The women were carrying 70 lbs. These burden-bearers

have their backs covered by a thick pad of plaited straw. On this

rests a ladder, curved up at the lower end like the runners of a

sleigh. On this the load is carefully packed till it extends from

below the man's waist to a considerable height above his head. It

is covered with waterproof paper, securely roped, and thatched with

straw, and is supported by a broad padded band just below the

collar bones. Of course, as the man walks nearly bent double, and

the position is a very painful one, he requires to stop and

straighten himself frequently, and unless he meets with a bank of

convenient height, he rests the bottom of his burden on a short,

stout pole with an L-shaped top, carried for this purpose. The

carrying of enormous loads is quite a feature of this region, and

so, I am sorry to say, are red stinging ants and the small gadflies

which molest the coolies.

Yesterday's journey was 18 miles in twelve hours! Ichinono is a

nice, industrious hamlet, given up, like all others, to rearing

silk-worms, and the pure white and sulphur yellow cocoons are

drying on mats in the sun everywhere.

I. L. B.

LETTER XVIII

Comely Kine--Japanese Criticism on a Foreign Usage--A Pleasant

Halt--Renewed Courtesies--The Plain of Yonezawa--A Curious Mistake-

-The Mother's Memorial--Arrival at Komatsu--Stately Accommodation--

A Vicious Horse--An Asiatic Arcadia--A Fashionable Watering-place--

A Belle--"Godowns."

KAMINOYAMA.

A severe day of mountain travelling brought us into another region.

We left Ichinono early on a fine morning, with three pack-cows, one

of which I rode [and their calves], very comely kine, with small

noses, short horns, straight spines, and deep bodies. I thought

that I might get some fresh milk, but the idea of anything but a

calf milking a cow was so new to the people that there was a

universal laugh, and Ito told me that they thought it "most

disgusting," and that the Japanese think it "most disgusting" in

foreigners to put anything "with such a strong smell and taste"

into their tea! All the cows had cotton cloths, printed with blue

dragons, suspended under their bodies to keep them from mud and

insects, and they wear straw shoes and cords through the cartilages

of their noses. The day being fine, a great deal of rice and sake

was on the move, and we met hundreds of pack-cows, all of the same

comely breed, in strings of four.

We crossed the Sakuratoge, from which the view is beautiful, got

horses at the mountain village of Shirakasawa, crossed more passes,

and in the afternoon reached the village of Tenoko. There, as

usual, I sat under the verandah of the Transport Office, and waited

for the one horse which was available. It was a large shop, but

contained not a single article of European make. In the one room a

group of women and children sat round the fire, and the agent sat

as usual with a number of ledgers at a table a foot high, on which

his grandchild was lying on a cushion. Here Ito dined on seven

dishes of horrors, and they brought me sake, tea, rice, and black

beans. The last are very good. We had some talk about the

country, and the man asked me to write his name in English

characters, and to write my own in a book. Meanwhile a crowd

assembled, and the front row sat on the ground that the others

might see over their heads. They were dirty and pressed very

close, and when the women of the house saw that I felt the heat

they gracefully produced fans and fanned me for a whole hour. On

asking the charge they refused to make any, and would not receive

anything. They had not seen a foreigner before, they said, they

would despise themselves for taking anything, they had my

"honourable name" in their book. Not only that, but they put up a

parcel of sweetmeats, and the man wrote his name on a fan and

insisted on my accepting it. I was grieved to have nothing to give

them but some English pins, but they had never seen such before,

and soon circulated them among the crowd. I told them truly that I

should remember them as long as I remember Japan, and went on, much

touched by their kindness.

The lofty pass of Utsu, which is ascended and descended by a number

of stone slabs, is the last of the passes of these choked-up

ranges. From its summit in the welcome sunlight I joyfully looked

down upon the noble plain of Yonezawa, about 30 miles long and from

10 to 18 broad, one of the gardens of Japan, wooded and watered,

covered with prosperous towns and villages, surrounded by

magnificent mountains not altogether timbered, and bounded at its

southern extremity by ranges white with snow even in the middle of

July.

In the long street of the farming village of Matsuhara a man amazed

me by running in front of me and speaking to me, and on Ito coming

up, he assailed him vociferously, and it turned out that he took me

for an Aino, one of the subjugated aborigines of Yezo. I have

before now been taken for a Chinese!

Throughout the province of Echigo I have occasionally seen a piece

of cotton cloth suspended by its four corners from four bamboo

poles just above a quiet stream. Behind it there is usually a long

narrow tablet, notched at the top, similar to those seen in

cemeteries, with characters upon it. Sometimes bouquets of flowers

are placed in the hollow top of each bamboo, and usually there are

characters on the cloth itself. Within it always lies a wooden

dipper. In coming down from Tenoko I passed one of these close to

the road, and a Buddhist priest was at the time pouring a dipper

full of water into it, which strained slowly through. As he was

going our way we joined him, and he explained its meaning.

According to him the tablet bears on it the kaimiyo, or posthumous

name of a woman. The flowers have the same significance as those

which loving hands place on the graves of kindred. If there are

characters on the cloth, they represent the well-known invocation

of the Nichiren sect, Namu mio ho ren ge kio. The pouring of the

water into the cloth, often accompanied by telling the beads on a

rosary, is a prayer. The whole is called "The Flowing Invocation."

I have seldom seen anything more plaintively affecting, for it

denotes that a mother in the first joy of maternity has passed away

to suffer (according to popular belief) in the Lake of Blood, one

of the Buddhist hells, for a sin committed in a former state of

being, and it appeals to every passer-by to shorten the penalties

of a woman in anguish, for in that lake she must remain until the

cloth is so utterly worn out that the water falls through it at

once.

Where the mountains come down upon the plain of Yonezawa there are

several raised banks, and you can take one step from the hillside

to a dead level. The soil is dry and gravelly at the junction,

ridges of pines appeared, and the look of the houses suggested

increased cleanliness and comfort. A walk of six miles took us

from Tenoko to Komatsu, a beautifully situated town of 3000 people,

with a large trade in cotton goods, silk, and sake.

As I entered Komatsu the first man whom I met turned back hastily,

called into the first house the words which mean "Quick, here's a

foreigner;" the three carpenters who were at work there flung down

their tools and, without waiting to put on their kimonos, sped down

the street calling out the news, so that by the time I reached the

yadoya a large crowd was pressing upon me. The front was mean and

unpromising-looking, but, on reaching the back by a stone bridge

over a stream which ran through the house, I found a room 40 feet

long by 15 high, entirely open along one side to a garden with a

large fish-pond with goldfish, a pagoda, dwarf trees, and all the

usual miniature adornments. Fusuma of wrinkled blue paper splashed

with gold turned this "gallery" into two rooms; but there was no

privacy, for the crowds climbed upon the roofs at the back, and sat

there patiently until night.

These were daimiyo's rooms. The posts and ceilings were ebony and

gold, the mats very fine, the polished alcoves decorated with

inlaid writing-tables and sword-racks; spears nine feet long, with

handles of lacquer inlaid with Venus' ear, hung in the verandah,

the washing bowl was fine inlaid black lacquer, and the rice-bowls

and their covers were gold lacquer.

In this, as in many other yadoyas, there were kakemonos with large

Chinese characters representing the names of the Prime Minister,

Provincial Governor, or distinguished General, who had honoured it

by halting there, and lines of poetry were hung up, as is usual, in

the same fashion. I have several times been asked to write

something to be thus displayed. I spent Sunday at Komatsu, but not

restfully, owing to the nocturnal croaking of the frogs in the

pond. In it, as in most towns, there were shops which sell nothing

but white, frothy-looking cakes, which are used for the goldfish

which are so much prized, and three times daily the women and

children of the household came into the garden to feed them.

When I left Komatsu there were fully sixty people inside the house

and 1500 outside--walls, verandahs, and even roofs being packed.

From Nikko to Komatsu mares had been exclusively used, but there I

encountered for the first time the terrible Japanese pack-horse.

Two horridly fierce-looking creatures were at the door, with their

heads tied down till their necks were completely arched. When I

mounted the crowd followed, gathering as it went, frightening the

horse with the clatter of clogs and the sound of a multitude, till

he broke his head-rope, and, the frightened mago letting him go, he

proceeded down the street mainly on his hind feet, squealing, and

striking savagely with his fore feet, the crowd scattering to the

right and left, till, as it surged past the police station, four

policemen came out and arrested it; only to gather again, however,

for there was a longer street, down which my horse proceeded in the

same fashion, and, looking round, I saw Ito's horse on his hind

legs and Ito on the ground. My beast jumped over all ditches,

attacked all foot-passengers with his teeth, and behaved so like a

wild animal that not all my previous acquaintance with the

idiosyncrasies of horses enabled me to cope with him. On reaching

Akayu we found a horse fair, and, as all the horses had their heads

tightly tied down to posts, they could only squeal and lash out

with their hind feet, which so provoked our animals that the

baggage horse, by a series of jerks and rearings, divested himself

of Ito and most of the baggage, and, as I dismounted from mine, he

stood upright, and my foot catching I fell on the ground, when he

made several vicious dashes at me with his teeth and fore feet,

which were happily frustrated by the dexterity of some mago. These

beasts forcibly remind me of the words, "Whose mouth must be held

with bit and bridle, lest they turn and fall upon thee."

It was a lovely summer day, though very hot, and the snowy peaks of

Aidzu scarcely looked cool as they glittered in the sunlight. The

plain of Yonezawa, with the prosperous town of Yonezawa in the

south, and the frequented watering-place of Akayu in the north, is

a perfect garden of Eden, "tilled with a pencil instead of a

plough," growing in rich profusion rice, cotton, maize, tobacco,

hemp, indigo, beans, egg-plants, walnuts, melons, cucumbers,

persimmons, apricots, pomegranates; a smiling and plenteous land,

an Asiatic Arcadia, prosperous and independent, all its bounteous

acres belonging to those who cultivate them, who live under their

vines, figs, and pomegranates, free from oppression--a remarkable

spectacle under an Asiatic despotism. Yet still Daikoku is the

chief deity, and material good is the one object of desire.

It is an enchanting region of beauty, industry, and comfort,

mountain girdled, and watered by the bright Matsuka. Everywhere

there are prosperous and beautiful farming villages, with large

houses with carved beams and ponderous tiled roofs, each standing

in its own grounds, buried among persimmons and pomegranates, with

flower-gardens under trellised vines, and privacy secured by high,

closely-clipped screens of pomegranate and cryptomeria. Besides

the villages of Yoshida, Semoshima, Kurokawa, Takayama, and

Takataki, through or near which we passed, I counted over fifty on

the plain with their brown, sweeping barn roofs looking out from

the woodland. I cannot see any differences in the style of

cultivation. Yoshida is rich and prosperous-looking, Numa poor and

wretched-looking; but the scanty acres of Numa, rescued from the

mountain-sides, are as exquisitely trim and neat, as perfectly

cultivated, and yield as abundantly of the crops which suit the

climate, as the broad acres of the sunny plain of Yonezawa, and

this is the case everywhere. "The field of the sluggard" has no

existence in Japan.

We rode for four hours through these beautiful villages on a road

four feet wide, and then, to my surprise, after ferrying a river,

emerged at Tsukuno upon what appears on the map as a secondary

road, but which is in reality a main road 25 feet wide, well kept,

trenched on both sides, and with a line of telegraph poles along

it. It was a new world at once. The road for many miles was

thronged with well-dressed foot-passengers, kurumas, pack-horses,

and waggons either with solid wheels, or wheels with spokes but no

tires. It is a capital carriage-road, but without carriages. In

such civilised circumstances it was curious to see two or four

brown skinned men pulling the carts, and quite often a man and his

wife--the man unclothed, and the woman unclothed to her waist--

doing the same. Also it struck me as incongruous to see telegraph

wires above, and below, men whose only clothing consisted of a sun-

hat and fan; while children with books and slates were returning

from school, conning their lessons.

At Akayu, a town of hot sulphur springs, I hoped to sleep, but it

was one of the noisiest places I have seen. In the most crowded

part, where four streets meet, there are bathing sheds, which were

full of people of both sexes, splashing loudly, and the yadoya

close to it had about forty rooms, in nearly all of which several

rheumatic people were lying on the mats, samisens were twanging,

and kotos screeching, and the hubbub was so unbearable that I came

on here, ten miles farther, by a fine new road, up an uninteresting

strath of rice-fields and low hills, which opens out upon a small

plain surrounded by elevated gravelly hills, on the slope of one of

which Kaminoyama, a watering-place of over 3000 people, is

pleasantly situated. It is keeping festival; there are lanterns

and flags on every house, and crowds are thronging the temple

grounds, of which there are several on the hills above. It is a

clean, dry place, with beautiful yadoyas on the heights, and

pleasant houses with gardens, and plenty of walks over the hills.

The people say that it is one of the driest places in Japan. If it

were within reach of foreigners, they would find it a wholesome

health resort, with picturesque excursions in many directions.

This is one of the great routes of Japanese travel, and it is

interesting to see watering-places with their habits, amusements,

and civilisation quite complete, but borrowing nothing from Europe.

The hot springs here contain iron, and are strongly impregnated

with sulphuretted hydrogen. I tried the temperature of three, and

found them 100 degrees, 105 degrees, and 107 degrees. They are

supposed to be very valuable in rheumatism, and they attract

visitors from great distances. The police, who are my frequent

informants, tell me that there are nearly 600 people now staying

here for the benefit of the baths, of which six daily are usually

taken. I think that in rheumatism, as in some other maladies, the

old-fashioned Japanese doctors pay little attention to diet and

habits, and much to drugs and external applications. The benefit

of these and other medicinal waters would be much increased if

vigorous friction replaced the dabbing with soft towels.

This is a large yadoya, very full of strangers, and the house-

mistress, a buxom and most prepossessing widow, has a truly

exquisite hotel for bathers higher up the hill. She has eleven

children, two or three of whom are tall, handsome, and graceful

girls. One blushed deeply at my evident admiration, but was not

displeased, and took me up the hill to see the temples, baths, and

yadoyas of this very attractive place. I am much delighted with

her grace and savoir faire. I asked the widow how long she had

kept the inn, and she proudly answered, "Three hundred years," not

an uncommon instance of the heredity of occupations.

My accommodation is unique--a kura, or godown, in a large

conventional garden, in which is a bath-house, which receives a hot

spring at a temperature of 105 degrees, in which I luxuriate. Last

night the mosquitoes were awful. If the widow and her handsome

girls had not fanned me perseveringly for an hour, I should not

have been able to write a line. My new mosquito net succeeds

admirably, and, when I am once within it, I rather enjoy the

disappointment of the hundreds of drumming blood-thirsty wretches

outside.

The widow tells me that house-masters pay 2 yen once for all for

the sign, and an annual tax of 2 yen on a first-class yadoya, 1 yen

for a second, and 50 cents for a third, with 5 yen for the license

to sell sake.

These "godowns" (from the Malay word gadong), or fire-proof store-

houses, are one of the most marked features of Japanese towns, both

because they are white where all else is grey, and because they are

solid where all else is perishable.

I am lodged in the lower part, but the iron doors are open, and in

their place at night is a paper screen. A few things are kept in

my room. Two handsome shrines from which the unemotional faces of

two Buddhas looked out all night, a fine figure of the goddess

Kwan-non, and a venerable one of the god of longevity, suggested

curious dreams.

I. L. B.

LETTER XIX

Prosperity--Convict Labour--A New Bridge--Yamagata--Intoxicating

Forgeries--The Government Buildings--Bad Manners--Snow Mountains--A

Wretched Town.

KANAYAMA, July 16.

Three days of travelling on the same excellent road have brought me

nearly 60 miles. Yamagata ken impresses me as being singularly

prosperous, progressive, and go-ahead; the plain of Yamagata, which

I entered soon after leaving Kaminoyama, is populous and highly

cultivated, and the broad road, with its enormous traffic, looks

wealthy and civilised. It is being improved by convicts in dull

red kimonos printed with Chinese characters, who correspond with

our ticket-of-leave men, as they are working for wages in the

employment of contractors and farmers, and are under no other

restriction than that of always wearing the prison dress.

At the Sakamoki river I was delighted to come upon the only

thoroughly solid piece of modern Japanese work that I have met

with--a remarkably handsome stone bridge nearly finished--the first

I have seen. I introduced myself to the engineer, Okuno Chiuzo, a

very gentlemanly, agreeable Japanese, who showed me the plans, took

a great deal of trouble to explain them, and courteously gave me

tea and sweetmeats.

Yamagata, a thriving town of 21,000 people and the capital of the

ken, is well situated on a slight eminence, and this and the

dominant position of the kencho at the top of the main street give

it an emphasis unusual in Japanese towns. The outskirts of all the

cities are very mean, and the appearance of the lofty white

buildings of the new Government Offices above the low grey houses

was much of a surprise. The streets of Yamagata are broad and

clean, and it has good shops, among which are long rows selling

nothing but ornamental iron kettles and ornamental brasswork. So

far in the interior I was annoyed to find several shops almost

exclusively for the sale of villainous forgeries of European

eatables and drinkables, specially the latter. The Japanese, from

the Mikado downwards, have acquired a love of foreign intoxicants,

which would be hurtful enough to them if the intoxicants were

genuine, but is far worse when they are compounds of vitriol, fusel

oil, bad vinegar, and I know not what. I saw two shops in Yamagata

which sold champagne of the best brands, Martel's cognac, Bass'

ale, Medoc, St. Julian, and Scotch whisky, at about one-fifth of

their cost price--all poisonous compounds, the sale of which ought

to be interdicted.

The Government Buildings, though in the usual confectionery style,

are improved by the addition of verandahs; and the Kencho,

Saibancho, or Court House, the Normal School with advanced schools

attached, and the police buildings, are all in keeping with the

good road and obvious prosperity. A large two-storied hospital,

with a cupola, which will accommodate 150 patients, and is to be a

medical school, is nearly finished. It is very well arranged and

ventilated. I cannot say as much for the present hospital, which I

went over. At the Court House I saw twenty officials doing

nothing, and as many policemen, all in European dress, to which

they had added an imitation of European manners, the total result

being unmitigated vulgarity. They demanded my passport before they

would tell me the population of the ken and city. Once or twice I

have found fault with Ito's manners, and he has asked me twice

since if I think them like the manners of the policemen at

Yamagata!

North of Yamagata the plain widens, and fine longitudinal ranges

capped with snow mountains on the one side, and broken ranges with

lateral spurs on the other, enclose as cheerful and pleasant a

region as one would wish to see, with many pleasant villages on the

lower slopes of the hills. The mercury was only 70 degrees, and

the wind north, so it was an especially pleasant journey, though I

had to go three and a half ri beyond Tendo, a town of 5000 people,

where I had intended to halt, because the only inns at Tendo which

were not kashitsukeya were so occupied with silk-worms that they

could not receive me.

The next day's journey was still along the same fine road, through

a succession of farming villages and towns of 1500 and 2000 people,

such as Tochiida and Obanasawa, were frequent. From both these

there was a glorious view of Chokaizan, a grand, snow-covered dome,

said to be 8000 feet high, which rises in an altogether unexpected

manner from comparatively level country, and, as the great snow-

fields of Udonosan are in sight at the same time, with most

picturesque curtain ranges below, it may be considered one of the

grandest views of Japan. After leaving Obanasawa the road passes

along a valley watered by one of the affluents of the Mogami, and,

after crossing it by a fine wooden bridge, ascends a pass from

which the view is most magnificent. After a long ascent through a

region of light, peaty soil, wooded with pine, cryptomeria, and

scrub oak, a long descent and a fine avenue terminate in Shinjo, a

wretched town of over 5000 people, situated in a plain of rice-

fields.

The day's journey, of over twenty-three miles, was through villages

of farms without yadoyas, and in many cases without even tea-

houses. The style of building has quite changed. Wood has

disappeared, and all the houses are now built with heavy beams and

walls of laths and brown mud mixed with chopped straw, and very

neat. Nearly all are great oblong barns, turned endwise to the

road, 50, 60, and even 100 feet long, with the end nearest the road

the dwelling-house. These farm-houses have no paper windows, only

amado, with a few panes of paper at the top. These are drawn back

in the daytime, and, in the better class of houses, blinds, formed

of reeds or split bamboo, are let down over the opening. There are

no ceilings, and in many cases an unmolested rat snake lives in the

rafters, who, when he is much gorged, occasionally falls down upon

a mosquito net.

Again I write that Shinjo is a wretched place. It is a daimiyo's

town, and every daimiyo's town that I have seen has an air of

decay, partly owing to the fact that the castle is either pulled

down, or has been allowed to fall into decay. Shinjo has a large

trade in rice, silk, and hemp, and ought not to be as poor as it

looks. The mosquitoes were in thousands, and I had to go to bed,

so as to be out of their reach, before I had finished my wretched

meal of sago and condensed milk. There was a hot rain all night,

my wretched room was dirty and stifling, and rats gnawed my boots

and ran away with my cucumbers.

To-day the temperature is high and the sky murky. The good road

has come to an end, and the old hardships have begun again. After

leaving Shinjo this morning we crossed over a steep ridge into a

singular basin of great beauty, with a semicircle of pyramidal

hills, rendered more striking by being covered to their summits

with pyramidal cryptomeria, and apparently blocking all northward

progress. At their feet lies Kanayama in a romantic situation,

and, though I arrived as early as noon, I am staying for a day or

two, for my room at the Transport Office is cheerful and pleasant,

the agent is most polite, a very rough region lies before me, and

Ito has secured a chicken for the first time since leaving Nikko!

I find it impossible in this damp climate, and in my present poor

health, to travel with any comfort for more than two or three days

at a time, and it is difficult to find pretty, quiet, and wholesome

places for a halt of two nights. Freedom from fleas and mosquitoes

one can never hope for, though the last vary in number, and I have

found a way of "dodging" the first by laying down a piece of oiled

paper six feet square upon the mat, dusting along its edges a band

of Persian insect powder, and setting my chair in the middle. I am

then insulated, and, though myriads of fleas jump on the paper, the

powder stupefies them, and they are easily killed. I have been

obliged to rest here at any rate, because I have been stung on my

left hand both by a hornet and a gadfly, and it is badly inflamed.

In some places the hornets are in hundreds, and make the horses

wild. I am also suffering from inflammation produced by the bites

of "horse ants," which attack one in walking. The Japanese suffer

very much from these, and a neglected bite often produces an

intractable ulcer. Besides these, there is a fly, as harmless in

appearance as our house-fly, which bites as badly as a mosquito.

These are some of the drawbacks of Japanese travelling in summer,

but worse than these is the lack of such food as one can eat when

one finishes a hard day's journey without appetite, in an

exhausting atmosphere.

July 18.--I have had so much pain and fever from stings and bites

that last night I was glad to consult a Japanese doctor from

Shinjo. Ito, who looks twice as big as usual when he has to do any

"grand" interpreting, and always puts on silk hakama in honour of

it, came in with a middle-aged man dressed entirely in silk, who

prostrated himself three times on the ground, and then sat down on

his heels. Ito in many words explained my calamities, and Dr.

Nosoki then asked to see my "honourable hand," which he examined

carefully, and then my "honourable foot." He felt my pulse and

looked at my eyes with a magnifying glass, and with much sucking in

of his breath--a sign of good breeding and politeness--informed me

that I had much fever, which I knew before; then that I must rest,

which I also knew; then he lighted his pipe and contemplated me.

Then he felt my pulse and looked at my eyes again, then felt the

swelling from the hornet bite, and said it was much inflamed, of

which I was painfully aware, and then clapped his hands three

times. At this signal a coolie appeared, carrying a handsome black

lacquer chest with the same crest in gold upon it as Dr. Nosoki

wore in white on his haori. This contained a medicine chest of

fine gold lacquer, fitted up with shelves, drawers, bottles, etc.

He compounded a lotion first, with which he bandaged my hand and

arm rather skilfully, telling me to pour the lotion over the

bandage at intervals till the pain abated. The whole was covered

with oiled paper, which answers the purpose of oiled silk. He then

compounded a febrifuge, which, as it is purely vegetable, I have

not hesitated to take, and told me to drink it in hot water, and to

avoid sake for a day or two!

I asked him what his fee was, and, after many bows and much

spluttering and sucking in of his breath, he asked if I should

think half a yen too much, and when I presented him with a yen, and

told him with a good deal of profound bowing on my part that I was

exceedingly glad to obtain his services, his gratitude quite

abashed me by its immensity.

Dr. Nosoki is one of the old-fashioned practitioners, whose medical

knowledge has been handed down from father to son, and who holds

out, as probably most of his patients do, against European methods

and drugs. A strong prejudice against surgical operations,

specially amputations, exists throughout Japan. With regard to the

latter, people think that, as they came into the world complete, so

they are bound to go out of it, and in many places a surgeon would

hardly be able to buy at any price the privilege of cutting off an

arm.

Except from books these older men know nothing of the mechanism of

the human body, as dissection is unknown to native science. Dr.

Nosoki told me that he relies mainly on the application of the moxa

and on acupuncture in the treatment of acute diseases, and in

chronic maladies on friction, medicinal baths, certain animal and

vegetable medicines, and certain kinds of food. The use of leeches

and blisters is unknown to him, and he regards mineral drugs with

obvious suspicion. He has heard of chloroform, but has never seen

it used, and considers that in maternity it must necessarily be

fatal either to mother or child. He asked me (and I have twice

before been asked the same question) whether it is not by its use

that we endeavour to keep down our redundant population! He has

great faith in ginseng, and in rhinoceros horn, and in the powdered

liver of some animal, which, from the description, I understood to

be a tiger--all specifics of the Chinese school of medicines. Dr.

Nosoki showed me a small box of "unicorn's" horn, which he said was

worth more than its weight in gold! As my arm improved

coincidently with the application of his lotion, I am bound to give

him the credit of the cure.

I invited him to dinner, and two tables were produced covered with

different dishes, of which he ate heartily, showing most singular

dexterity with his chopsticks in removing the flesh of small, bony

fish. It is proper to show appreciation of a repast by noisy

gulpings, and much gurgling and drawing in of the breath.

Etiquette rigidly prescribes these performances, which are most

distressing to a European, and my guest nearly upset my gravity by

them.

The host and the kocho, or chief man of the village, paid me a

formal visit in the evening, and Ito, en grande tenue, exerted

himself immensely on the occasion. They were much surprised at my

not smoking, and supposed me to be under a vow! They asked me many

questions about our customs and Government, but frequently reverted

to tobacco.

I. L. B.

LETTER XX

The Effect of a Chicken--Poor Fare--Slow Travelling--Objects of

Interest--Kak'ke--The Fatal Close--A Great Fire--Security of the

Kuras.

SHINGOJI, July 21.

Very early in the morning, after my long talk with the Kocho of

Kanayama, Ito wakened me by saying, "You'll be able for a long

day's journey to-day, as you had a chicken yesterday," and under

this chicken's marvellous influence we got away at 6.45, only to

verify the proverb, "The more haste the worse speed." Unsolicited

by me the Kocho sent round the village to forbid the people from

assembling, so I got away in peace with a pack-horse and one

runner. It was a terrible road, with two severe mountain-passes to

cross, and I not only had to walk nearly the whole way, but to help

the man with the kuruma up some of the steepest places. Halting at

the exquisitely situated village of Nosoki, we got one horse, and

walked by a mountain road along the head-waters of the Omono to

Innai. I wish I could convey to you any idea of the beauty and

wildness of that mountain route, of the surprises on the way, of

views, of the violent deluges of rain which turned rivulets into

torrents, and of the hardships and difficulties of the day; the

scanty fare of sun-dried rice dough and sour yellow rasps, and the

depth of the mire through which we waded! We crossed the Shione

and Sakatsu passes, and in twelve hours accomplished fifteen miles!

Everywhere we were told that we should never get through the

country by the way we are going.

The women still wear trousers, but with a long garment tucked into

them instead of a short one, and the men wear a cotton combination

of breastplate and apron, either without anything else, or over

their kimonos. The descent to Innai under an avenue of

cryptomeria, and the village itself, shut in with the rushing

Omono, are very beautiful.

The yadoya at Innai was a remarkably cheerful one, but my room was

entirely fusuma and shoji, and people were peeping in the whole

time. It is not only a foreigner and his strange ways which

attract attention in these remote districts, but, in my case, my

india-rubber bath, air-pillow, and, above all, my white mosquito

net. Their nets are all of a heavy green canvas, and they admire

mine so much, that I can give no more acceptable present on leaving

than a piece of it to twist in with the hair. There were six

engineers in the next room who are surveying the passes which I had

crossed, in order to see if they could be tunnelled, in which case

kurumas might go all the way from Tokiyo to Kubota on the Sea of

Japan, and, with a small additional outlay, carts also.

In the two villages of Upper and Lower Innai there has been an

outbreak of a malady much dreaded by the Japanese, called kak'ke,

which, in the last seven months, has carried off 100 persons out of

a population of about 1500, and the local doctors have been aided

by two sent from the Medical School at Kubota. I don't know a

European name for it; the Japanese name signifies an affection of

the legs. Its first symptoms are a loss of strength in the legs,

"looseness in the knees," cramps in the calves, swelling, and

numbness. This, Dr. Anderson, who has studied kak'ke in more than

1100 cases in Tokiyo, calls the sub-acute form. The chronic is a

slow, numbing, and wasting malady, which, if unchecked, results in

death from paralysis and exhaustion in from six months to three

years. The third, or acute form, Dr. Anderson describes thus.

After remarking that the grave symptoms set in quite unexpectedly,

and go on rapidly increasing, he says:- "The patient now can lie

down no longer; he sits up in bed and tosses restlessly from one

position to another, and, with wrinkled brow, staring and anxious

eyes, dusky skin, blue, parted lips, dilated nostrils, throbbing

neck, and labouring chest, presents a picture of the most terrible

distress that the worst of diseases can inflict. There is no

intermission even for a moment, and the physician, here almost

powerless, can do little more than note the failing pulse and

falling temperature, and wait for the moment when the brain,

paralysed by the carbonised blood, shall become insensible, and

allow the dying man to pass his last moments in merciful

unconsciousness." {15}

The next morning, after riding nine miles through a quagmire, under

grand avenues of cryptomeria, and noticing with regret that the

telegraph poles ceased, we reached Yusowa, a town of 7000 people,

in which, had it not been for provoking delays, I should have slept

instead of at Innai, and found that a fire a few hours previously

had destroyed seventy houses, including the yadoya at which I

should have lodged. We had to wait two hours for horses, as all

were engaged in moving property and people. The ground where the

houses had stood was absolutely bare of everything but fine black

ash, among which the kuras stood blackened, and, in some instances,

slightly cracked, but in all unharmed. Already skeletons of new

houses were rising. No life had been lost except that of a tipsy

man, but I should probably have lost everything but my money.

LETTER XX--(Continued)

Lunch in Public--A Grotesque Accident--Police Inquiries--Man or

Woman?--A Melancholy Stare--A Vicious Horse--An Ill-favoured Town--

A Disappointment--A Torii.

Yusowa is a specially objectionable-looking place. I took my

lunch--a wretched meal of a tasteless white curd made from beans,

with some condensed milk added to it--in a yard, and the people

crowded in hundreds to the gate, and those behind, being unable to

see me, got ladders and climbed on the adjacent roofs, where they

remained till one of the roofs gave way with a loud crash, and

precipitated about fifty men, women, and children into the room

below, which fortunately was vacant. Nobody screamed--a noteworthy

fact--and the casualties were only a few bruises. Four policemen

then appeared and demanded my passport, as if I were responsible

for the accident, and failing, like all others, to read a

particular word upon it, they asked me what I was travelling for,

and on being told "to learn about the country," they asked if I was

making a map! Having satisfied their curiosity they disappeared,

and the crowd surged up again in fuller force. The Transport Agent

begged them to go away, but they said they might never see such a

sight again! One old peasant said he would go away if he were told

whether "the sight" were a man or a woman, and, on the agent asking

if that were any business of his, he said he should like to tell at

home what he had seen, which awoke my sympathy at once, and I told

Ito to tell them that a Japanese horse galloping night and day

without ceasing would take 5.5 weeks to reach my county--a

statement which he is using lavishly as I go along. These are such

queer crowds, so silent and gaping, and they remain motionless for

hours, the wide-awake babies on the mothers' backs and in the

fathers' arms never crying. I should be glad to hear a hearty

aggregate laugh, even if I were its object. The great melancholy

stare is depressing.

The road for ten miles was thronged with country people going in to

see the fire. It was a good road and very pleasant country, with

numerous road-side shrines and figures of the goddess of mercy. I

had a wicked horse, thoroughly vicious. His head was doubly

chained to the saddle-girth, but he never met man, woman, or child,

without laying back his ears and running at them to bite them. I

was so tired and in so much spinal pain that I got off and walked

several times, and it was most difficult to get on again, for as

soon as I put my hand on the saddle he swung his hind legs round to

kick me, and it required some agility to avoid being hurt. Nor was

this all. The evil beast made dashes with his tethered head at

flies, threatening to twist or demolish my foot at each, flung his

hind legs upwards, attempted to dislodge flies on his nose with his

hind hoof, executed capers which involved a total disappearance of

everything in front of the saddle, squealed, stumbled, kicked his

old shoes off, and resented the feeble attempts which the mago made

to replace them, and finally walked in to Yokote and down its long

and dismal street mainly on his hind legs, shaking the rope out of

his timid leader's hand, and shaking me into a sort of aching

jelly! I used to think that horses were made vicious either by

being teased or by violence in breaking; but this does not account

for the malignity of the Japanese horses, for the people are so

much afraid of them that they treat them with great respect: they

are not beaten or kicked, are spoken to in soothing tones, and, on

the whole, live better than their masters. Perhaps this is the

secret of their villainy--"Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked."

Yokote, a town of 10,000 people, in which the best yadoyas are all

non-respectable, is an ill-favoured, ill-smelling, forlorn, dirty,

damp, miserable place, with a large trade in cottons. As I rode

through on my temporary biped the people rushed out from the baths

to see me, men and women alike without a particle of clothing. The

house-master was very polite, but I had a dark and dirty room, up a

bamboo ladder, and it swarmed with fleas and mosquitoes to an

exasperating extent. On the way I heard that a bullock was killed

every Thursday in Yokote, and had decided on having a broiled steak

for supper and taking another with me, but when I arrived it was

all sold, there were no eggs, and I made a miserable meal of rice

and bean curd, feeling somewhat starved, as the condensed milk I

bought at Yamagata had to be thrown away. I was somewhat wretched

from fatigue and inflamed ant bites, but in the early morning, hot

and misty as all the mornings have been, I went to see a Shinto

temple, or miya, and, though I went alone, escaped a throng.

The entrance into the temple court was, as usual, by a torii, which

consisted of two large posts 20 feet high, surmounted with cross

beams, the upper one of which projects beyond the posts and

frequently curves upwards at both ends. The whole, as is often the

case, was painted a dull red. This torii, or "birds' rest," is

said to be so called because the fowls, which were formerly offered

but not sacrificed, were accustomed to perch upon it. A straw

rope, with straw tassels and strips of paper hanging from it, the

special emblem of Shinto, hung across the gateway. In the paved

court there were several handsome granite lanterns on fine granite

pedestals, such as are the nearly universal accompaniments of both

Shinto and Buddhist temples.

After leaving Yakote we passed through very pretty country with

mountain views and occasional glimpses of the snowy dome of

Chokaizan, crossed the Omono (which has burst its banks and

destroyed its bridges) by two troublesome ferries, and arrived at

Rokugo, a town of 5000 people, with fine temples, exceptionally

mean houses, and the most aggressive crowd by which I have yet been

asphyxiated.

There, through the good offices of the police, I was enabled to

attend a Buddhist funeral of a merchant of some wealth. It

interested me very much from its solemnity and decorum, and Ito's

explanations of what went before were remarkably distinctly given.

I went in a Japanese woman's dress, borrowed at the tea-house, with

a blue hood over my head, and thus escaped all notice, but I found

the restraint of the scanty "tied forward" kimono very tiresome.

Ito gave me many injunctions as to what I was to do and avoid,

which I carried out faithfully, being nervously anxious to avoid

jarring on the sensibilities of those who had kindly permitted a

foreigner to be present.

The illness was a short one, and there had been no time either for

prayers or pilgrimages on the sick man's behalf. When death occurs

the body is laid with its head to the north (a position that the

living Japanese scrupulously avoid), near a folding screen, between

which and it a new zen is placed, on which are a saucer of oil with

a lighted rush, cakes of uncooked rice dough, and a saucer of

incense sticks. The priests directly after death choose the

kaimiyo, or posthumous name, write it on a tablet of white wood,

and seat themselves by the corpse; his zen, bowls, cups, etc., are

filled with vegetable food and are placed by his side, the

chopsticks being put on the wrong, i.e. the left, side of the zen.

At the end of forty-eight hours the corpse is arranged for the

coffin by being washed with warm water, and the priest, while

saying certain prayers, shaves the head. In all cases, rich or

poor, the dress is of the usual make, but of pure white linen or

cotton.

At Omagori, a town near Rokugo, large earthenware jars are

manufactured, which are much used for interment by the wealthy; but

in this case there were two square boxes, the outer one being of

finely planed wood of the Retinospora obtusa. The poor use what is

called the "quick-tub," a covered tub of pine hooped with bamboo.

Women are dressed for burial in the silk robe worn on the marriage

day, tabi are placed beside them or on their feet, and their hair

usually flows loosely behind them. The wealthiest people fill the

coffin with vermilion and the poorest use chaff; but in this case I

heard that only the mouth, nose, and ears were filled with

vermilion, and that the coffin was filled up with coarse incense.

The body is placed within the tub or box in the usual squatting

position. It is impossible to understand how a human body, many

hours after death, can be pressed into the limited space afforded

by even the outermost of the boxes. It has been said that the

rigidity of a corpse is overcome by the use of a powder called

dosia, which is sold by the priests; but this idea has been

exploded, and the process remains incomprehensible.

Bannerets of small size and ornamental staves were outside the

house door. Two men in blue dresses, with pale blue over-garments

resembling wings received each person, two more presented a

lacquered bowl of water and a white silk crepe towel, and then we

passed into a large room, round which were arranged a number of

very handsome folding screens, on which lotuses, storks, and

peonies were realistically painted on a dead gold ground. Near the

end of the room the coffin, under a canopy of white silk, upon

which there was a very beautiful arrangement of artificial white

lotuses, rested upon trestles, the face of the corpse being turned

towards the north. Six priests, very magnificently dressed, sat on

each side of the coffin, and two more knelt in front of a small

temporary altar.

The widow, an extremely pretty woman, squatted near the deceased,

below the father and mother; and after her came the children,

relatives, and friends, who sat in rows, dressed in winged garments

of blue and white. The widow was painted white; her lips were

reddened with vermilion; her hair was elaborately dressed and

ornamented with carved shell pins; she wore a beautiful dress of

sky-blue silk, with a haori of fine white crepe and a scarlet crepe

girdle embroidered in gold, and looked like a bride on her marriage

day rather than a widow.

Indeed, owing to the beauty of the dresses and the amount of blue

and white silk, the room had a festal rather than a funereal look.

When all the guests had arrived, tea and sweetmeats were passed

round; incense was burned profusely; litanies were mumbled, and the

bustle of moving to the grave began, during which I secured a place

near the gate of the temple grounds.

The procession did not contain the father or mother of the

deceased, but I understood that the mourners who composed it were

all relatives. The oblong tablet with the "dead name" of the

deceased was carried first by a priest, then the lotus blossom by

another priest, then ten priests followed, two and two, chanting

litanies from books, then came the coffin on a platform borne by

four men and covered with white drapery, then the widow, and then

the other relatives. The coffin was carried into the temple and

laid upon trestles, while incense was burned and prayers were said,

and was then carried to a shallow grave lined with cement, and

prayers were said by the priests until the earth was raised to the

proper level, when all dispersed, and the widow, in her gay attire,

walked home unattended. There were no hired mourners or any signs

of grief, but nothing could be more solemn, reverent, and decorous

than the whole service. [I have since seen many funerals, chiefly

of the poor, and, though shorn of much of the ceremony, and with

only one officiating priest, the decorum was always most

remarkable.] The fees to the priests are from 2 up to 40 or 50

yen. The graveyard, which surrounds the temple, was extremely

beautiful, and the cryptomeria specially fine. It was very full of

stone gravestones, and, like all Japanese cemeteries, exquisitely

kept. As soon as the grave was filled in, a life-size pink lotus

plant was placed upon it, and a lacquer tray, on which were lacquer

bowls containing tea or sake, beans, and sweetmeats.

The temple at Rokugo was very beautiful, and, except that its

ornaments were superior in solidity and good taste, differed little

from a Romish church. The low altar, on which were lilies and

lighted candles, was draped in blue and silver, and on the high

altar, draped in crimson and cloth of gold, there was nothing but a

closed shrine, an incense-burner, and a vase of lotuses.

LETTER XX--(Concluded)

A Casual Invitation--A Ludicrous Incident--Politeness of a

Policeman--A Comfortless Sunday--An Outrageous Irruption--A

Privileged Stare.

At a wayside tea-house, soon after leaving Rokugo in kurumas, I met

the same courteous and agreeable young doctor who was stationed at

Innai during the prevalence of kak'ke, and he invited me to visit

the hospital at Kubota, of which he is junior physician, and told

Ito of a restaurant at which "foreign food" can be obtained--a

pleasant prospect, of which he is always reminding me.

Travelling along a very narrow road, I as usual first, we met a man

leading a prisoner by a rope, followed by a policeman. As soon as

my runner saw the latter he fell down on his face so suddenly in

the shafts as nearly to throw me out, at the same time trying to

wriggle into a garment which he had carried on the crossbar, while

the young men who were drawing the two kurumas behind, crouching

behind my vehicle, tried to scuttle into their clothes. I never

saw such a picture of abjectness as my man presented. He trembled

from head to foot, and illustrated that queer phrase often heard in

Scotch Presbyterian prayers, "Lay our hands on our mouths and our

mouths in the dust." He literally grovelled in the dust, and with

every sentence that the policeman spoke raised his head a little,

to bow it yet more deeply than before. It was all because he had

no clothes on. I interceded for him as the day was very hot, and

the policeman said he would not arrest him, as he should otherwise

have done, because of the inconvenience that it would cause to a

foreigner. He was quite an elderly man, and never recovered his

spirits, but, as soon as a turn of the road took us out of the

policeman's sight, the two younger men threw their clothes into the

air and gambolled in the shafts, shrieking with laughter!

On reaching Shingoji, being too tired to go farther, I was dismayed

to find nothing but a low, dark, foul-smelling room, enclosed only

by dirty shoji, in which to spend Sunday. One side looked into a

little mildewed court, with a slimy growth of Protococcus viridis,

and into which the people of another house constantly came to

stare. The other side opened on the earthen passage into the

street, where travellers wash their feet, the third into the

kitchen, and the fourth into the front room. Even before dark it

was alive with mosquitoes, and the fleas hopped on the mats like

sand-flies. There were no eggs, nothing but rice and cucumbers.

At five on Sunday morning I saw three faces pressed against the

outer lattice, and before evening the shoji were riddled with

finger-holes, at each of which a dark eye appeared. There was a

still, fine rain all day, with the mercury at 82 degrees, and the

heat, darkness, and smells were difficult to endure. In the

afternoon a small procession passed the house, consisting of a

decorated palanquin, carried and followed by priests, with capes

and stoles over crimson chasubles and white cassocks. This ark,

they said, contained papers inscribed with the names of people and

the evils they feared, and the priests were carrying the papers to

throw them into the river.

I went to bed early as a refuge from mosquitoes, with the andon, as

usual, dimly lighting the room, and shut my eyes. About nine I

heard a good deal of whispering and shuffling, which continued for

some time, and, on looking up, saw opposite to me about 40 men,

women, and children (Ito says 100), all staring at me, with the

light upon their faces. They had silently removed three of the

shoji next the passage! I called Ito loudly, and clapped my hands,

but they did not stir till he came, and then they fled like a flock

of sheep. I have patiently, and even smilingly, borne all out-of-

doors crowding and curiosity, but this kind of intrusion is

unbearable; and I sent Ito to the police station, much against his

will, to beg the police to keep the people out of the house, as the

house-master was unable to do so. This morning, as I was finishing

dressing, a policeman appeared in my room, ostensibly to apologise

for the behaviour of the people, but in reality to have a

privileged stare at me, and, above all, at my stretcher and

mosquito net, from which he hardly took his eyes. Ito says he

could make a yen a day by showing them! The policeman said that

the people had never seen a foreigner.

I. L. B.

LETTER XXI

The Necessity of Firmness--Perplexing Misrepresentations--Gliding

with the Stream--Suburban Residences--The Kubota Hospital--A Formal

Reception--The Normal School.

KUBOTA, July 23.

I arrived here on Monday afternoon by the river Omono, what would

have been two long days' journey by land having been easily

accomplished in nine hours by water. This was an instance of

forming a plan wisely, and adhering to it resolutely! Firmness in

travelling is nowhere more necessary than in Japan. I decided some

time ago, from Mr. Brunton's map, that the Omono must be navigable

from Shingoji, and a week ago told Ito to inquire about it, but at

each place difficulties have been started. There was too much

water, there was too little; there were bad rapids, there were

shallows; it was too late in the year; all the boats which had

started lately were lying aground; but at one of the ferries I saw

in the distance a merchandise boat going down, and told Ito I

should go that way and no other. On arriving at Shingoji they said

it was not on the Omono at all, but on a stream with some very bad

rapids, in which boats are broken to pieces. Lastly, they said

there was no boat, but on my saying that I would send ten miles for

one, a small, flat-bottomed scow was produced by the Transport

Agent, into which Ito, the luggage, and myself accurately fitted.

Ito sententiously observed, "Not one thing has been told us on our

journey which has turned out true!" This is not an exaggeration.

The usual crowd did not assemble round the door, but preceded me to

the river, where it covered the banks and clustered in the trees.

Four policemen escorted me down. The voyage of forty-two miles was

delightful. The rapids were a mere ripple, the current was strong,

one boatman almost slept upon his paddle, the other only woke to

bale the boat when it was half-full of water, the shores were

silent and pretty, and almost without population till we reached

the large town of Araya, which straggles along a high bank for a

considerable distance, and after nine peaceful hours we turned off

from the main stream of the Omono just at the outskirts of Kubota,

and poled up a narrow, green river, fringed by dilapidated backs of

houses, boat-building yards, and rafts of timber on one side, and

dwelling-houses, gardens, and damp greenery on the other. This

stream is crossed by very numerous bridges.

I got a cheerful upstairs room at a most friendly yadoya, and my

three days here have been fully occupied and very pleasant.

"Foreign food"--a good beef-steak, an excellent curry, cucumbers,

and foreign salt and mustard, were at once obtained, and I felt my

"eyes lightened" after partaking of them.

Kubota is a very attractive and purely Japanese town of 36,000

people, the capital of Akita ken. A fine mountain, called

Taiheisan, rises above its fertile valley, and the Omono falls into

the Sea of Japan close to it. It has a number of kurumas, but,

owing to heavy sand and the badness of the roads, they can only go

three miles in any direction. It is a town of activity and brisk

trade, and manufactures a silk fabric in stripes of blue and black,

and yellow and black, much used for making hakama and kimonos, a

species of white silk crepe with a raised woof, which brings a high

price in Tokiyo shops, fusuma, and clogs. Though it is a castle

town, it is free from the usual "deadly-lively" look, and has an

air of prosperity and comfort. Though it has few streets of shops,

it covers a great extent of ground with streets and lanes of

pretty, isolated dwelling-houses, surrounded by trees, gardens, and

well-trimmed hedges, each garden entered by a substantial gateway.

The existence of something like a middle class with home privacy

and home life is suggested by these miles of comfortable "suburban

residences." Foreign influence is hardly at all felt, there is not

a single foreigner in Government or any other employment, and even

the hospital was organised from the beginning by Japanese doctors.

This fact made me greatly desire to see it, but, on going there at

the proper hour for visitors, I was met by the Director with

courteous but vexatious denial. No foreigner could see it, he

said, without sending his passport to the Governor and getting a

written order, so I complied with these preliminaries, and 8 a.m.

of the next day was fixed for my visit Ito, who is lazy about

interpreting for the lower orders, but exerts himself to the utmost

on such an occasion as this, went with me, handsomely clothed in

silk, as befitted an "Interpreter," and surpassed all his former

efforts.

The Director and the staff of six physicians, all handsomely

dressed in silk, met me at the top of the stairs, and conducted me

to the management room, where six clerks were writing. Here there

was a table, solemnly covered with a white cloth, and four chairs,

on which the Director, the Chief Physician, Ito, and I sat, and

pipes, tea, and sweetmeats, were produced. After this, accompanied

by fifty medical students, whose intelligent looks promise well for

their success, we went round the hospital, which is a large two-

storied building in semi-European style, but with deep verandahs

all round. The upper floor is used for class-rooms, and the lower

accommodates 100 patients, besides a number of resident students.

Ten is the largest number treated in any one room, and severe cases

are treated in separate rooms. Gangrene has prevailed, and the

Chief Physician, who is at this time remodelling the hospital, has

closed some of the wards in consequence. There is a Lock Hospital

under the same roof. About fifty important operations are annually

performed under chloroform, but the people of Akita ken are very

conservative, and object to part with their limbs and to foreign

drugs. This conservatism diminishes the number of patients.

The odour of carbolic acid pervaded the whole hospital, and there

were spray producers enough to satisfy Mr. Lister! At the request

of Dr. K. I saw the dressing of some very severe wounds carefully

performed with carbolised gauze, under spray of carbolic acid, the

fingers of the surgeon and the instruments used being all carefully

bathed in the disinfectant. Dr. K. said it was difficult to teach

the students the extreme carefulness with regard to minor details

which is required in the antiseptic treatment, which he regards as

one of the greatest discoveries of this century. I was very much

impressed with the fortitude shown by the surgical patients, who

went through very severe pain without a wince or a moan. Eye cases

are unfortunately very numerous. Dr. K. attributes their extreme

prevalence to overcrowding, defective ventilation, poor living, and

bad light.

After our round we returned to the management room to find a meal

laid out in English style--coffee in cups with handles and saucers,

and plates with spoons. After this pipes were again produced, and

the Director and medical staff escorted me to the entrance, where

we all bowed profoundly. I was delighted to see that Dr.

Kayabashi, a man under thirty, and fresh from Tokiyo, and all the

staff and students were in the national dress, with the hakama of

rich silk. It is a beautiful dress, and assists dignity as much as

the ill-fitting European costume detracts from it. This was a very

interesting visit, in spite of the difficulty of communication

through an interpreter.

The public buildings, with their fine gardens, and the broad road

near which they stand, with its stone-faced embankments, are very

striking in such a far-off ken. Among the finest of the buildings

is the Normal School, where I shortly afterwards presented myself,

but I was not admitted till I had shown my passport and explained

my objects in travelling. These preliminaries being settled, Mr.

Tomatsu Aoki, the Chief Director, and Mr. Shude Kane Nigishi, the

principal teacher, both looking more like monkeys than men in their

European clothes, lionised me.

The first was most trying, for he persisted in attempting to speak

English, of which he knows about as much as I know of Japanese, but

the last, after some grotesque attempts, accepted Ito's services.

The school is a commodious Europeanised building, three stories

high, and from its upper balcony the view of the city, with its

gray roofs and abundant greenery, and surrounding mountains and

valleys, is very fine. The equipments of the different class-rooms

surprised me, especially the laboratory of the chemical class-room,

and the truly magnificent illustrative apparatus in the natural

science class-room. Ganot's "Physics" is the text book of that

department.

I. L. B.

LETTER XXII

A Silk Factory--Employment for Women--A Police Escort--The Japanese

Police Force.

KUBOTA, July 23.

My next visit was to a factory of handloom silk-weavers, where 180

hands, half of them women, are employed. These new industrial

openings for respectable employment for women and girls are very

important, and tend in the direction of a much-needed social

reform. The striped silk fabrics produced are entirely for home

consumption.

Afterwards I went into the principal street, and, after a long

search through the shops, bought some condensed milk with the

"Eagle" brand and the label all right, but, on opening it, found it

to contain small pellets of a brownish, dried curd, with an

unpleasant taste! As I was sitting in the shop, half stifled by

the crowd, the people suddenly fell back to a respectful distance,

leaving me breathing space, and a message came from the chief of

police to say that he was very sorry for the crowding, and had

ordered two policemen to attend upon me for the remainder of my

visit. The black and yellow uniforms were most truly welcome, and

since then I have escaped all annoyance. On my return I found the

card of the chief of police, who had left a message with the house-

master apologising for the crowd by saying that foreigners very

rarely visited Kubota, and he thought that the people had never

seen a foreign woman.

I went afterwards to the central police station to inquire about an

inland route to Aomori, and received much courtesy, but no

information. The police everywhere are very gentle to the people,-

-a few quiet words or a wave of the hand are sufficient, when they

do not resist them. They belong to the samurai class, and,

doubtless, their naturally superior position weighs with the

heimin. Their faces and a certain hauteur of manner show the

indelible class distinction. The entire police force of Japan

numbers 23,300 educated men in the prime of life, and if 30 per

cent of them do wear spectacles, it does not detract from their

usefulness. 5600 of them are stationed at Yedo, as from thence

they can be easily sent wherever they are wanted, 1004 at Kiyoto,

and 815 at Osaka, and the remaining 10,000 are spread over the

country. The police force costs something over 400,000 pounds

annually, and certainly is very efficient in preserving good order.

The pay of ordinary constables ranges from 6 to 10 yen a month. An

enormous quantity of superfluous writing is done by all officialdom

in Japan, and one usually sees policemen writing. What comes of it

I don't know. They are mostly intelligent and gentlemanly-looking

young men, and foreigners in the interior are really much indebted

to them. If I am at any time in difficulties I apply to them, and,

though they are disposed to be somewhat de haut en bas, they are

sure to help one, except about routes, of which they always profess

ignorance.

On the whole, I like Kubota better than any other Japanese town,

perhaps because it is so completely Japanese and has no air of

having seen better days. I no longer care to meet Europeans--

indeed I should go far out of my way to avoid them. I have become

quite used to Japanese life, and think that I learn more about it

in travelling in this solitary way than I should otherwise. I. L.

B.

LETTER XXIII

"A Plague of Immoderate Rain"--A Confidential Servant--Ito's Diary-

-Ito's Excellences--Ito's Faults--Prophecy of the Future of Japan--

Curious Queries--Superfine English--Economical Travelling--The

Japanese Pack-horse again.

KUBOTA, July 24.

I am here still, not altogether because the town is fascinating,

but because the rain is so ceaseless as to be truly "a plague of

immoderate rain and waters." Travellers keep coming in with

stories of the impassability of the roads and the carrying away of

bridges. Ito amuses me very much by his remarks. He thinks that

my visit to the school and hospital must have raised Japan in my

estimation, and he is talking rather big. He asked me if I noticed

that all the students kept their mouths shut like educated men and

residents of Tokiyo, and that all country people keep theirs open.

I have said little about him for some time, but I daily feel more

dependent on him, not only for all information, but actually for

getting on. At night he has my watch, passport, and half my money,

and I often wonder what would become of me if he absconded before

morning. He is not a good boy. He has no moral sense, according

to our notions; he dislikes foreigners; his manner is often very

disagreeable; and yet I doubt whether I could have obtained a more

valuable servant and interpreter. When we left Tokiyo he spoke

fairly good English, but by practice and industrious study he now

speaks better than any official interpreter that I have seen, and

his vocabulary is daily increasing. He never uses a word

inaccurately when he has once got hold of its meaning, and his

memory never fails. He keeps a diary both in English and Japanese,

and it shows much painstaking observation. He reads it to me

sometimes, and it is interesting to hear what a young man who has

travelled as much as he has regards as novel in this northern

region. He has made a hotel book and a transport book, in which

all the bills and receipts are written, and he daily transliterates

the names of all places into English letters, and puts down the

distances and the sums paid for transport and hotels on each bill.

He inquires the number of houses in each place from the police or

Transport Agent, and the special trade of each town, and notes them

down for me. He takes great pains to be accurate, and occasionally

remarks about some piece of information that he is not quite

certain about, "If it's not true, it's not worth having." He is

never late, never dawdles, never goes out in the evening except on

errands for me, never touches sake, is never disobedient, never

requires to be told the same thing twice, is always within hearing,

has a good deal of tact as to what he repeats, and all with an

undisguised view to his own interest. He sends most of his wages

to his mother, who is a widow--"It's the custom of the country"--

and seems to spend the remainder on sweetmeats, tobacco, and the

luxury of frequent shampooing.

That he would tell a lie if it served his purpose, and would

"squeeze" up to the limits of extortion, if he could do it

unobserved, I have not the slightest doubt. He seems to have but

little heart, or any idea of any but vicious pleasures. He has no

religion of any kind; he has been too much with foreigners for

that. His frankness is something startling. He has no idea of

reticence on any subject; but probably I learn more about things as

they really are from this very defect. In virtue in man or woman,

except in that of his former master, he has little, if any belief.

He thinks that Japan is right in availing herself of the

discoveries made by foreigners, that they have as much to learn

from her, and that she will outstrip them in the race, because she

takes all that is worth having, and rejects the incubus of

Christianity. Patriotism is, I think, his strongest feeling, and I

never met with such a boastful display of it, except in a Scotchman

or an American. He despises the uneducated, as he can read and

write both the syllabaries. For foreign rank or position he has

not an atom of reverence or value, but a great deal of both for

Japanese officialdom. He despises the intellects of women, but

flirts in a town-bred fashion with the simple tea-house girls.

He is anxious to speak the very best English, and to say that a

word is slangy or common interdicts its use. Sometimes, when the

weather is fine and things go smoothly, he is in an excellent and

communicative humour, and talks a good deal as we travel. A few

days ago I remarked, "What a beautiful day this is!" and soon

after, note-book in hand, he said, "You say 'a beautiful day.' Is

that better English than 'a devilish fine day,' which most

foreigners say?" I replied that it was "common," and "beautiful"

has been brought out frequently since. Again, "When you ask a

question you never say, 'What the d-l is it?' as other foreigners

do. Is it proper for men to say it and not for women?" I told him

it was proper for neither, it was a very "common" word, and I saw

that he erased it from his note-book. At first he always used

fellows for men, as, "Will you have one or two FELLOWS for your

kuruma?" "FELLOWS and women." At last he called the Chief

Physician of the hospital here a FELLOW, on which I told him that

it was slightly slangy, and at least "colloquial," and for two days

he has scrupulously spoken of man and men. To-day he brought a boy

with very sore eyes to see me, on which I exclaimed, "Poor little

fellow!" and this evening he said, "You called that boy a fellow, I

thought it was a bad word!" The habits of many of the Yokohama

foreigners have helped to obliterate any distinctions between right

and wrong, if he ever made any. If he wishes to tell me that he

has seen a very tipsy man, he always says he has seen "a fellow as

drunk as an Englishman." At Nikko I asked him how many legal wives

a man could have in Japan, and he replied, "Only one lawful one,

but as many others (mekake) as he can support, just as Englishmen

have." He never forgets a correction. Till I told him it was

slangy he always spoke of inebriated people as "tight," and when I

gave him the words "tipsy," "drunk," "intoxicated," he asked me

which one would use in writing good English, and since then he has

always spoken of people as "intoxicated."

He naturally likes large towns, and tries to deter me from taking

the "unbeaten tracks," which I prefer--but when he finds me

immovable, always concludes his arguments with the same formula,

"Well, of course you can do as you like; it's all the same to me."

I do not think he cheats me to any extent. Board, lodging, and

travelling expenses for us both are about 6s. 6d. a day, and about

2s. 6d. when we are stationary, and this includes all gratuities

and extras. True, the board and lodging consist of tea, rice, and

eggs, a copper basin of water, an andon and an empty room, for,

though there are plenty of chickens in all the villages, the people

won't be bribed to sell them for killing, though they would gladly

part with them if they were to be kept to lay eggs. Ito amuses me

nearly every night with stories of his unsuccessful attempts to

provide me with animal food.

The travelling is the nearest approach to "a ride on a rail" that I

have ever made. I have now ridden, or rather sat, upon seventy-six

horses, all horrible. They all stumble. The loins of some are

higher than their shoulders, so that one slips forwards, and the

back-bones of all are ridgy. Their hind feet grow into points

which turn up, and their hind legs all turn outwards, like those of

a cat, from carrying heavy burdens at an early age. The same thing

gives them a roll in their gait, which is increased by their

awkward shoes. In summer they feed chiefly on leaves, supplemented

with mashes of bruised beans, and instead of straw they sleep on

beds of leaves. In their stalls their heads are tied "where their

tails should be," and their fodder is placed not in a manger, but

in a swinging bucket. Those used in this part of Japan are worth

from 15 to 30 yen. I have not seen any overloading or ill-

treatment; they are neither kicked, nor beaten, nor threatened in

rough tones, and when they die they are decently buried, and have

stones placed over their graves. It might be well if the end of a

worn-out horse were somewhat accelerated, but this is mainly a

Buddhist region, and the aversion to taking animal life is very

strong. I. L. B.

LETTER XXIV

The Symbolism of Seaweed--Afternoon Visitors--An Infant Prodigy--A

Feat in Caligraphy--Child Worship--A Borrowed Dress--A Trousseau--

House Furniture--The Marriage Ceremony.

KUBOTA, July 25.

The weather at last gives a hope of improvement, and I think I

shall leave to-morrow. I had written this sentence when Ito came

in to say that the man in the next house would like to see my

stretcher and mosquito net, and had sent me a bag of cakes with the

usual bit of seaweed attached, to show that it was a present. The

Japanese believe themselves to be descended from a race of

fishermen; they are proud of it, and Yebis, the god of fishermen,

is one of the most popular of the household divinities. The piece

of seaweed sent with a present to any ordinary person, and the

piece of dried fish-skin which accompanies a present to the Mikado,

record the origin of the race, and at the same time typify the

dignity of simple industry.

Of course I consented to receive the visitor, and with the mercury

at 84 degrees, five men, two boys, and five women entered my small,

low room, and after bowing to the earth three times, sat down on

the floor. They had evidently come to spend the afternoon. Trays

of tea and sweetmeats were handed round, and a labako-bon was

brought in, and they all smoked, as I had told Ito that all usual

courtesies were to be punctiliously performed. They expressed

their gratification at seeing so "honourable" a traveller. I

expressed mine at seeing so much of their "honourable" country.

Then we all bowed profoundly. Then I laid Brunton's map on the

floor and showed them my route, showed them the Asiatic Society's

Transactions, and how we read from left to right, instead of from

top to bottom, showed them my knitting, which amazed them, and my

Berlin work, and then had nothing left. Then they began to

entertain me, and I found that the real object of their visit was

to exhibit an "infant prodigy," a boy of four, with a head shaven

all but a tuft on the top, a face of preternatural thoughtfulness

and gravity, and the self-possessed and dignified demeanour of an

elderly man. He was dressed in scarlet silk hakama, and a dark,

striped, blue silk kimono, and fanned himself gracefully, looking

at everything as intelligently and courteously as the others. To

talk child's talk to him, or show him toys, or try to amuse him,

would have been an insult. The monster has taught himself to read

and write, and has composed poetry. His father says that he never

plays, and understands everything just like a grown person. The

intention was that I should ask him to write, and I did so.

It was a solemn performance. A red blanket was laid in the middle

of the floor, with a lacquer writing-box upon it. The creature

rubbed the ink with water on the inkstone, unrolled four rolls of

paper, five feet long, and inscribed them with Chinese characters,

nine inches long, of the most complicated kind, with firm and

graceful curves of his brush, and with the ease and certainty of

Giotto in turning his O. He sealed them with his seal in

vermilion, bowed three times, and the performance was ended.

People get him to write kakemonos and signboards for them, and he

had earned 10 yen, or about 2 pounds, that day. His father is

going to travel to Kiyoto with him, to see if any one under

fourteen can write as well. I never saw such an exaggerated

instance of child worship. Father, mother, friends, and servants,

treated him as if he were a prince.

The house-master, who is a most polite man, procured me an

invitation to the marriage of his niece, and I have just returned

from it. He has three "wives" himself. One keeps a yadoya in

Kiyoto, another in Morioka, and the third and youngest is with him

here. From her limitless stores of apparel she chose what she

considered a suitable dress for me--an under-dress of sage green

silk crepe, a kimono of soft, green, striped silk of a darker

shade, with a fold of white crepe, spangled with gold at the neck,

and a girdle of sage green corded silk, with the family badge here

and there upon it in gold. I went with the house-master, Ito, to

his disgust, not being invited, and his absence was like the loss

of one of my senses, as I could not get any explanations till

afterwards.

The ceremony did not correspond with the rules laid down for

marriages in the books of etiquette that I have seen, but this is

accounted for by the fact that they were for persons of the samurai

class, while this bride and bridegroom, though the children of

well-to-do merchants, belong to the heimin.

In this case the trousseau and furniture were conveyed to the

bridegroom's house in the early morning, and I was allowed to go to

see them. There were several girdles of silk embroidered with

gold, several pieces of brocaded silk for kimonos, several pieces

of silk crepe, a large number of made-up garments, a piece of white

silk, six barrels of wine or sake, and seven sorts of condiments.

Jewellery is not worn by women in Japan.

The furniture consisted of two wooden pillows, finely lacquered,

one of them containing a drawer for ornamental hairpins, some

cotton futons, two very handsome silk ones, a few silk cushions, a

lacquer workbox, a spinning-wheel, a lacquer rice bucket and ladle,

two ornamental iron kettles, various kitchen utensils, three bronze

hibachi, two tabako-bons, some lacquer trays, and zens, china

kettles, teapots, and cups, some lacquer rice bowls, two copper

basins, a few towels, some bamboo switches, and an inlaid lacquer

etagere. As the things are all very handsome the parents must be

well off. The sake is sent in accordance with rigid etiquette.

The bridegroom is twenty-two, the bride seventeen, and very comely,

so far as I could see through the paint with which she was

profusely disfigured. Towards evening she was carried in a

norimon, accompanied by her parents and friends, to the

bridegroom's house, each member of the procession carrying a

Chinese lantern. When the house-master and I arrived the wedding

party was assembled in a large room, the parents and friends of the

bridegroom being seated on one side, and those of the bride on the

other. Two young girls, very beautifully dressed, brought in the

bride, a very pleasing-looking creature dressed entirely in white

silk, with a veil of white silk covering her from head to foot.

The bridegroom, who was already seated in the middle of the room

near its upper part, did not rise to receive her, and kept his eyes

fixed on the ground, and she sat opposite to him, but never looked

up. A low table was placed in front, on which there was a two-

spouted kettle full of sake, some sake bottles, and some cups, and

on another there were some small figures representing a fir-tree, a

plum-tree in blossom, and a stork standing on a tortoise, the last

representing length of days, and the former the beauty of women and

the strength of men. Shortly a zen, loaded with eatables, was

placed before each person, and the feast began, accompanied by the

noises which signify gastronomic gratification.

After this, which was only a preliminary, the two girls who brought

in the bride handed round a tray with three cups containing sake,

which each person was expected to drain till he came to the god of

luck at the bottom.

The bride and bridegroom then retired, but shortly reappeared in

other dresses of ceremony, but the bride still wore her white silk

veil, which one day will be her shroud. An old gold lacquer tray

was produced, with three sake cups, which were filled by the two

bridesmaids, and placed before the parents-in-law and the bride.

The father-in-law drank three cups, and handed the cup to the

bride, who, after drinking two cups, received from her father-in-

law a present in a box, drank the third cup, and then returned the

cup to the father-in-law, who again drank three cups. Rice and

fish were next brought in, after which the bridegroom's mother took

the second cup, and filled and emptied it three times, after which

she passed it to the bride, who drank two cups, received a present

from her mother-in-law in a lacquer box, drank a third cup, and

gave the cup to the elder lady, who again drank three cups. Soup

was then served, and then the bride drank once from the third cup,

and handed it to her husband's father, who drank three more cups,

the bride took it again, and drank two, and lastly the mother-in-

law drank three more cups. Now, if you possess the clear-

sightedness which I laboured to preserve, you will perceive that

each of the three had inbibed nine cups of some generous liquor!

{16}

After this the two bridesmaids raised the two-spouted kettle and

presented it to the lips of the married pair, who drank from it

alternately, till they had exhausted its contents. This concluding

ceremony is said to be emblematic of the tasting together of the

joys and sorrows of life. And so they became man and wife till

death or divorce parted them.

This drinking of sake or wine, according to prescribed usage,

appeared to constitute the "marriage service," to which none but

relations were bidden. Immediately afterwards the wedding guests

arrived, and the evening was spent in feasting and sake drinking;

but the fare is simple, and intoxication is happily out of place at

a marriage feast. Every detail is a matter of etiquette, and has

been handed down for centuries. Except for the interest of the

ceremony, in that light it was a very dull and tedious affair,

conducted in melancholy silence, and the young bride, with her

whitened face and painted lips, looked and moved like an automaton.

I. L. B.

LETTER XXV

A Holiday Scene--A Matsuri--Attractions of the Revel--Matsuri Cars-

-Gods and Demons--A Possible Harbour--A Village Forge--Prosperity

of Sake Brewers--A "Great Sight."

TSUGURATA, July 27.

Three miles of good road thronged with half the people of Kubota on

foot and in kurumas, red vans drawn by horses, pairs of policemen

in kurumas, hundreds of children being carried, hundreds more on

foot, little girls, formal and precocious looking, with hair

dressed with scarlet crepe and flowers, hobbling toilsomely along

on high clogs, groups of men and women, never intermixing, stalls

driving a "roaring trade" in cakes and sweetmeats, women making

mochi as fast as the buyers ate it, broad rice-fields rolling like

a green sea on the right, an ocean of liquid turquoise on the left,

the grey roofs of Kubota looking out from their green surroundings,

Taiheisan in deepest indigo blocking the view to the south, a

glorious day, and a summer sun streaming over all, made up the

cheeriest and most festal scene that I have seen in Japan; men,

women, and children, vans and kurumas, policemen and horsemen, all

on their way to a mean-looking town, Minato, the junk port of

Kubota, which was keeping matsuri, or festival, in honour of the

birthday of the god Shimmai. Towering above the low grey houses

there were objects which at first looked like five enormous black

fingers, then like trees with their branches wrapped in black, and

then--comparisons ceased; they were a mystery.

Dismissing the kurumas, which could go no farther, we dived into

the crowd, which was wedged along a mean street, nearly a mile

long--a miserable street of poor tea-houses and poor shop-fronts;

but, in fact, you could hardly see the street for the people.

Paper lanterns were hung close together along its whole length.

There were rude scaffoldings supporting matted and covered

platforms, on which people were drinking tea and sake and enjoying

the crowd below; monkey theatres and dog theatres, two mangy sheep

and a lean pig attracting wondering crowds, for neither of these

animals is known in this region of Japan; a booth in which a woman

was having her head cut off every half-hour for 2 sen a spectator;

cars with roofs like temples, on which, with forty men at the

ropes, dancing children of the highest class were being borne in

procession; a theatre with an open front, on the boards of which

two men in antique dresses, with sleeves touching the ground, were

performing with tedious slowness a classic dance of tedious

posturings, which consisted mainly in dexterous movements of the

aforesaid sleeves, and occasional emphatic stampings, and

utterances of the word No in a hoarse howl. It is needless to say

that a foreign lady was not the least of the attractions of the

fair. The cultus of children was in full force, all sorts of

masks, dolls, sugar figures, toys, and sweetmeats were exposed for

sale on mats on the ground, and found their way into the hands and

sleeves of the children, for no Japanese parent would ever attend a

matsuri without making an offering to his child.

The police told me that there were 22,000 strangers in Minato, yet

for 32,000 holiday-makers a force of twenty-five policemen was

sufficient. I did not see one person under the influence of sake

up to 3 p.m., when I left, nor a solitary instance of rude or

improper behaviour, nor was I in any way rudely crowded upon, for,

even where the crowd was densest, the people of their own accord

formed a ring and left me breathing space.

We went to the place where the throng was greatest, round the two

great matsuri cars, whose colossal erections we had seen far off.

These were structures of heavy beams, thirty feet long, with eight

huge, solid wheels. Upon them there were several scaffoldings with

projections, like flat surfaces of cedar branches, and two special

peaks of unequal height at the top, the whole being nearly fifty

feet from the ground. All these projections were covered with

black cotton cloth, from which branches of pines protruded. In the

middle three small wheels, one above another, over which striped

white cotton was rolling perpetually, represented a waterfall; at

the bottom another arrangement of white cotton represented a river,

and an arrangement of blue cotton, fitfully agitated by a pair of

bellows below, represented the sea. The whole is intended to

represent a mountain on which the Shinto gods slew some devils, but

anything more rude and barbarous could scarcely be seen. On the

fronts of each car, under a canopy, were thirty performers on

thirty diabolical instruments, which rent the air with a truly

infernal discord, and suggested devils rather than their

conquerors. High up on the flat projections there were groups of

monstrous figures. On one a giant in brass armour, much like the

Nio of temple gates, was killing a revolting-looking demon. On

another a daimiyo's daughter, in robes of cloth of gold with satin

sleeves richly flowered, was playing on the samisen. On another a

hunter, thrice the size of life, was killing a wild horse equally

magnified, whose hide was represented by the hairy wrappings of the

leaves of the Chamaerops excelsa. On others highly-coloured gods,

and devils equally hideous, were grouped miscellaneously. These

two cars were being drawn up and down the street at the rate of a

mile in three hours by 200 men each, numbers of men with levers

assisting the heavy wheels out of the mud-holes. This matsuri,

which, like an English fair, feast, or revel, has lost its original

religious significance, goes on for three days and nights, and this

was its third and greatest day.

We left on mild-tempered horses, quite unlike the fierce fellows of

Yamagata ken. Between Minato and Kado there is a very curious

lagoon on the left, about 17 miles long by 16 broad, connected with

the sea by a narrow channel, guarded by two high hills called

Shinzan and Honzan. Two Dutch engineers are now engaged in

reporting on its capacities, and if its outlet could be deepened

without enormous cost it would give north-western Japan the harbour

it so greatly needs. Extensive rice-fields and many villages lie

along the road, which is an avenue of deep sand and ancient pines

much contorted and gnarled. Down the pine avenue hundreds of

people on horseback and on foot were trooping into Minato from all

the farming villages, glad in the glorious sunshine which succeeded

four days of rain. There were hundreds of horses, wonderful-

looking animals in bravery of scarlet cloth and lacquer and fringed

nets of leather, and many straw wisps and ropes, with Gothic roofs

for saddles, and dependent panniers on each side, carrying two

grave and stately-looking children in each, and sometimes a father

or a fifth child on the top of the pack-saddle.

I was so far from well that I was obliged to sleep at the wretched

village of Abukawa, in a loft alive with fleas, where the rice was

too dirty to be eaten, and where the house-master's wife, who sat

for an hour on my floor, was sorely afflicted with skin disease.

The clay houses have disappeared and the villages are now built of

wood, but Abukawa is an antiquated, ramshackle place, propped up

with posts and slanting beams projecting into the roadway for the

entanglement of unwary passengers.

The village smith was opposite, but he was not a man of ponderous

strength, nor were there those wondrous flights and scintillations

of sparks which were the joy of our childhood in the Tattenhall

forge. A fire of powdered charcoal on the floor, always being

trimmed and replenished by a lean and grimy satellite, a man still

leaner and grimier, clothed in goggles and a girdle, always sitting

in front of it, heating and hammering iron bars with his hands,

with a clink which went on late into the night, and blowing his

bellows with his toes; bars and pieces of rusty iron pinned on the

smoky walls, and a group of idle men watching his skilful

manipulation, were the sights of the Abukawa smithy, and kept me

thralled in the balcony, though the whole clothesless population

stood for the whole evening in front of the house with a silent,

open-mouthed stare.

Early in the morning the same melancholy crowd appeared in the

dismal drizzle, which turned into a tremendous torrent, which has

lasted for sixteen hours. Low hills, broad rice valleys in which

people are puddling the rice a second time to kill the weeds, bad

roads, pretty villages, much indigo, few passengers, were the

features of the day's journey. At Morioka and several other

villages in this region I noticed that if you see one large, high,

well-built house, standing in enclosed grounds, with a look of

wealth about it, it is always that of the sake brewer. A bush

denotes the manufacture as well as the sale of sake, and these are

of all sorts, from the mangy bit of fir which has seen long service

to the vigorous truss of pine constantly renewed. It is curious

that this should formerly have been the sign of the sale of wine in

England.

The wind and rain were something fearful all that afternoon. I

could not ride, so I tramped on foot for some miles under an avenue

of pines, through water a foot deep, and, with my paper waterproof

soaked through, reached Toyoka half drowned and very cold, to

shiver over a hibachi in a clean loft, hung with my dripping

clothes, which had to be put on wet the next day. By 5 a.m. all

Toyoka assembled, and while I took my breakfast I was not only the

"cynosure" of the eyes of all the people outside, but of those of

about forty more who were standing in the doma, looking up the

ladder. When asked to depart by the house-master, they said, "It's

neither fair nor neighbourly in you to keep this great sight to

yourself, seeing that our lives may pass without again looking on a

foreign woman;" so they were allowed to remain! I. L. B.

LETTER XXVI

The Fatigues of Travelling--Torrents and Mud--Ito's Surliness--The

Blind Shampooers--A Supposed Monkey Theatre--A Suspended Ferry--A

Difficult Transit--Perils on the Yonetsurugawa--A Boatman Drowned--

Nocturnal Disturbances--A Noisy Yadoya--Storm-bound Travellers--

Hai! Hai!--More Nocturnal Disturbances

ODATE, July 29.

I have been suffering so much from my spine that I have been unable

to travel more than seven or eight miles daily for several days,

and even that with great difficulty. I try my own saddle, then a

pack-saddle, then walk through the mud; but I only get on because

getting on is a necessity, and as soon as I reach the night's

halting-place I am obliged to lie down at once. Only strong people

should travel in northern Japan. The inevitable fatigue is much

increased by the state of the weather, and doubtless my impressions

of the country are affected by it also, as a hamlet in a quagmire

in a gray mist or a soaking rain is a far less delectable object

than the same hamlet under bright sunshine. There has not been

such a season for thirty years. The rains have been tremendous. I

have lived in soaked clothes, in spite of my rain-cloak, and have

slept on a soaked stretcher in spite of all waterproof wrappings

for several days, and still the weather shows no signs of

improvement, and the rivers are so high on the northern road that I

am storm-bound as well as pain-bound here. Ito shows his sympathy

for me by intense surliness, though he did say very sensibly, "I'm

very sorry for you, but it's no use saying so over and over again;

as I can do nothing for you, you'd better send for the blind man!"

In Japanese towns and villages you hear every evening a man (or

men) making a low peculiar whistle as he walks along, and in large

towns the noise is quite a nuisance. It is made by blind men; but

a blind beggar is never seen throughout Japan, and the blind are an

independent, respected, and well-to-do class, carrying on the

occupations of shampooing, money-lending, and music.

We have had a very severe journey from Toyoka. That day the rain

was ceaseless, and in the driving mists one could see little but

low hills looming on the horizon, pine barrens, scrub, and flooded

rice-fields; varied by villages standing along roads which were

quagmires a foot deep, and where the clothing was specially ragged

and dirty. Hinokiyama, a village of samurai, on a beautiful slope,

was an exception, with its fine detached houses, pretty gardens,

deep-roofed gateways, grass and stone-faced terraces, and look of

refined, quiet comfort. Everywhere there was a quantity of indigo,

as is necessary, for nearly all the clothing of the lower classes

is blue. Near a large village we were riding on a causeway through

the rice-fields, Ito on the pack-horse in front, when we met a

number of children returning from school, who, on getting near us,

turned, ran away, and even jumped into the ditches, screaming as

they ran. The mago ran after them, caught the hindmost boy, and

dragged him back--the boy scared and struggling, the man laughing.

The boy said that they thought that Ito was a monkey-player, i.e.

the keeper of a monkey theatre, I a big ape, and the poles of my

bed the scaffolding of the stage!

Splashing through mire and water we found that the people of Tubine

wished to detain us, saying that all the ferries were stopped in

consequence of the rise in the rivers; but I had been so often

misled by false reports that I took fresh horses and went on by a

track along a very pretty hillside, overlooking the Yonetsurugawa,

a large and swollen river, which nearer the sea had spread itself

over the whole country. Torrents of rain were still falling, and

all out-of-doors industries were suspended. Straw rain-cloaks

hanging to dry dripped under all the eaves, our paper cloaks were

sodden, our dripping horses steamed, and thus we slid down a steep

descent into the hamlet of Kiriishi, thirty-one houses clustered

under persimmon trees under a wooded hillside, all standing in a

quagmire, and so abject and filthy that one could not ask for five

minutes' shelter in any one of them. Sure enough, on the bank of

the river, which was fully 400 yards wide, and swirling like a

mill-stream with a suppressed roar, there was an official order

prohibiting the crossing of man or beast, and before I had time to

think the mago had deposited the baggage on an islet in the mire

and was over the crest of the hill. I wished that the Government

was a little less paternal.

Just in the nick of time we discerned a punt drifting down the

river on the opposite side, where it brought up, and landed a man,

and Ito and two others yelled, howled, and waved so lustily as to

attract its notice, and to my joy an answering yell came across the

roar and rush of the river. The torrent was so strong that the

boatmen had to pole up on that side for half a mile, and in about

three-quarters of an hour they reached our side. They were

returning to Kotsunagi--the very place I wished to reach--but,

though only 2.5 miles off, the distance took nearly four hours of

the hardest work I ever saw done by men. Every moment I expected

to see them rupture blood-vessels or tendons. All their muscles

quivered. It is a mighty river, and was from eight to twelve feet

deep, and whirling down in muddy eddies; and often with their

utmost efforts in poling, when it seemed as if poles or backs must

break, the boat hung trembling and stationary for three or four

minutes at a time. After the slow and eventless tramp of the last

few days this was an exciting transit. Higher up there was a

flooded wood, and, getting into this, the men aided themselves

considerably by hauling by the trees; but when we got out of this,

another river joined the Yonetsurugawa, which with added strength

rushed and roared more wildly.

I had long been watching a large house-boat far above us on the

other side, which was being poled by desperate efforts by ten men.

At that point she must have been half a mile off, when the stream

overpowered the crew and in no time she swung round and came

drifting wildly down and across the river, broadside on to us. We

could not stir against the current, and had large trees on our

immediate left, and for a moment it was a question whether she

would not smash us to atoms. Ito was livid with fear; his white,

appalled face struck me as ludicrous, for I had no other thought

than the imminent peril of the large boat with her freight of

helpless families, when, just as she was within two feet of us, she

struck a stem and glanced off. Then her crew grappled a headless

trunk and got their hawser round it, and eight of them, one behind

the other, hung on to it, when it suddenly snapped, seven fell

backwards, and the forward one went overboard to be no more seen.

Some house that night was desolate. Reeling downwards, the big

mast and spar of the ungainly craft caught in a tree, giving her

such a check that they were able to make her fast. It was a

saddening incident. I asked Ito what he felt when we seemed in

peril, and he replied, "I thought I'd been good to my mother, and

honest, and I hoped I should go to a good place."

The fashion of boats varies much on different rivers. On this one

there are two sizes. Ours was a small one, flat-bottomed, 25 feet

long by 2.5 broad, drawing 6 inches, very low in the water, and

with sides slightly curved inwards. The prow forms a gradual long

curve from the body of the boat, and is very high.

The mists rolled away as dusk came on, and revealed a lovely

country with much picturesqueness of form, and near Kotsunagi the

river disappears into a narrow gorge with steep, sentinel hills,

dark with pine and cryptomeria. To cross the river we had to go

fully a mile above the point aimed at, and then a few minutes of

express speed brought us to a landing in a deep, tough quagmire in

a dark wood, through which we groped our lamentable way to the

yadoya. A heavy mist came on, and the rain returned in torrents;

the doma was ankle deep in black slush. The daidokoro was open to

the roof, roof and rafters were black with smoke, and a great fire

of damp wood was smoking lustily. Round some live embers in the

irori fifteen men, women, and children were lying, doing nothing,

by the dim light of an andon. It was picturesque decidedly, and I

was well disposed to be content when the production of some

handsome fusuma created daimiyo's rooms out of the farthest part of

the dim and wandering space, opening upon a damp garden, into which

the rain splashed all night.

The solitary spoil of the day's journey was a glorious lily, which

I presented to the house-master, and in the morning it was blooming

on the kami-dana in a small vase of priceless old Satsuma china. I

was awoke out of a sound sleep by Ito coming in with a rumour,

brought by some travellers, that the Prime Minister had been

assassinated, and fifty policemen killed! [This was probably a

distorted version of the partial mutiny of the Imperial Guard,

which I learned on landing in Yezo.] Very wild political rumours

are in the air in these outlandish regions, and it is not very

wonderful that the peasantry lack confidence in the existing order

of things after the changes of the last ten years, and the recent

assassination of the Home Minister. I did not believe the rumour,

for fanaticism, even in its wildest moods, usually owes some

allegiance to common sense; but it was disturbing, as I have

naturally come to feel a deep interest in Japanese affairs. A few

hours later Ito again presented himself with a bleeding cut on his

temple. In lighting his pipe--an odious nocturnal practice of the

Japanese--he had fallen over the edge of the fire-pot. I always

sleep in a Japanese kimona to be ready for emergencies, and soon

bound up his head, and slept again, to be awoke early by another

deluge.

We made an early start, but got over very little ground, owing to

bad roads and long delays. All day the rain came down in even

torrents, the tracks were nearly impassable, my horse fell five

times, I suffered severely from pain and exhaustion, and almost

fell into despair about ever reaching the sea. In these wild

regions there are no kago or norimons to be had, and a pack-horse

is the only conveyance, and yesterday, having abandoned my own

saddle, I had the bad luck to get a pack-saddle with specially

angular and uncompromising peaks, with a soaked and extremely

unwashed futon on the top, spars, tackle, ridges, and furrows of

the most exasperating description, and two nooses of rope to hold

on by as the animal slid down hill on his haunches, or let me

almost slide over his tail as he scrambled and plunged up hill.

It was pretty country, even in the downpour, when white mists

parted and fir-crowned heights looked out for a moment, or we slid

down into a deep glen with mossy boulders, lichen-covered stumps,

ferny carpet, and damp, balsamy smell of pyramidal cryptomeria, and

a tawny torrent dashing through it in gusts of passion. Then there

were low hills, much scrub, immense rice-fields, and violent

inundations. But it is not pleasant, even in the prettiest

country, to cling on to a pack-saddle with a saturated quilt below

you and the water slowly soaking down through your wet clothes into

your boots, knowing all the time that when you halt you must sleep

on a wet bed, and change into damp clothes, and put on the wet ones

again the next morning. The villages were poor, and most of the

houses were of boards rudely nailed together for ends, and for

sides straw rudely tied on; they had no windows, and smoke came out

of every crack. They were as unlike the houses which travellers

see in southern Japan as a "black hut" in Uist is like a cottage in

a trim village in Kent. These peasant proprietors have much to

learn of the art of living. At Tsuguriko, the next stage, where

the Transport Office was so dirty that I was obliged to sit in the

street in the rain, they told us that we could only get on a ri

farther, because the bridges were all carried away and the fords

were impassable; but I engaged horses, and, by dint of British

doggedness and the willingness of the mago, I got the horses singly

and without their loads in small punts across the swollen waters of

the Hayakuchi, the Yuwase, and the Mochida, and finally forded

three branches of my old friend the Yonetsurugawa, with the foam of

its hurrying waters whitening the men's shoulders and the horses'

packs, and with a hundred Japanese looking on at the "folly" of the

foreigner.

I like to tell you of kind people everywhere, and the two mago were

specially so, for, when they found that I was pushing on to Yezo

for fear of being laid up in the interior wilds, they did all they

could to help me; lifted me gently from the horse, made steps of

their backs for me to mount, and gathered for me handfuls of red

berries, which I ate out of politeness, though they tasted of some

nauseous drug. They suggested that I should stay at the

picturesquely-situated old village of Kawaguchi, but everything

about it was mildewed and green with damp, and the stench from the

green and black ditches with which it abounded was so overpowering,

even in passing through, that I was obliged to ride on to Odate, a

crowded, forlorn, half-tumbling-to-pieces town of 8000 people, with

bark roofs held down by stones.

The yadoyas are crowded with storm-staid travellers, and I had a

weary tramp from one to another, almost sinking from pain, pressed

upon by an immense crowd, and frequently bothered by a policeman,

who followed me from one place to the other, making wholly

unrighteous demands for my passport at that most inopportune time.

After a long search I could get nothing better than this room, with

fusuma of tissue paper, in the centre of the din of the house,

close to the doma and daidokoro. Fifty travellers, nearly all men,

are here, mostly speaking at the top of their voices, and in a

provincial jargon which exasperates Ito. Cooking, bathing, eating,

and, worst of all, perpetual drawing water from a well with a

creaking hoisting apparatus, are going on from 4.30 in the morning

till 11.30 at night, and on both evenings noisy mirth, of alcoholic

inspiration, and dissonant performances by geishas have added to

the dim

In all places lately Hai, "yes," has been pronounced He, Chi, Na,

Ne, to Ito's great contempt. It sounds like an expletive or

interjection rather than a response, and seems used often as a sign

of respect or attention only. Often it is loud and shrill, then

guttural, at times little more than a sigh. In these yadoyas every

sound is audible, and I hear low rumbling of mingled voices, and

above all the sharp Hai, Hai of the tea-house girls in full chorus

from every quarter of the house. The habit of saying it is so

strong that a man roused out of sleep jumps up with Hai, Hai, and

often, when I speak to Ito in English, a stupid Hebe sitting by

answers Hai.

I don't want to convey a false impression of the noise here. It

would be at least three times as great were I in equally close

proximity to a large hotel kitchen in England, with fifty Britons

only separated from me by paper partitions. I had not been long in

bed on Saturday night when I was awoke by Ito bringing in an old

hen which he said he could stew till it was tender, and I fell

asleep again with its dying squeak in my ears, to be awoke a second

time by two policemen wanting for some occult reason to see my

passport, and a third time by two men with lanterns scrambling and

fumbling about the room for the strings of a mosquito net, which

they wanted for another traveller. These are among the ludicrous

incidents of Japanese travelling. About five Ito woke me by saying

he was quite sure that the moxa would be the thing to cure my

spine, and, as we were going to stay all day, he would go and fetch

an operator; but I rejected this as emphatically as the services of

the blind man! Yesterday a man came and pasted slips of paper over

all the "peep holes" in the shoji, and I have been very little

annoyed, even though the yadoya is so crowded.

The rain continues to come down in torrents, and rumours are hourly

arriving of disasters to roads and bridges on the northern route.

I. L. B.

LETTER XXVII

Good-tempered Intoxication--The Effect of Sunshine--A tedious

Altercation--Evening Occupations--Noisy Talk--Social Gathering--

Unfair Comparisons.

SHIRASAWA, July 29.

Early this morning the rain-clouds rolled themselves up and

disappeared, and the bright blue sky looked as if it had been well

washed. I had to wait till noon before the rivers became fordable,

and my day's journey is only seven miles, as it is not possible to

go farther till more of the water runs off. We had very limp,

melancholy horses, and my mago was half-tipsy, and sang, talked,

and jumped the whole way. Sake is frequently taken warm, and in

that state produces a very noisy but good-tempered intoxication. I

have seen a good many intoxicated persons, but never one in the

least degree quarrelsome; and the effect very soon passes off,

leaving, however, an unpleasant nausea for two or three days as a

warning against excess. The abominable concoctions known under the

names of beer, wine, and brandy, produce a bad-tempered and

prolonged intoxication, and delirium tremens, rarely known as a

result of sake drinking, is being introduced under their baleful

influence.

The sun shone gloriously and brightened the hill-girdled valley in

which Odate stands into positive beauty, with the narrow river

flinging its bright waters over green and red shingle, lighting it

up in glints among the conical hills, some richly wooded with

coniferae, and others merely covered with scrub, which were tumbled

about in picturesque confusion. When Japan gets the sunshine, its

forest-covered hills and garden-like valleys are turned into

paradise. In a journey of 600 miles there has hardly been a patch

of country which would not have been beautiful in sunlight.

We crossed five severe fords with the water half-way up the horses'

bodies, in one of which the strong current carried my mago off his

feet, and the horse towed him ashore, singing and capering, his

drunken glee nothing abated by his cold bath. Everything is in a

state of wreck. Several river channels have been formed in places

where there was only one; there is not a trace of the road for a

considerable distance, not a bridge exists for ten miles, and a

great tract of country is covered with boulders, uprooted trees,

and logs floated from the mountain sides. Already, however, these

industrious peasants are driving piles, carrying soil for

embankments in creels on horses' backs, and making ropes of stones

to prevent a recurrence of the calamity. About here the female

peasants wear for field-work a dress which pleases me much by its

suitability--light blue trousers, with a loose sack over them,

confined at the waist by a girdle.

On arriving here in much pain, and knowing that the road was not

open any farther, I was annoyed by a long and angry conversation

between the house-master and Ito, during which the horses were not

unloaded, and the upshot of it was that the man declined to give me

shelter, saying that the police had been round the week before

giving notice that no foreigner was to be received without first

communicating with the nearest police station, which, in this

instance, is three hours off. I said that the authorities of Akita

ken could not by any local regulations override the Imperial edict

under which passports are issued; but he said he should be liable

to a fine and the withdrawal of his license if he violated the

rule. No foreigner, he said, had ever lodged in Shirasawa, and I

have no doubt that he added that he hoped no foreigner would ever

seek lodgings again. My passport was copied and sent off by

special runner, as I should have deeply regretted bringing trouble

on the poor man by insisting on my rights, and in much trepidation

he gave me a room open on one side to the village, and on another

to a pond, over which, as if to court mosquitoes, it is partially

built. I cannot think how the Japanese can regard a hole full of

dirty water as an ornamental appendage to a house.

My hotel expenses (including Ito's) are less than 3s. a-day, and in

nearly every place there has been a cordial desire that I should be

comfortable, and, considering that I have often put up in small,

rough hamlets off the great routes even of Japanese travel, the

accommodation, minus the fleas and the odours, has been

surprisingly excellent, not to be equalled, I should think, in

equally remote regions in any country in the world.

This evening, here, as in thousands of other villages, the men came

home from their work, ate their food, took their smoke, enjoyed

their children, carried them about, watched their games, twisted

straw ropes, made straw sandals, split bamboo, wove straw rain-

coats, and spent the time universally in those little economical

ingenuities and skilful adaptations which our people (the worse for

them) practise perhaps less than any other. There was no

assembling at the sake shop. Poor though the homes are, the men

enjoy them; the children are an attraction at any rate, and the

brawling and disobedience which often turn our working-class homes

into bear-gardens are unknown here, where docility and obedience

are inculcated from the cradle as a matter of course. The signs of

religion become fewer as I travel north, and it appears that the

little faith which exists consists mainly in a belief in certain

charms and superstitions, which the priests industriously foster.

A low voice is not regarded as "a most excellent thing," in man at

least, among the lower classes in Japan. The people speak at the

top of their voices, and, though most words and syllables end in

vowels, the general effect of a conversation is like the discordant

gabble of a farm-yard. The next room to mine is full of stormbound

travellers, and they and the house-master kept up what I thought

was a most important argument for four hours at the top of their

voices. I supposed it must be on the new and important ordinance

granting local elective assemblies, of which I heard at Odate, but

on inquiry found that it was possible to spend four mortal hours in

discussing whether the day's journey from Odate to Noshiro could be

made best by road or river.

Japanese women have their own gatherings, where gossip and chit-

chat, marked by a truly Oriental indecorum of speech, are the

staple of talk. I think that in many things, specially in some

which lie on the surface, the Japanese are greatly our superiors,

but that in many others they are immeasurably behind us. In living

altogether among this courteous, industrious, and civilised people,

one comes to forget that one is doing them a gross injustice in

comparing their manners and ways with those of a people moulded by

many centuries of Christianity. Would to God that we were so

Christianised that the comparison might always be favourable to us,

which it is not!

July 30.--In the room on the other side of mine were two men with

severe eye-disease, with shaven heads and long and curious

rosaries, who beat small drums as they walked, and were on

pilgrimage to the shrine of Fudo at Megura, near Yedo, a seated,

flame-surrounded idol, with a naked sword in one hand and a coil of

rope in the other, who has the reputation of giving sight to the

blind. At five this morning they began their devotions, which

consisted in repeating with great rapidity, and in a high

monotonous key for two hours, the invocation of the Nichiren sect

of Buddhists, Namu miyo ho ren ge Kiyo, which certainly no Japanese

understands, and on the meaning of which even the best scholars are

divided; one having given me, "Glory to the salvation-bringing

Scriptures;" another, "Hail, precious law and gospel of the lotus

flower;" and a third, "Heaven and earth! The teachings of the

wonderful lotus flower sect." Namu amidu Butsu occurred at

intervals, and two drums were beaten the whole time!

The rain, which began again at eleven last night, fell from five

till eight this morning, not in drops, but in streams, and in the

middle of it a heavy pall of blackness (said to be a total eclipse)

enfolded all things in a lurid gloom. Any detention is

exasperating within one day of my journey's end, and I hear without

equanimity that there are great difficulties ahead, and that our

getting through in three or even four days is doubtful. I hope you

will not be tired of the monotony of my letters. Such as they are,

they represent the scenes which a traveller would see throughout

much of northern Japan, and whatever interest they have consists in

the fact that they are a faithful representation, made upon the

spot, of what a foreigner sees and hears in travelling through a

large but unfrequented region. I. L. B.

LETTER XXVIII

Torrents of Rain--An unpleasant Detention--Devastations produced by

Floods--The Yadate Pass--The Force of Water--Difficulties thicken--

A Primitive Yadoya--The Water rises.

IKARIGASEKI, AOMORI KEN, August 2.

The prophecies concerning difficulties are fulfilled. For six days

and five nights the rain has never ceased, except for a few hours

at a time, and for the last thirteen hours, as during the eclipse

at Shirasawa, it has been falling in such sheets as I have only

seen for a few minutes at a time on the equator. I have been here

storm-staid for two days, with damp bed, damp clothes, damp

everything, and boots, bag, books, are all green with mildew. And

still the rain falls, and roads, bridges, rice-fields, trees, and

hillsides are being swept in a common ruin towards the Tsugaru

Strait, so tantalisingly near; and the simple people are calling on

the forgotten gods of the rivers and the hills, on the sun and

moon, and all the host of heaven, to save them from this "plague of

immoderate rain and waters." For myself, to be able to lie down

all day is something, and as "the mind, when in a healthy state,

reposes as quietly before an insurmountable difficulty as before an

ascertained truth," so, as I cannot get on, I have ceased to chafe,

and am rather inclined to magnify the advantages of the detention,

a necessary process, as you would think if you saw my surroundings!

The day before yesterday, in spite of severe pain, was one of the

most interesting of my journey. As I learned something of the

force of fire in Hawaii, I am learning not a little of the force of

water in Japan. We left Shirasawa at noon, as it looked likely to

clear, taking two horses and three men. It is beautiful scenery--a

wild valley, upon which a number of lateral ridges descend,

rendered strikingly picturesque by the dark pyramidal cryptomeria,

which are truly the glory of Japan. Five of the fords were deep

and rapid, and the entrance on them difficult, as the sloping

descents were all carried away, leaving steep banks, which had to

be levelled by the mattocks of the mago. Then the fords themselves

were gone; there were shallows where there had been depths, and

depths where there had been shallows; new channels were carved, and

great beds of shingle had been thrown up. Much wreckage lay about.

The road and its small bridges were all gone, trees torn up by the

roots or snapped short off by being struck by heavy logs were

heaped together like barricades, leaves and even bark being in many

cases stripped completely off; great logs floated down the river in

such numbers and with such force that we had to wait half an hour

in one place to secure a safe crossing; hollows were filled with

liquid mud, boulders of great size were piled into embankments,

causing perilous alterations in the course of the river; a fertile

valley had been utterly destroyed, and the men said they could

hardly find their way.

At the end of five miles it became impassable for horses, and, with

two of the mago carrying the baggage, we set off, wading through

water and climbing along the side of a hill, up to our knees in

soft wet soil. The hillside and the road were both gone, and there

were heavy landslips along the whole valley. Happily there was not

much of this exhausting work, for, just as higher and darker

ranges, densely wooded with cryptomeria, began to close us in, we

emerged upon a fine new road, broad enough for a carriage, which,

after crossing two ravines on fine bridges, plunges into the depths

of a magnificent forest, and then by a long series of fine zigzags

of easy gradients ascends the pass of Yadate, on the top of which,

in a deep sandstone cutting, is a handsome obelisk marking the

boundary between Akita and Aomori ken. This is a marvellous road

for Japan, it is so well graded and built up, and logs for

travellers' rests are placed at convenient distances. Some very

heavy work in grading and blasting has been done upon it, but there

are only four miles of it, with wretched bridle tracks at each end.

I left the others behind, and strolled on alone over the top of the

pass and down the other side, where the road is blasted out of rock

of a vivid pink and green colour, looking brilliant under the

trickle of water. I admire this pass more than anything I have

seen in Japan; I even long to see it again, but under a bright blue

sky. It reminds me much of the finest part of the Brunig Pass, and

something of some of the passes in the Rocky Mountains, but the

trees are far finer than in either. It was lonely, stately, dark,

solemn; its huge cryptomeria, straight as masts, sent their tall

spires far aloft in search of light; the ferns, which love damp and

shady places, were the only undergrowth; the trees flung their

balsamy, aromatic scent liberally upon the air, and, in the

unlighted depths of many a ravine and hollow, clear bright torrents

leapt and tumbled, drowning with their thundering bass the musical

treble of the lighter streams. Not a traveller disturbed the

solitude with his sandalled footfall; there was neither song of

bird nor hum of insect.

In the midst of this sublime scenery, and at the very top of the

pass, the rain, which had been light but steady during the whole

day, began to come down in streams and then in sheets. I have been

so rained upon for weeks that at first I took little notice of it,

but very soon changes occurred before my eyes which concentrated my

attention upon it. The rush of waters was heard everywhere, trees

of great size slid down, breaking others in their fall; rocks were

rent and carried away trees in their descent, the waters rose

before our eyes; with a boom and roar as of an earthquake a

hillside burst, and half the hill, with a noble forest of

cryptomeria, was projected outwards, and the trees, with the land

on which they grew, went down heads foremost, diverting a river

from its course, and where the forest-covered hillside had been

there was a great scar, out of which a torrent burst at high

pressure, which in half an hour carved for itself a deep ravine,

and carried into the valley below an avalanche of stones and sand.

Another hillside descended less abruptly, and its noble groves

found themselves at the bottom in a perpendicular position, and

will doubtless survive their transplantation. Actually, before my

eyes, this fine new road was torn away by hastily improvised

torrents, or blocked by landslips in several places, and a little

lower, in one moment, a hundred yards of it disappeared, and with

them a fine bridge, which was deposited aslant across the torrent

lower down.

On the descent, when things began to look very bad, and the

mountain-sides had become cascades bringing trees, logs, and rocks

down with them, we were fortunate enough to meet with two pack-

horses whose leaders were ignorant of the impassability of the road

to Odate, and they and my coolies exchanged loads. These were

strong horses, and the mago were skilful and courageous. They said

if we hurried we could just get to the hamlet they had left, they

thought; but while they spoke the road and the bridge below were

carried away. They insisted on lashing me to the pack-saddle. The

great stream, whose beauty I had formerly admired, was now a thing

of dread, and had to be forded four times without fords. It

crashed and thundered, drowning the feeble sound of human voices,

the torrents from the heavens hissed through the forest, trees and

logs came crashing down the hillsides, a thousand cascades added to

the din, and in the bewilderment produced by such an unusual

concatenation of sights and sounds we stumbled through the river,

the men up to their shoulders, the horses up to their backs. Again

and again we crossed. The banks being carried away, it was very

hard to get either into or out of the water; the horses had to

scramble or jump up places as high as their shoulders, all slippery

and crumbling, and twice the men cut steps for them with axes. The

rush of the torrent at the last crossing taxed the strength of both

men and horses, and, as I was helpless from being tied on, I

confess that I shut my eyes! After getting through, we came upon

the lands belonging to this village--rice-fields with the dykes

burst, and all the beautiful ridge and furrow cultivation of the

other crops carried away. The waters were rising fast, the men

said we must hurry; they unbound me, so that I might ride more

comfortably, spoke to the horses, and went on at a run. My horse,

which had nearly worn out his shoes in the fords, stumbled at every

step, the mago gave me a noose of rope to clutch, the rain fell in

such torrents that I speculated on the chance of being washed off

my saddle, when suddenly I saw a shower of sparks; I felt

unutterable things; I was choked, bruised, stifled, and presently

found myself being hauled out of a ditch by three men, and realised

that the horse had tumbled down in going down a steepish hill, and

that I had gone over his head. To climb again on the soaked futon

was the work of a moment, and, with men running and horses

stumbling and splashing, we crossed the Hirakawa by one fine

bridge, and half a mile farther re-crossed it on another, wishing

as we did so that all Japanese bridges were as substantial, for

they were both 100 feet long, and had central piers.

We entered Ikarigaseki from the last bridge, a village of 800

people, on a narrow ledge between an abrupt hill and the Hirakawa,

a most forlorn and tumble-down place, given up to felling timber

and making shingles; and timber in all its forms--logs, planks,

faggots, and shingles--is heaped and stalked about. It looks more

like a lumberer's encampment than a permanent village, but it is

beautifully situated, and unlike any of the innumerable villages

that I have ever seen.

The street is long and narrow, with streams in stone channels on

either side; but these had overflowed, and men, women, and children

were constructing square dams to keep the water, which had already

reached the doma, from rising over the tatami. Hardly any house

has paper windows, and in the few which have, they are so black

with smoke as to look worse than none. The roofs are nearly flat,

and are covered with shingles held on by laths and weighted with

large stones. Nearly all the houses look like temporary sheds, and

most are as black inside as a Barra hut. The walls of many are

nothing but rough boards tied to the uprights by straw ropes.

In the drowning torrent, sitting in puddles of water, and drenched

to the skin hours before, we reached this very primitive yadoya,

the lower part of which is occupied by the daidokoro, a party of

storm-bound students, horses, fowls, and dogs. My room is a

wretched loft, reached by a ladder, with such a quagmire at its

foot that I have to descend into it in Wellington boots. It was

dismally grotesque at first. The torrent on the unceiled roof

prevented Ito from hearing what I said, the bed was soaked, and the

water, having got into my box, had dissolved the remains of the

condensed milk, and had reduced clothes, books, and paper into a

condition of universal stickiness. My kimono was less wet than

anything else, and, borrowing a sheet of oiled paper, I lay down in

it, till roused up in half an hour by Ito shrieking above the din

on the roof that the people thought that the bridge by which we had

just entered would give way; and, running to the river bank, we

joined a large crowd, far too intensely occupied by the coming

disaster to take any notice of the first foreign lady they had ever

seen.

The Hirakawa, which an hour before was merely a clear, rapid

mountain stream, about four feet deep, was then ten feet deep, they

said, and tearing along, thick and muddy, and with a fearful roar,

"And each wave was crested with tawny foam,

Like the mane of a chestnut steed."

Immense logs of hewn timber, trees, roots, branches, and faggots,

were coming down in numbers. The abutment on this side was much

undermined, but, except that the central pier trembled whenever a

log struck it, the bridge itself stood firm--so firm, indeed, that

two men, anxious to save some property on the other side, crossed

it after I arrived. Then logs of planed timber of large size, and

joints, and much wreckage, came down--fully forty fine timbers,

thirty feet long, for the fine bridge above had given way. Most of

the harvest of logs cut on the Yadate Pass must have been lost, for

over 300 were carried down in the short time in which I watched the

river. This is a very heavy loss to this village, which lives by

the timber trade. Efforts were made at a bank higher up to catch

them as they drifted by, but they only saved about one in twenty.

It was most exciting to see the grand way in which these timbers

came down; and the moment in which they were to strike or not to

strike the pier was one of intense suspense. After an hour of this

two superb logs, fully thirty feet long, came down close together,

and, striking the central pier nearly simultaneously, it shuddered

horribly, the great bridge parted in the middle, gave an awful

groan like a living thing, plunged into the torrent, and re-

appeared in the foam below only as disjointed timbers hurrying to

the sea. Not a vestige remained. The bridge below was carried

away in the morning, so, till the river becomes fordable, this

little place is completely isolated. On thirty miles of road, out

of nineteen bridges only two remain, and the road itself is almost

wholly carried away!

LETTER XXVIII--(Continued)

Scanty Resources--Japanese Children--Children's Games--A Sagacious

Example--A Kite Competition--Personal Privations.

IKARIGASEKI.

I have well-nigh exhausted the resources of this place. They are

to go out three times a day to see how much the river has fallen;

to talk with the house-master and Kocho; to watch the children's

games and the making of shingles; to buy toys and sweetmeats and

give them away; to apply zinc lotion to a number of sore eyes three

times daily, under which treatment, during three days, there has

been a wonderful amendment; to watch the cooking, spinning, and

other domestic processes in the daidokoro; to see the horses, which

are also actually in it, making meals of green leaves of trees

instead of hay; to see the lepers, who are here for some waters

which are supposed to arrest, if not to cure, their terrible

malady; to lie on my stretcher and sew, and read the papers of the

Asiatic Society, and to go over all possible routes to Aomori. The

people have become very friendly in consequence of the eye lotion,

and bring many diseases for my inspection, most of which would

never have arisen had cleanliness of clothing and person been

attended to. The absence of soap, the infrequency with which

clothing is washed, and the absence of linen next the skin, cause

various cutaneous diseases, which are aggravated by the bites and

stings of insects. Scald-head affects nearly half the children

here.

I am very fond of Japanese children. I have never yet heard a baby

cry, and I have never seen a child troublesome or disobedient.

Filial piety is the leading virtue in Japan, and unquestioning

obedience is the habit of centuries. The arts and threats by which

English mothers cajole or frighten children into unwilling

obedience appear unknown. I admire the way in which children are

taught to be independent in their amusements. Part of the home

education is the learning of the rules of the different games,

which are absolute, and when there is a doubt, instead of a

quarrelsome suspension of the game, the fiat of a senior child

decides the matter. They play by themselves, and don't bother

adults at every turn. I usually carry sweeties with me, and give

them to the children, but not one has ever received them without

first obtaining permission from the father or mother. When that is

gained they smile and bow profoundly, and hand the sweeties to

those present before eating any themselves. They are gentle

creatures, but too formal and precocious.

They have no special dress. This is so queer that I cannot repeat

it too often. At three they put on the kimono and girdle, which

are as inconvenient to them as to their parents, and childish play

in this garb is grotesque. I have, however, never seen what we

call child's play--that general abandonment to miscellaneous

impulses, which consists in struggling, slapping, rolling, jumping,

kicking, shouting, laughing, and quarrelling! Two fine boys are

very clever in harnessing paper carts to the backs of beetles with

gummed traces, so that eight of them draw a load of rice up an

inclined plane. You can imagine what the fate of such a load and

team would be at home among a number of snatching hands. Here a

number of infants watch the performance with motionless interest,

and never need the adjuration, "Don't touch." In most of the

houses there are bamboo cages for "the shrill-voiced Katydid," and

the children amuse themselves with feeding these vociferous

grasshoppers. The channels of swift water in the street turn a

number of toy water-wheels, which set in motion most ingenious

mechanical toys, of which a model of the automatic rice-husker is

the commonest, and the boys spend much time in devising and

watching these, which are really very fascinating. It is the

holidays, but "holiday tasks" are given, and in the evenings you

hear the hum of lessons all along the street for about an hour.

The school examination is at the re-opening of the school after the

holidays, instead of at the end of the session--an arrangement

which shows an honest desire to discern the permanent gain made by

the scholars.

This afternoon has been fine and windy, and the boys have been

flying kites, made of tough paper on a bamboo frame, all of a

rectangular shape, some of them five feet square, and nearly all

decorated with huge faces of historical heroes. Some of them have

a humming arrangement made of whale-bone. There was a very

interesting contest between two great kites, and it brought out the

whole population. The string of each kite, for 30 feet or more

below the frame, was covered with pounded glass, made to adhere

very closely by means of tenacious glue, and for two hours the

kite-fighters tried to get their kites into a proper position for

sawing the adversary's string in two. At last one was successful,

and the severed kite became his property, upon which victor and

vanquished exchanged three low bows. Silently as the people

watched and received the destruction of their bridge, so silently

they watched this exciting contest. The boys also flew their kites

while walking on stilts--a most dexterous performance, in which few

were able to take part--and then a larger number gave a stilt race.

The most striking out-of-door games are played at fixed seasons of

the year, and are not to be seen now.

There are twelve children in this yadoya, and after dark they

regularly play at a game which Ito says "is played in the winter in

every house in Japan." The children sit in a circle, and the

adults look on eagerly, child-worship being more common in Japan

than in America, and, to my thinking, the Japanese form is the

best.

From proverbial philosophy to personal privation is rather a

descent, but owing to the many detentions on the journey my small

stock of foreign food is exhausted, and I have been living here on

rice, cucumbers, and salt salmon--so salt that, after being boiled

in two waters, it produces a most distressing thirst. Even this

has failed to-day, as communication with the coast has been stopped

for some time, and the village is suffering under the calamity of

its stock of salt-fish being completely exhausted. There are no

eggs, and rice and cucumbers are very like the "light food" which

the Israelites "loathed." I had an omelette one day, but it was

much like musty leather. The Italian minister said to me in

Tokiyo, "No question in Japan is so solemn as that of food," and

many others echoed what I thought at the time a most unworthy

sentiment. I recognised its truth to-day when I opened my last

resort, a box of Brand's meat lozenges, and found them a mass of

mouldiness. One can only dry clothes here by hanging them in the

wood smoke, so I prefer to let them mildew on the walls, and have

bought a straw rain-coat, which is more reliable than the paper

waterproofs. I hear the hum of the children at their lessons for

the last time, for the waters are falling fast, and we shall leave

in the morning.

I. L. B.

LETTER XXIX

Hope deferred--Effects of the Flood--Activity of the Police--A

Ramble in Disguise--The Tanabata Festival--Mr. Satow's Reputation.

KUROISHI, August 5.

After all the waters did not fall as was expected, and I had to

spend a fourth day at Ikarigaseki. We left early on Saturday, as

we had to travel fifteen miles without halting. The sun shone on

all the beautiful country, and on all the wreck and devastation, as

it often shines on the dimpling ocean the day after a storm. We

took four men, crossed two severe fords where bridges had been

carried away, and where I and the baggage got very wet; saw great

devastations and much loss of crops and felled timber; passed under

a cliff, which for 200 feet was composed of fine columnar basalt in

six-sided prisms, and quite suddenly emerged on a great plain, on

which green billows of rice were rolling sunlit before a fresh

north wind. This plain is liberally sprinkled with wooded villages

and surrounded by hills; one low range forming a curtain across the

base of Iwakisan, a great snow-streaked dome, which rises to the

west of the plain to a supposed height of 5000 feet. The water had

risen in most of the villages to a height of four feet, and had

washed the lower part of the mud walls away. The people were busy

drying their tatami, futons, and clothing, reconstructing their

dykes and small bridges, and fishing for the logs which were still

coming down in large quantities.

In one town two very shabby policemen rushed upon us, seized the

bridle of my horse, and kept me waiting for a long time in the

middle of a crowd, while they toilsomely bored through the

passport, turning it up and down, and holding it up to the light,

as though there were some nefarious mystery about it. My horse

stumbled so badly that I was obliged to walk to save myself from

another fall, and, just as my powers were failing, we met a kuruma,

which by good management, such as being carried occasionally,

brought me into Kuroishi, a neat town of 5500 people, famous for

the making of clogs and combs, where I have obtained a very neat,

airy, upstairs room, with a good view over the surrounding country

and of the doings of my neighbours in their back rooms and gardens.

Instead of getting on to Aomori I am spending three days and two

nights here, and, as the weather has improved and my room is

remarkably cheerful, the rest has been very pleasant. As I have

said before, it is difficult to get any information about anything

even a few miles off, and even at the Post Office they cannot give

any intelligence as to the date of the sailings of the mail steamer

between Aomori, twenty miles off, and Hakodate.

The police were not satisfied with seeing my passport, but must

also see me, and four of them paid me a polite but domiciliary

visit the evening of my arrival. That evening the sound of

drumming was ceaseless, and soon after I was in bed Ito announced

that there was something really worth seeing, so I went out in my

kimono and without my hat, and in this disguise altogether escaped

recognition as a foreigner. Kuroishi is unlighted, and I was

tumbling and stumbling along in overhaste when a strong arm cleared

the way, and the house-master appeared with a very pretty lantern,

hanging close to the ground from a cane held in the hand. Thus

came the phrase, "Thy word is a light unto my feet."

We soon reached a point for seeing the festival procession advance

towards us, and it was so beautiful and picturesque that it kept me

out for an hour. It passes through all the streets between 7 and

10 p.m. each night during the first week in August, with an ark, or

coffer, containing slips of paper, on which (as I understand)

wishes are written, and each morning at seven this is carried to

the river and the slips are cast upon the stream. The procession

consisted of three monster drums nearly the height of a man's body,

covered with horsehide, and strapped to the drummers, end upwards,

and thirty small drums, all beaten rub-a-dub-dub without ceasing.

Each drum has the tomoye painted on its ends. Then there were

hundreds of paper lanterns carried on long poles of various lengths

round a central lantern, 20 feet high, itself an oblong 6 feet

long, with a front and wings, and all kinds of mythical and

mystical creatures painted in bright colours upon it--a

transparency rather than a lantern, in fact. Surrounding it were

hundreds of beautiful lanterns and transparencies of all sorts of

fanciful shapes--fans, fishes, birds, kites, drums; the hundreds of

people and children who followed all carried circular lanterns, and

rows of lanterns with the tomoye on one side and two Chinese

characters on the other hung from the eaves all along the line of

the procession. I never saw anything more completely like a fairy

scene, the undulating waves of lanterns as they swayed along, the

soft lights and soft tints moving aloft in the darkness, the

lantern-bearers being in deep shadow. This festival is called the

tanabata, or seiseki festival, but I am unable to get any

information about it. Ito says that he knows what it means, but is

unable to explain, and adds the phrase he always uses when in

difficulties, "Mr. Satow would be able to tell you all about it."

I. L. B.

LETTER XXX

A Lady's Toilet--Hair-dressing--Paint and Cosmetics--Afternoon

Visitors--Christian Converts.

KUROISHI, August 5.

This is a pleasant place, and my room has many advantages besides

light and cleanliness, as, for instance, that I overlook my

neighbours and that I have seen a lady at her toilet preparing for

a wedding! A married girl knelt in front of a black lacquer

toilet-box with a spray of cherry blossoms in gold sprawling over

it, and lacquer uprights at the top, which supported a polished

metal mirror. Several drawers in the toilet-box were open, and

toilet requisites in small lacquer boxes were lying on the floor.

A female barber stood behind the lady, combing, dividing, and tying

her hair, which, like that of all Japanese women, was glossy black,

but neither fine nor long. The coiffure is an erection, a complete

work of art. Two divisions, three inches apart, were made along

the top of the head, and the lock of hair between these was combed,

stiffened with a bandoline made from the Uvario Japonica, raised

two inches from the forehead, turned back, tied, and pinned to the

back hair. The rest was combed from each side to the back, and

then tied loosely with twine made of paper. Several switches of

false hair were then taken out of a long lacquer box, and, with the

aid of a quantity of bandoline and a solid pad, the ordinary smooth

chignon was produced, to which several loops and bows of hair were

added, interwoven with a little dark-blue crepe, spangled with

gold. A single, thick, square-sided, tortoiseshell pin was stuck

through the whole as an ornament.

The fashions of dressing the hair are fixed. They vary with the

ages of female children, and there is a slight difference between

the coiffure of the married and unmarried. The two partings on the

top of the head and the chignon never vary. The amount of

stiffening used is necessary, as the head is never covered out of

doors. This arrangement will last in good order for a week or

more--thanks to the wooden pillow.

The barber's work was only partially done when the hair was

dressed, for every vestige of recalcitrant eyebrow was removed, and

every downy hair which dared to display itself on the temples and

neck was pulled out with tweezers. This removal of all short hair

has a tendency to make even the natural hair look like a wig. Then

the lady herself took a box of white powder, and laid it on her

face, ears, and neck, till her skin looked like a mask. With a

camel's-hair brush she then applied some mixture to her eyelids to

make the bright eyes look brighter, the teeth were blackened, or

rather reblackened, with a feather brush dipped in a solution of

gall-nuts and iron-filings--a tiresome and disgusting process,

several times repeated, and then a patch of red was placed upon the

lower lip. I cannot say that the effect was pleasing, but the girl

thought so, for she turned her head so as to see the general effect

in the mirror, smiled, and was satisfied. The remainder of her

toilet, which altogether took over three hours, was performed in

private, and when she reappeared she looked as if a very unmeaning-

looking wooden doll had been dressed up with the exquisite good

taste, harmony, and quietness which characterise the dress of

Japanese women.

A most rigid social etiquette draws an impassable line of

demarcation between the costume of the virtuous woman in every rank

and that of her frail sister. The humiliating truth that many of

our female fashions are originated by those whose position we the

most regret, and are then carefully copied by all classes of women

in our country, does not obtain credence among Japanese women, to

whom even the slightest approximation in the style of hair-

dressing, ornament, or fashion of garments would be a shame.

I was surprised to hear that three "Christian students" from

Hirosaki wished to see me--three remarkably intelligent-looking,

handsomely-dressed young men, who all spoke a little English. One

of them had the brightest and most intellectual face which I have

seen in Japan. They are of the samurai class, as I should have

known from the superior type of face and manner. They said that

they heard that an English lady was in the house, and asked me if I

were a Christian, but apparently were not satisfied till, in answer

to the question if I had a Bible, I was able to produce one.

Hirosaki is a castle town of some importance, 3.5 ri from here, and

its ex-daimiyo supports a high-class school or college there, which

has had two Americans successively for its headmasters. These

gentlemen must have been very consistent in Christian living as

well as energetic in Christian teaching, for under their auspices

thirty young men have embraced Christianity. As all of these are

well educated, and several are nearly ready to pass as teachers

into Government employment, their acceptance of the "new way" may

have an important bearing on the future of this region.

I. L. B.

LETTER XXXI

A Travelling Curiosity--Rude Dwellings--Primitive Simplicity--The

Public Bath-house.

KUROISHI.

Yesterday was beautiful, and, dispensing for the first time with

Ito's attendance, I took a kuruma for the day, and had a very

pleasant excursion into a cul de sac in the mountains. The one

drawback was the infamous road, which compelled me either to walk

or be mercilessly jolted. The runner was a nice, kind, merry

creature, quite delighted, Ito said, to have a chance of carrying

so great a sight as a foreigner into a district in which no

foreigner has even been seen. In the absolute security of Japanese

travelling, which I have fully realised for a long time, I look

back upon my fears at Kasukabe with a feeling of self-contempt.

The scenery, which was extremely pretty, gained everything from

sunlight and colour--wonderful shades of cobalt and indigo, green

blues and blue greens, and flashes of white foam in unsuspected

rifts. It looked a simple, home-like region, a very pleasant land.

We passed through several villages of farmers who live in very

primitive habitations, built of mud, looking as if the mud had been

dabbed upon the framework with the hands. The walls sloped

slightly inwards, the thatch was rude, the eaves were deep and

covered all manner of lumber; there was a smoke-hole in a few, but

the majority smoked all over like brick-kilns; they had no windows,

and the walls and rafters were black and shiny. Fowls and horses

live on one side of the dark interior, and the people on the other.

The houses were alive with unclothed children, and as I repassed in

the evening unclothed men and women, nude to their waists, were

sitting outside their dwellings with the small fry, clothed only in

amulets, about them, several big yellow dogs forming part of each

family group, and the faces of dogs, children, and people were all

placidly contented! These farmers owned many good horses, and

their crops were splendid. Probably on matsuri days all appear in

fine clothes taken from ample hoards. They cannot be so poor, as

far as the necessaries of life are concerned; they are only very

"far back." They know nothing better, and are contented; but their

houses are as bad as any that I have ever seen, and the simplicity

of Eden is combined with an amount of dirt which makes me sceptical

as to the performance of even weekly ablutions.

Upper Nakano is very beautiful, and in the autumn, when its myriads

of star-leaved maples are scarlet and crimson, against a dark

background of cryptomeria, among which a great white waterfall

gleams like a snow-drift before it leaps into the black pool below,

it must be well worth a long journey. I have not seen anything

which has pleased me more. There is a fine flight of moss-grown

stone steps down to the water, a pretty bridge, two superb stone

torii, some handsome stone lanterns, and then a grand flight of

steep stone steps up a hill-side dark with cryptomeria leads to a

small Shinto shrine. Not far off there is a sacred tree, with the

token of love and revenge upon it. The whole place is entrancing.

Lower Nakano, which I could only reach on foot, is only interesting

as possessing some very hot springs, which are valuable in cases of

rheumatism and sore eyes. It consists mainly of tea-houses and

yadoyas, and seemed rather gay. It is built round the edge of an

oblong depression, at the bottom of which the bath-houses stand, of

which there are four, only nominally separated, and with but two

entrances, which open directly upon the bathers. In the two end

houses women and children were bathing in large tanks, and in the

centre ones women and men were bathing together, but at opposite

sides, with wooden ledges to sit upon all round. I followed the

kuruma-runner blindly to the baths, and when once in I had to go

out at the other side, being pressed upon by people from behind;

but the bathers were too polite to take any notice of my most

unwilling intrusion, and the kuruma-runner took me in without the

slightest sense of impropriety in so doing. I noticed that formal

politeness prevailed in the bath-house as elsewhere, and that

dippers and towels were handed from one to another with profound

bows. The public bath-house is said to be the place in which

public opinion is formed, as it is with us in clubs and public-

houses, and that the presence of women prevents any dangerous or

seditious consequences; but the Government is doing its best to

prevent promiscuous bathing; and, though the reform may travel

slowly into these remote regions, it will doubtless arrive sooner

or later. The public bath-house is one of the features of Japan.

I. L. B.

LETTER XXXII

A Hard Day's Journey--An Overturn--Nearing the Ocean--Joyful

Excitement--Universal Greyness--Inopportune Policemen--A Stormy

Voyage--A Wild Welcome--A Windy Landing--The Journey's End.

HAKODATE, YEZO, August, 1878.

The journey from Kuroishi to Aomori, though only 22.5 miles, was a

tremendous one, owing to the state of the roads; for more rain had

fallen, and the passage of hundreds of pack-horses heavily loaded

with salt-fish had turned the tracks into quagmires. At the end of

the first stage the Transport Office declined to furnish a kuruma,

owing to the state of the roads; but, as I was not well enough to

ride farther, I bribed two men for a very moderate sum to take me

to the coast; and by accommodating each other we got on tolerably,

though I had to walk up all the hills and down many, to get out at

every place where a little bridge had been carried away, that the

kuruma might be lifted over the gap, and often to walk for 200

yards at a time, because it sank up to its axles in the quagmire.

In spite of all precautions I was upset into a muddy ditch, with

the kuruma on the top of me; but, as my air-pillow fortunately fell

between the wheel and me, I escaped with nothing worse than having

my clothes soaked with water and mud, which, as I had to keep them

on all night, might have given me cold, but did not. We met

strings of pack-horses the whole way, carrying salt-fish, which is

taken throughout the interior.

The mountain-ridge, which runs throughout the Main Island, becomes

depressed in the province of Nambu, but rises again into grand,

abrupt hills at Aomori Bay. Between Kuroishi and Aomori, however,

it is broken up into low ranges, scantily wooded, mainly with pine,

scrub oak, and the dwarf bamboo. The Sesamum ignosco, of which the

incense-sticks are made, covers some hills to the exclusion of all

else. Rice grows in the valleys, but there is not much

cultivation, and the country looks rough, cold, and hyperborean.

The farming hamlets grew worse and worse, with houses made roughly

of mud, with holes scratched in the side for light to get in, or

for smoke to get out, and the walls of some were only great pieces

of bark and bundles of straw tied to the posts with straw ropes.

The roofs were untidy, but this was often concealed by the profuse

growth of the water-melons which trailed over them. The people

were very dirty, but there was no appearance of special poverty,

and a good deal of money must be made on the horses and mago

required for the transit of fish from Yezo, and for rice to it.

At Namioka occurred the last of the very numerous ridges we have

crossed since leaving Nikko at a point called Tsugarusaka, and from

it looked over a rugged country upon a dark-grey sea, nearly

landlocked by pine-clothed hills, of a rich purple indigo colour.

The clouds were drifting, the colour was intensifying, the air was

fresh and cold, the surrounding soil was peaty, the odours of pines

were balsamic, it looked, felt, and smelt like home; the grey sea

was Aomori Bay, beyond was the Tsugaru Strait,--my long land-

journey was done. A traveller said a steamer was sailing for Yezo

at night, so, in a state of joyful excitement, I engaged four men,

and by dragging, pushing, and lifting, they got me into Aomori, a

town of grey houses, grey roofs, and grey stones on roofs, built on

a beach of grey sand, round a grey bay--a miserable-looking place,

though the capital of the ken.

It has a great export trade in cattle and rice to Yezo, besides

being the outlet of an immense annual emigration from northern

Japan to the Yezo fishery, and imports from Hakodate large

quantities of fish, skins, and foreign merchandise. It has some

trade in a pretty but not valuable "seaweed," or variegated

lacquer, called Aomori lacquer, but not actually made there, its

own speciality being a sweetmeat made of beans and sugar. It has a

deep and well-protected harbour, but no piers or conveniences for

trade. It has barracks and the usual Government buildings, but

there was no time to learn anything about it,--only a short half-

hour for getting my ticket at the Mitsu Bishi office, where they

demanded and copied my passport; for snatching a morsel of fish at

a restaurant where "foreign food" was represented by a very dirty

table-cloth; and for running down to the grey beach, where I was

carried into a large sampan crowded with Japanese steerage

passengers.

The wind was rising, a considerable surf was running, the spray was

flying over the boat, the steamer had her steam up, and was ringing

and whistling impatiently, there was a scud of rain, and I was

standing trying to keep my paper waterproof from being blown off,

when three inopportune policemen jumped into the boat and demanded

my passport. For a moment I wished them and the passport under the

waves! The steamer is a little old paddle-boat of about 70 tons,

with no accommodation but a single cabin on deck. She was as clean

and trim as a yacht, and, like a yacht, totally unfit for bad

weather. Her captain, engineers, and crew were all Japanese, and

not a word of English was spoken. My clothes were very wet, and

the night was colder than the day had been, but the captain kindly

covered me up with several blankets on the floor, so I did not

suffer. We sailed early in the evening, with a brisk northerly

breeze, which chopped round to the south-east, and by eleven blew a

gale; the sea ran high, the steamer laboured and shipped several

heavy seas, much water entered the cabin, the captain came below

every half-hour, tapped the barometer, sipped some tea, offered me

a lump of sugar, and made a face and gesture indicative of bad

weather, and we were buffeted about mercilessly till 4 a.m., when

heavy rain came on, and the gale fell temporarily with it. The

boat is not fit for a night passage, and always lies in port when

bad weather is expected; and as this was said to be the severest

gale which has swept the Tsugaru Strait since January, the captain

was uneasy about her, but being so, showed as much calmness as if

he had been a Briton!

The gale rose again after sunrise, and when, after doing sixty

miles in fourteen hours, we reached the heads of Hakodate Harbour,

it was blowing and pouring like a bad day in Argyllshire, the spin-

drift was driving over the bay, the Yezo mountains loomed darkly

and loftily through rain and mist, and wind and thunder, and

"noises of the northern sea," gave me a wild welcome to these

northern shores. A rocky head like Gibraltar, a cold-blooded-

looking grey town, straggling up a steep hillside, a few coniferae,

a great many grey junks, a few steamers and vessels of foreign rig

at anchor, a number of sampans riding the rough water easily, seen

in flashes between gusts of rain and spin-drift, were all I saw,

but somehow it all pleased me from its breezy, northern look.

The steamer was not expected in the gale, so no one met me, and I

went ashore with fifty Japanese clustered on the top of a decked

sampan in such a storm of wind and rain that it took us 1.5 hours

to go half a mile; then I waited shelterless on the windy beach

till the Customs' Officers were roused from their late slumbers,

and then battled with the storm for a mile up a steep hill. I was

expected at the hospitable Consulate, but did not know it, and came

here to the Church Mission House, to which Mr. and Mrs. Dening

kindly invited me when I met them in Tokiyo. I was unfit to enter

a civilised dwelling; my clothes, besides being soaked, were coated

and splashed with mud up to the top of my hat; my gloves and boots

were finished, my mud-splashed baggage was soaked with salt water;

but I feel a somewhat legitimate triumph at having conquered all

obstacles, and having accomplished more than I intended to

accomplish when I left Yedo.

How musical the clamour of the northern ocean is! How inspiriting

the shrieking and howling of the boisterous wind! Even the fierce

pelting of the rain is home-like, and the cold in which one shivers

is stimulating! You cannot imagine the delight of being in a room

with a door that will lock, to be in a bed instead of on a

stretcher, of finding twenty-three letters containing good news,

and of being able to read them in warmth and quietness under the

roof of an English home!

I. L. B.

ITINERARY OF ROUTE FROM NIIGATA TO AOMORI

No. of Houses. Ri. Cho.

Kisaki 56 4

Tsuiji 209 6

Kurokawa 215 2 12

Hanadati 2O 2

Kawaguchi 27 3

Numa 24 1 18

Tamagawa 40 3

Okuni 210 2 11

Kurosawa 17 1 18

Ichinono 2O 1 18

Shirokasawa 42 1 21

Tenoko 120 3 11

Komatsu 513 2 13

Akayu 350 4

Kaminoyama 650 5

Yamagata 21,O00 souls 3 19

Tendo 1,040 3 8

Tateoka 307 3 21

Tochiida 217 1 33

Obanasawa 506 1 21

Ashizawa 70 1 21

Shinjo 1,060 4 6

Kanayama 165 3 27

Nosoki 37 3 9

Innai 257 3 12

Yusawa 1,506 3 35

Yokote 2,070 4 27

Rokugo 1,062 6

Shingoji 209 1 28

Kubota 36,587 souls 16

Minato 2,108 1 28

Carry forward 107 21

No. of Houses Ri. Cho.

Brought forward 107 21

Abukawa 163 3 33

Ichi Nichi Ichi 306 1 34

Kado 151 2 9

Hinikoyama 396 2 9

Tsugurata 186 1 14

Tubine 153 1 18

Kiriishi 31 1 14

Kotsunagi 47 1 16

Tsuguriko 136 3 5

Odate 1,673 4 23

Shirasawa 71 2 19

Ikarigaseki 175 4 18

Kuroishi 1,176 6 19

Daishaka 43 4

Shinjo 51 2 21

Aomori 1 24

Ri 153 9

About 368 miles.

This is considerably under the actual distance, as on several of

the mountain routes the ri is 56 cho, but in the lack of accurate

information the ri has been taken at its ordinary standard of 36

cho throughout.

LETTER XXXIII

Form and Colour--A Windy Capital--Eccentricities in House Roofs.

HAKODATE, YEZO, August 13, 1878

After a tremendous bluster for two days the weather has become

beautifully fine, and I find the climate here more invigorating

than that of the main island. It is Japan, but yet there is a

difference somehow. When the mists lift they reveal not mountains

smothered in greenery, but naked peaks, volcanoes only recently

burnt out, with the red ash flaming under the noonday sun, and

passing through shades of pink into violet at sundown. Strips of

sand border the bay, ranges of hills, with here and there a patch

of pine or scrub, fade into the far-off blue, and the great cloud

shadows lie upon their scored sides in indigo and purple. Blue as

the Adriatic are the waters of the land-locked bay, and the snowy

sails of pale junks look whiter than snow against its intense

azure. The abruptness of the double peaks behind the town is

softened by a belt of cryptomeria, the sandy strip which connects

the headland with the mainland heightens the general resemblance of

the contour of the ground to Gibraltar; but while one dreams of the

western world a kuruma passes one at a trot, temple drums are

beaten in a manner which does not recall "the roll of the British

drum," a Buddhist funeral passes down the street, or a man-cart

pulled and pushed by four yellow-skinned, little-clothed mannikins,

creaks by, with the monotonous grunt of Ha huida.

A single look at Hakodate itself makes one feel that it is Japan

all over. The streets are very wide and clean, but the houses are

mean and low. The city looks as if it had just recovered from a

conflagration. The houses are nothing but tinder. The grand tile

roofs of some other cities are not to be seen. There is not an

element of permanence in the wide, and windy streets. It is an

increasing and busy place; it lies for two miles along the shore,

and has climbed the hill till it can go no higher; but still houses

and people look poor. It has a skeleton aspect too, which is

partially due to the number of permanent "clothes-horses" on the

roofs. Stones, however, are its prominent feature. Looking down

upon it from above you see miles of grey boulders, and realise that

every roof in the windy capital is "hodden doun" by a weight of

paving stones. Nor is this all. Some of the flatter roofs are

pebbled all over like a courtyard, and others, such as the roof of

this house, for instance, are covered with sod and crops of grass,

the two latter arrangements being precautions against risks from

sparks during fires. These paving stones are certainly the

cheapest possible mode of keeping the roofs on the houses in such a

windy region, but they look odd.

None of the streets, except one high up the hill, with a row of

fine temples and temple grounds, call for any notice. Nearly every

house is a shop; most of the shops supply only the ordinary

articles consumed by a large and poor population; either real or

imitated foreign goods abound in Main Street, and the only

novelties are the furs, skins, and horns, which abound in shops

devoted to their sale. I covet the great bear furs and the deep

cream-coloured furs of Aino dogs, which are cheap as well as

handsome. There are many second-hand, or, as they are called,

"curio" shops, and the cheap lacquer from Aomori is also tempting

to a stranger.

I. L. B.

LETTER XXXIV

Ito's Delinquency--"Missionary Manners"--A Predicted Failure.

HAKODATE, YEZO.

I am enjoying Hakodate so much that, though my tour is all planned

and my arrangements are made, I linger on from day to day. There

has been an unpleasant eclaircissement about Ito. You will

remember that I engaged him without a character, and that he told

both Lady Parkes and me that after I had done so his former master,

Mr. Maries, asked him to go back to him, to which he had replied

that he had "a contract with a lady." Mr. Maries is here, and I

now find that he had a contract with Ito, by which Ito bound

himself to serve him as long as he required him, for $7 a month,

but that, hearing that I offered $12, he ran away from him and

entered my service with a lie! Mr. Maries has been put to the

greatest inconvenience by his defection, and has been hindered

greatly in completing his botanical collection, for Ito is very

clever, and he had not only trained him to dry plants successfully,

but he could trust him to go away for two or three days and collect

seeds. I am very sorry about it. He says that Ito was a bad boy

when he came to him, but he thinks that he cured him of some of his

faults, and that he has served me faithfully. I have seen Mr.

Maries at the Consul's, and have arranged that, after my Yezo tour

is over, Ito shall be returned to his rightful master, who will

take him to China and Formosa for a year and a half, and who, I

think, will look after his well-being in every way. Dr. and Mrs.

Hepburn, who are here, heard a bad account of the boy after I began

my travels and were uneasy about me, but, except for this original

lie, I have no fault to find with him, and his Shinto creed has not

taught him any better. When I paid him his wages this morning he

asked me if I had any fault to find, and I told him of my objection

to his manners, which he took in very good part and promised to

amend them; "but," he added, "mine are just missionary manners!"

Yesterday I dined at the Consulate, to meet Count Diesbach, of the

French Legation, Mr. Von Siebold, of the Austrian Legation, and

Lieutenant Kreitner, of the Austrian army, who start to-morrow on

an exploring expedition in the interior, intending to cross the

sources of the rivers which fall into the sea on the southern coast

and measure the heights of some of the mountains. They are "well

found" in food and claret, but take such a number of pack-ponies

with them that I predict that they will fail, and that I, who have

reduced my luggage to 45 lbs., will succeed!

I hope to start on my long-projected tour to-morrow; I have planned

it for myself with the confidence of an experienced traveller, and

look forward to it with great pleasure, as a visit to the

aborigines is sure to be full of novel and interesting experiences.

Good-bye for a long time. I. L. B.

LETTER XXXV {17}

A Lovely Sunset--An Official Letter--A "Front Horse"--Japanese

Courtesy--The Steam Ferry--Coolies Abscond--A Team of Savages--A

Drove of Horses--Floral Beauties--An Unbeaten Track--A Ghostly

Dwelling--Solitude and Eeriness.

GINSAINOMA, YEZO, August 17.

I am once again in the wilds! I am sitting outside an upper room

built out almost over a lonely lake, with wooded points purpling

and still shadows deepening in the sinking sun. A number of men

are dragging down the nearest hillside the carcass of a bear which

they have just despatched with spears. There is no village, and

the busy clatter of the cicada and the rustle of the forest are the

only sounds which float on the still evening air. The sunset

colours are pink and green; on the tinted water lie the waxen cups

of great water-lilies, and above the wooded heights the pointed,

craggy, and altogether naked summit of the volcano of Komono-taki

flushes red in the sunset. Not the least of the charms of the

evening is that I am absolutely alone, having ridden the eighteen

miles from Hakodate without Ito or an attendant of any kind; have

unsaddled my own horse, and by means of much politeness and a

dexterous use of Japanese substantives have secured a good room and

supper of rice, eggs, and black beans for myself and a mash of

beans for my horse, which, as it belongs to the Kaitakushi, and has

the dignity of iron shoes, is entitled to special consideration!

I am not yet off the "beaten track," but my spirits are rising with

the fine weather, the drier atmosphere, and the freedom of Yezo.

Yezo is to the main island of Japan what Tipperary is to an

Englishman, Barra to a Scotchman, "away down in Texas" to a New

Yorker--in the rough, little known, and thinly-peopled; and people

can locate all sorts of improbable stories here without much fear

of being found out, of which the Ainos and the misdeeds of the

ponies furnish the staple, and the queer doings of men and dogs,

and adventures with bears, wolves, and salmon, the embroidery.

Nobody comes here without meeting with something queer, and one or

two tumbles either with or from his horse. Very little is known of

the interior except that it is covered with forest matted together

by lianas, and with an undergrowth of scrub bamboo impenetrable

except to the axe, varied by swamps equally impassable, which give

rise to hundreds of rivers well stocked with fish. The glare of

volcanoes is seen in different parts of the island. The forests

are the hunting-grounds of the Ainos, who are complete savages in

everything but their disposition, which is said to be so gentle and

harmless that I may go among them with perfect safety.

Kindly interest has been excited by the first foray made by a lady

into the country of the aborigines; and Mr. Eusden, the Consul, has

worked upon the powers that be with such good effect that the

Governor has granted me a shomon, a sort of official letter or

certificate, giving me a right to obtain horses and coolies

everywhere at the Government rate of 6 sen a ri, with a prior claim

to accommodation at the houses kept up for officials on their

circuits, and to help and assistance from officials generally; and

the Governor has further telegraphed to the other side of Volcano

Bay desiring the authorities to give me the use of the Government

kuruma as long as I need it, and to detain the steamer to suit my

convenience! With this document, which enables me to dispense with

my passport, I shall find travelling very easy, and I am very

grateful to the Consul for procuring it for me.

Here, where rice and tea have to be imported, there is a uniform

charge at the yadoyas of 30 sen a day, which includes three meals,

whether you eat them or not. Horses are abundant, but are small,

and are not up to heavy weights. They are entirely unshod, and,

though their hoofs are very shallow and grow into turned-up points

and other singular shapes, they go over rough ground with facility

at a scrambling run of over four miles an hour following a leader

called a "front horse." If you don't get a "front horse" and try

to ride in front, you find that your horse will not stir till he

has another before him; and then you are perfectly helpless, as he

follows the movements of his leader without any reference to your

wishes. There are no mago; a man rides the "front horse" and goes

at whatever pace you please, or, if you get a "front horse," you

may go without any one. Horses are cheap and abundant. They drive

a number of them down from the hills every morning into corrals in

the villages, and keep them there till they are wanted. Because

they are so cheap they are very badly used. I have not seen one

yet without a sore back, produced by the harsh pack-saddle rubbing

up and down the spine, as the loaded animals are driven at a run.

They are mostly very poor-looking.

As there was some difficulty about getting a horse for me the

Consul sent one of the Kaitakushi saddle-horses, a handsome, lazy

animal, which I rarely succeeded in stimulating into a heavy

gallop. Leaving Ito to follow with the baggage, I enjoyed my

solitary ride and the possibility of choosing my own pace very

much, though the choice was only between a slow walk and the

lumbering gallop aforesaid.

I met strings of horses loaded with deer hides, and overtook other

strings loaded with sake and manufactured goods and in each case

had a fight with my sociably inclined animal. In two villages I

was interested to see that the small shops contained lucifer

matches, cotton umbrellas, boots, brushes, clocks, slates, and

pencils, engravings in frames, kerosene lamps, {18} and red and

green blankets, all but the last, which are unmistakable British

"shoddy," being Japanese imitations of foreign manufactured goods,

more or less cleverly executed. The road goes up hill for fifteen

miles, and, after passing Nanai, a trim Europeanised village in the

midst of fine crops, one of the places at which the Government is

making acclimatisation and other agricultural experiments, it

fairly enters the mountains, and from the top of a steep hill there

is a glorious view of Hakodate Head, looking like an island in the

deep blue sea, and from the top of a higher hill, looking

northward, a magnificent view of the volcano with its bare, pink

summit rising above three lovely lakes densely wooded. These are

the flushed scaurs and outbreaks of bare rock for which I sighed

amidst the smothering greenery of the main island, and the silver

gleam of the lakes takes away the blindness from the face of

nature. It was delicious to descend to the water's edge in the

dewy silence amidst balsamic odours, to find not a clattering grey

village with its monotony, but a single, irregularly-built house,

with lovely surroundings.

It is a most displeasing road for most of the way; sides with deep

corrugations, and in the middle a high causeway of earth, whose

height is being added to by hundreds of creels of earth brought on

ponies' backs. It is supposed that carriages and waggons will use

this causeway, but a shying horse or a bad driver would overturn

them. As it is at present the road is only passable for pack-

horses, owing to the number of broken bridges. I passed strings of

horses laden with sake going into the interior. The people of Yezo

drink freely, and the poor Ainos outrageously. On the road I

dismounted to rest myself by walking up hill, and, the saddle being

loosely girthed, the gear behind it dragged it round and under the

body of the horse, and it was too heavy for me to lift on his back

again. When I had led him for some time two Japanese with a string

of pack-horses loaded with deer-hides met me, and not only put the

saddle on again, but held the stirrup while I remounted, and bowed

politely when I went away. Who could help liking such a courteous

and kindly people?

MORI, VOLCANO BAY, Monday.

Even Ginsainoma was not Paradise after dark, and I was actually

driven to bed early by the number of mosquitoes. Ito is in an

excellent humour on this tour. Like me, he likes the freedom of

the Hokkaido. He is much more polite and agreeable also, and very

proud of the Governor's shomon, with which he swaggers into hotels

and Transport Offices. I never get on so well as when he arranges

for me. Saturday was grey and lifeless, and the ride of seven

miles here along a sandy road through monotonous forest and swamp,

with the volcano on one side and low wooded hills on the other, was

wearisome and fatiguing. I saw five large snakes all in a heap,

and a number more twisting through the grass. There are no

villages, but several very poor tea-houses, and on the other side

of the road long sheds with troughs hollowed like canoes out of the

trunks of trees, containing horse food. Here nobody walks, and the

men ride at a quick run, sitting on the tops of their pack-saddles

with their legs crossed above their horses' necks, and wearing

large hats like coal-scuttle bonnets. The horses are infested with

ticks, hundreds upon one animal sometimes, and occasionally they

become so mad from the irritation that they throw themselves

suddenly on the ground, and roll over load and rider. I saw this

done twice. The ticks often transfer themselves to the riders.

Mori is a large, ramshackle village, near the southern point of

Volcano Bay--a wild, dreary-looking place on a sandy shore, with a

number of joroyas and disreputable characters. Several of the

yadoyas are not respectable, but I rather like this one, and it has

a very fine view of the volcano, which forms one point of the bay.

Mori has no anchorage, though it has an unfinished pier 345 feet

long. The steam ferry across the mouth of the bay is here, and

there is a very difficult bridle-track running for nearly 100 miles

round the bay besides, and a road into the interior. But it is a

forlorn, decayed place. Last night the inn was very noisy, as some

travellers in the next room to mine hired geishas, who played,

sang, and danced till two in the morning, and the whole party

imbibed sake freely. In this comparatively northern latitude the

summer is already waning. The seeds of the blossoms which were in

their glory when I arrived are ripe, and here and there a tinge of

yellow on a hillside, or a scarlet spray of maple, heralds the

glories and the coolness of autumn.

YUBETS. YEZO.

A loud yell of "steamer," coupled with the information that "she

could not wait one minute," broke in upon go and everything else,

and in a broiling sun we hurried down to the pier, and with a heap

of Japanese, who filled two scows, were put on board a steamer not

bigger than a large decked steam launch, where the natives were all

packed into a covered hole, and I was conducted with much ceremony

to the forecastle, a place at the bow 5 feet square, full of coils

of rope, shut in, and left to solitude and dignity, and the stare

of eight eyes, which perseveringly glowered through the windows!

The steamer had been kept waiting for me on the other side for two

days, to the infinite disgust of two foreigners, who wished to

return to Hakodate, and to mine.

It was a splendid day, with foam crests on the wonderfully blue

water, and the red ashes of the volcano, which forms the south

point of the bay, glowed in the sunlight. This wretched steamer,

whose boilers are so often "sick" that she can never be relied

upon, is the only means of reaching the new capital without taking

a most difficult and circuitous route. To continue the pier and

put a capable good steamer on the ferry would be a useful

expenditure of money. The breeze was strong and in our favour, but

even with this it took us six weary hours to steam twenty-five

miles, and it was eight at night before we reached the beautiful

and almost land-locked bay of Mororan, with steep, wooded sides,

and deep water close to the shore, deep enough for the foreign

ships of war which occasionally anchor there, much to the detriment

of the town. We got off in over-crowded sampans, and several

people fell into the water, much to their own amusement. The

servants from the different yadoyas go down to the jetty to "tout"

for guests with large paper lanterns, and the effect of these, one

above another, waving and undulating, with their soft coloured

light, was as bewitching as the reflection of the stars in the

motionless water. Mororan is a small town very picturesquely

situated on the steep shore of a most lovely bay, with another

height, richly wooded, above it, with shrines approached by flights

of stone stairs, and behind this hill there is the first Aino

village along this coast.

The long, irregular street is slightly picturesque, but I was

impressed both with the unusual sight of loafers and with the

dissolute look of the place, arising from the number of joroyas,

and from the number of yadoyas that are also haunts of the vicious.

I could only get a very small room in a very poor and dirty inn,

but there were no mosquitoes, and I got a good meal of fish. On

sending to order horses I found that everything was arranged for my

journey. The Governor sent his card early, to know if there were

anything I should like to see or do, but, as the morning was grey

and threatening, I wished to push on, and at 9.30 I was in the

kuruma at the inn door. I call it the kuruma because it is the

only one, and is kept by the Government for the conveyance of

hospital patients. I sat there uncomfortably and patiently for

half an hour, my only amusement being the flirtations of Ito with a

very pretty girl. Loiterers assembled, but no one came to draw the

vehicle, and by degrees the dismal truth leaked out that the three

coolies who had been impressed for the occasion had all absconded,

and that four policemen were in search of them. I walked on in a

dawdling way up the steep hill which leads from the town, met Mr.

Akboshi, a pleasant young Japanese surveyor, who spoke English and

stigmatised Mororan as "the worst place in Yezo;" and, after fuming

for two hours at the waste of time, was overtaken by Ito with the

horses, in a boiling rage. "They're the worst and wickedest

coolies in all Japan," he stammered; "two more ran away, and now

three are coming, and have got paid for four, and the first three

who ran away got paid, and the Express man's so ashamed for a

foreigner, and the Governor's in a furious rage."

Except for the loss of time it made no difference to me, but when

the kuruma did come up the runners were three such ruffianly-

looking men, and were dressed so wildly in bark cloth, that, in

sending Ito on twelve miles to secure relays, I sent my money along

with him. These men, though there were three instead of two, never

went out of a walk, and, as if on purpose, took the vehicle over

every stone and into every rut, and kept up a savage chorus of

"haes-ha, haes-hora" the whole time, as if they were pulling stone-

carts. There are really no runners out of Hakodate, and the men

don't know how to pull, and hate doing it.

Mororan Bay is truly beautiful from the top of the ascent. The

coast scenery of Japan generally is the loveliest I have ever seen,

except that of a portion of windward Hawaii, and this yields in

beauty to none. The irregular grey town, with a grey temple on the

height above, straggles round the little bay on a steep, wooded

terrace; hills, densely wooded, and with a perfect entanglement of

large-leaved trailers, descend abruptly to the water's edge; the

festoons of the vines are mirrored in the still waters; and above

the dark forest, and beyond the gleaming sea, rises the red, peaked

top of the volcano. Then the road dips abruptly to sandy

swellings, rising into bold headlands here and there; and for the

first time I saw the surge of 5000 miles of unbroken ocean break

upon the shore. Glimpses of the Pacific, an uncultivated, swampy

level quite uninhabited, and distant hills mainly covered with

forest, made up the landscape till I reached Horobets, a mixed

Japanese and Aino village built upon the sand near the sea.

In these mixed villages the Ainos are compelled to live at a

respectful distance from the Japanese, and frequently out-number

them, as at Horobets, where there are forty-seven Aino and only

eighteen Japanese houses. The Aino village looks larger than it

really is, because nearly every house has a kura, raised six feet

from the ground by wooden stilts. When I am better acquainted with

the houses I shall describe them; at present I will only say that

they do not resemble the Japanese houses so much as the Polynesian,

as they are made of reeds very neatly tied upon a wooden framework.

They have small windows, and roofs of a very great height, and

steep pitch, with the thatch in a series of very neat frills, and

the ridge poles covered with reeds, and ornamented. The coast

Ainos are nearly all engaged in fishing, but at this season the men

hunt deer in the forests. On this coast there are several names

compounded with bets or pets, the Aino for a river, such as

Horobets, Yubets, Mombets, etc.

I found that Ito had been engaged for a whole hour in a violent

altercation, which was caused by the Transport Agent refusing to

supply runners for the kuruma, saying that no one in Horobets would

draw one, but on my producing the shomon I was at once started on

my journey of sixteen miles with three Japanese lads, Ito riding on

to Shiraoi to get my room ready. I think that the Transport

Offices in Yezo are in Government hands. In a few minutes three

Ainos ran out of a house, took the kuruma, and went the whole stage

without stopping. They took a boy and three saddled horses along

with them to bring them back, and rode and hauled alternately, two

youths always attached to the shafts, and a man pushing behind.

They were very kind, and so courteous, after a new fashion, that I

quite forgot that I was alone among savages. The lads were young

and beardless, their lips were thick, and their mouths very wide,

and I thought that they approached more nearly to the Eskimo type

than to any other. They had masses of soft black hair falling on

each side of their faces. The adult man was not a pure Aino. His

dark hair was not very thick, and both it and his beard had an

occasional auburn gleam. I think I never saw a face more

completely beautiful in features and expression, with a lofty, sad,

far-off, gentle, intellectual look, rather that of Sir Noel Paton's

"Christ" than of a savage. His manner was most graceful, and he

spoke both Aino and Japanese in the low musical tone which I find

is a characteristic of Aino speech. These Ainos never took off

their clothes, but merely let them fall from one or both shoulders

when it was very warm.

The road from Horobets to Shiraoi is very solitary, with not more

than four or five houses the whole way. It is broad and straight,

except when it ascends hills or turns inland to cross rivers, and

is carried across a broad swampy level, covered with tall wild

flowers, which extends from the high beach thrown up by the sea for

two miles inland, where there is a lofty wall of wooded rock, and

beyond this the forest-covered mountains of the interior. On the

top of the raised beach there were Aino hamlets, and occasionally a

nearly overpowering stench came across the level from the sheds and

apparatus used for extracting fish-oil. I enjoyed the afternoon

thoroughly. It is so good to have got beyond the confines of

stereotyped civilisation and the trammels of Japanese travelling to

the solitude of nature and an atmosphere of freedom. It was grey,

with a hard, dark line of ocean horizon, and over the weedy level

the grey road, with grey telegraph-poles along it, stretched

wearisomely like a grey thread. The breeze came up from the sea,

rustled the reeds, and waved the tall plumes of the Eulalia

japonica, and the thunder of the Pacific surges boomed through the

air with its grand, deep bass. Poetry and music pervaded the

solitude, and my spirit was rested.

Going up and then down a steep, wooded hill, the road appeared to

return to its original state of brushwood, and the men stopped at

the broken edge of a declivity which led down to a shingle bank and

a foam-crested river of clear, blue-green water, strongly

impregnated with sulphur from some medicinal springs above, with a

steep bank of tangle on the opposite side. This beautiful stream

was crossed by two round poles, a foot apart, on which I attempted

to walk with the help of an Aino hand; but the poles were very

unsteady, and I doubt whether any one, even with a strong head,

could walk on them in boots. Then the beautiful Aino signed to me

to come back and mount on his shoulders; but when he had got a few

feet out the poles swayed and trembled so much that he was obliged

to retrace his way cautiously, during which process I endured

miseries from dizziness and fear; after which he carried me through

the rushing water, which was up to his shoulders, and through a bit

of swampy jungle, and up a steep bank, to the great fatigue both of

body and mind, hardly mitigated by the enjoyment of the ludicrous

in riding a savage through these Yezo waters. They dexterously

carried the kuruma through, on the shoulders of four, and showed

extreme anxiety that neither it nor I should get wet. After this

we crossed two deep, still rivers in scows, and far above the grey

level and the grey sea the sun was setting in gold and vermilion-

streaked green behind a glorified mountain of great height, at

whose feet the forest-covered hills lay in purple gloom. At dark

we reached Shiraoi, a village of eleven Japanese houses, with a

village of fifty-one Aino houses, near the sea. There is a large

yadoya of the old style there; but I found that Ito had chosen a

very pretty new one, with four stalls open to the road, in the

centre one of which I found him, with the welcome news that a steak

of fresh salmon was broiling on the coals; and, as the room was

clean and sweet and I was very hungry, I enjoyed my meal by the

light of a rush in a saucer of fish-oil as much as any part of the

day.

SARUFUTO.

The night was too cold for sleep, and at daybreak, hearing a great

din, I looked out, and saw a drove of fully a hundred horses all

galloping down the road, with two Ainos on horse-back, and a number

of big dogs after them. Hundreds of horses run nearly wild on the

hills, and the Ainos, getting a large drove together, skilfully

head them for the entrance into the corral, in which a selection of

them is made for the day's needs, and the remainder--that is, those

with the deepest sores on their backs--are turned loose. This dull

rattle of shoeless feet is the first sound in the morning in these

Yezo villages. I sent Ito on early, and followed at nine with

three Ainos. The road is perfectly level for thirteen miles,

through gravel flats and swamps, very monotonous, but with a wild

charm of its own. There were swampy lakes, with wild ducks and

small white water-lilies, and the surrounding levels were covered

with reedy grass, flowers, and weeds. The early autumn has

withered a great many of the flowers; but enough remains to show

how beautiful the now russet plains must have been in the early

summer. A dwarf rose, of a deep crimson colour, with orange,

medlar-shaped hips, as large as crabs, and corollas three inches

across, is one of the features of Yezo; and besides, there is a

large rose-red convolvulus, a blue campanula, with tiers of bells,

a blue monkshood, the Aconitum Japonicum, the flaunting Calystegia

soldanella, purple asters, grass of Parnassus, yellow lilies, and a

remarkable trailer, whose delicate leafage looked quite out of

place among its coarse surroundings, with a purplish-brown

campanulate blossom, only remarkable for a peculiar arrangement of

the pistil, green stamens, and a most offensive carrion-like odour,

which is probably to attract to it a very objectionable-looking

fly, for purposes of fertilisation.

We overtook four Aino women, young and comely, with bare feet,

striding firmly along; and after a good deal of laughing with the

men, they took hold of the kuruma, and the whole seven raced with

it at full speed for half a mile, shrieking with laughter. Soon

after we came upon a little tea-house, and the Ainos showed me a

straw package, and pointed to their open mouths, by which I

understood that they wished to stop and eat. Later we overtook

four Japanese on horseback, and the Ainos raced with them for a

considerable distance, the result of these spurts being that I

reached Tomakomai at noon--a wide, dreary place, with houses roofed

with sod, bearing luxuriant crops of weeds. Near this place is the

volcano of Tarumai, a calm-looking, grey cone, whose skirts are

draped by tens of thousands of dead trees. So calm and grey had it

looked for many a year that people supposed it had passed into

endless rest, when quite lately, on a sultry day, it blew off its

cap and covered the whole country for many a mile with cinders and

ashes, burning up the forest on its sides, adding a new covering to

the Tomakomai roofs, and depositing fine ash as far as Cape Erimo,

fifty miles off.

At this place the road and telegraph wires turn inland to

Satsuporo, and a track for horses only turns to the north-east, and

straggles round the island for about seven hundred miles. From

Mororan to Sarufuto there are everywhere traces of new and old

volcanic action--pumice, tufas, conglomerates, and occasional beds

of hard basalt, all covered with recent pumice, which, from Shiraoi

eastwards, conceals everything. At Tomakomai we took horses, and,

as I brought my own saddle, I have had the nearest approach to real

riding that I have enjoyed in Japan. The wife of a Satsuporo

doctor was there, who was travelling for two hundred miles astride

on a pack-saddle, with rope-loops for stirrups. She rode well, and

vaulted into my saddle with circus-like dexterity, and performed

many equestrian feats upon it, telling me that she should be quite

happy if she were possessed of it.

I was happy when I left the "beaten track" to Satsuporo, and saw

before me, stretching for I know not how far, rolling, sandy

machirs like those of the Outer Hebrides, desert-like and lonely,

covered almost altogether with dwarf roses and campanulas, a

prairie land on which you can make any tracks you please. Sending

the others on, I followed them at the Yezo scramble, and soon

ventured on a long gallop, and revelled in the music of the thud of

shoeless feet over the elastic soil; but I had not realised the

peculiarities of Yezo steeds, and had forgotten to ask whether mine

was a "front horse," and just as we were going at full speed we

came nearly up with the others, and my horse coming abruptly to a

full stop, I went six feet over his head among the rose-bushes.

Ito looking back saw me tightening the saddle-girths, and I never

divulged this escapade.

After riding eight miles along this breezy belt, with the sea on

one side and forests on the other, we came upon Yubets, a place

which has fascinated me so much that I intend to return to it; but

I must confess that its fascinations depend rather upon what it has

not than upon what it has, and Ito says that it would kill him to

spend even two days there. It looks like the end of all things, as

if loneliness and desolation could go no farther. A sandy stretch

on three sides, a river arrested in its progress to the sea, and

compelled to wander tediously in search of an outlet by the height

and mass of the beach thrown up by the Pacific, a distant forest-

belt rising into featureless, wooded ranges in shades of indigo and

grey, and a never-absent consciousness of a vast ocean just out of

sight, are the environments of two high look-outs, some sheds for

fish-oil purposes, four or five Japanese houses, four Aino huts on

the top of the beach across the river, and a grey barrack,

consisting of a polished passage eighty feet long, with small rooms

on either side, at one end a gravelled yard, with two quiet rooms

opening upon it, and at the other an immense daidokoro, with dark

recesses and blackened rafters--a haunted-looking abode. One would

suppose that there had been a special object in setting the houses

down at weary distances from each other. Few as they are, they are

not all inhabited at this season, and all that can be seen is grey

sand, sparse grass, and a few savages creeping about.

Nothing that I have seen has made such an impression upon me as

that ghostly, ghastly fishing-station. In the long grey wall of

the long grey barrack there were many dismal windows, and when we

hooted for admission a stupid face appeared at one of them and

disappeared. Then a grey gateway opened, and we rode into a yard

of grey gravel, with some silent rooms opening upon it. The

solitude of the thirty or forty rooms which lie between it and the

kitchen, and which are now filled with nets and fishing-tackle, was

something awful; and as the wind swept along the polished passage,

rattling the fusuma and lifting the shingles on the roof, and the

rats careered from end to end, I went to the great black daidokoro

in search of social life, and found a few embers and an andon, and

nothing else but the stupid-faced man deploring his fate, and two

orphan boys whose lot he makes more wretched than his own. In the

fishing-season this barrack accommodates from 200 to 300 men.

I started to the sea-shore, crossing the dreary river, and found

open sheds much blackened, deserted huts of reeds, long sheds with

a nearly insufferable odour from caldrons in which oil had been

extracted from last year's fish, two or three Aino huts, and two or

three grand-looking Ainos, clothed in skins, striding like ghosts

over the sandbanks, a number of wolfish dogs, some log canoes or

"dug-outs," the bones of a wrecked junk, a quantity of bleached

drift-wood, a beach of dark-grey sand, and a tossing expanse of

dark-grey ocean under a dull and windy sky. On this part of the

coast the Pacific spends its fury, and has raised up at a short

distance above high-water mark a sandy sweep of such a height that

when you descend its seaward slope you see nothing but the sea and

the sky, and a grey, curving shore, covered thick for many a lonely

mile with fantastic forms of whitened drift-wood, the shattered

wrecks of forest-trees, which are carried down by the innumerable

rivers, till, after tossing for weeks and months along with

"--wrecks of ships, and drifting

spars uplifting

On the desolate, rainy seas:

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting,

On the shifting

Currents of the restless main;"

the "toiling surges" cast them on Yubets beach, and

"All have found repose again."

A grim repose!

The deep boom of the surf was music, and the strange cries of sea-

birds, and the hoarse notes of the audacious black crows, were all

harmonious, for nature, when left to herself, never produces

discords either in sound or colour.

LETTER XXXV--(Continued)

The Harmonies of Nature--A Good Horse--A Single Discord--A Forest--

Aino Ferrymen--"Les Puces! Les Puces!"--Baffled Explorers--Ito's

Contempt for Ainos--An Aino Introduction.

SARUFUTO.

No! Nature has no discords. This morning, to the far horizon,

diamond-flashing blue water shimmered in perfect peace, outlined by

a line of surf which broke lazily on a beach scarcely less snowy

than itself. The deep, perfect blue of the sky was only broken by

a few radiant white clouds, whose shadows trailed slowly over the

plain on whose broad bosom a thousand corollas, in the glory of

their brief but passionate life, were drinking in the sunshine,

wavy ranges slept in depths of indigo, and higher hills beyond were

painted in faint blue on the dreamy sky. Even the few grey houses

of Yubets were spiritualised into harmony by a faint blue veil

which was not a mist, and the loud croak of the loquacious and

impertinent crows had a cheeriness about it, a hearty mockery,

which I liked.

Above all, I had a horse so good that he was always trying to run

away, and galloped so lightly over the flowery grass that I rode

the seventeen miles here with great enjoyment. Truly a good horse,

good ground to gallop on, and sunshine, make up the sum of

enjoyable travelling. The discord in the general harmony was

produced by the sight of the Ainos, a harmless people without the

instinct of progress, descending to that vast tomb of conquered and

unknown races which has opened to receive so many before them. A

mounted policeman started with us from Yubets, and rode the whole

way here, keeping exactly to my pace, but never speaking a word.

We forded one broad, deep river, and crossed another, partly by

fording and partly in a scow, after which the track left the level,

and, after passing through reedy grass as high as the horse's ears,

went for some miles up and down hill, through woods composed

entirely of the Ailanthus glandulosus, with leaves much riddled by

the mountain silk-worm, and a ferny undergrowth of the familiar

Pteris aquilina. The deep shade and glancing lights of this open

copsewood were very pleasant; and as the horse tripped gaily up and

down the little hills, and the sea murmur mingled with the rustle

of the breeze, and a glint of white surf sometimes flashed through

the greenery, and dragonflies and butterflies in suits of crimson

and black velvet crossed the path continually like "living flashes"

of light, I was reminded somewhat, though faintly, of windward

Hawaii. We emerged upon an Aino hut and a beautiful placid river,

and two Ainos ferried the four people and horses across in a scow,

the third wading to guide the boat. They wore no clothing, but

only one was hairy. They were superb-looking men, gentle, and

extremely courteous, handing me in and out of the boat, and holding

the stirrup while I mounted, with much natural grace. On leaving

they extended their arms and waved their hands inwards twice,

stroking their grand beards afterwards, which is their usual

salutation. A short distance over shingle brought us to this

Japanese village of sixty-three houses, a colonisation settlement,

mainly of samurai from the province of Sendai, who are raising very

fine crops on the sandy soil. The mountains, twelve miles in the

interior, have a large Aino population, and a few Ainos live near

this village and are held in great contempt by its inhabitants. My

room is on the village street, and, as it is too warm to close the

shoji, the aborigines stand looking in at the lattice hour after

hour.

A short time ago Mr. Von Siebold and Count Diesbach galloped up on

their return from Biratori, the Aino village to which I am going;

and Count D., throwing himself from his horse, rushed up to me with

the exclamation, Les puces! les puces! They have brought down with

them the chief, Benri, a superb but dissipated-looking savage. Mr.

Von Siebold called on me this evening, and I envied him his fresh,

clean clothing as much as he envied me my stretcher and mosquito-

net. They have suffered terribly from fleas, mosquitoes, and

general discomfort, and are much exhausted; but Mr. Von S. thinks

that, in spite of all, a visit to the mountain Ainos is worth a

long journey. As I expected, they have completely failed in their

explorations, and have been deserted by Lieutenant Kreitner. I

asked Mr. Von S. to speak to Ito in Japanese about the importance

of being kind and courteous to the Ainos whose hospitality I shall

receive; and Ito is very indignant at this. "Treat Ainos

politely!" he says; "they're just dogs, not men;" and since he has

regaled me with all the scandal concerning them which he has been

able to rake together in the village.

We have to take not only food for both Ito and myself, but cooking

utensils. I have been introduced to Benri, the chief; and, though

he does not return for a day or two, he will send a message along

with us which will ensure me hospitality.

I. L. B.

LETTER XXXVI

Savage Life--A Forest Track--Cleanly Villages--A Hospitable

Reception--The Chief's Mother--The Evening Meal--A Savage Seance--

Libations to the Gods--Nocturnal Silence--Aino Courtesy--The

Chief's Wife.

AINO HUT, BIRATORI, August 23.

I am in the lonely Aino land, and I think that the most interesting

of my travelling experiences has been the living for three days and

two nights in an Aino hut, and seeing and sharing the daily life of

complete savages, who go on with their ordinary occupations just as

if I were not among them. I found yesterday a most fatiguing and

over-exciting day, as everything was new and interesting, even the

extracting from men who have few if any ideas in common with me all

I could extract concerning their religion and customs, and that

through an interpreter. I got up at six this morning to write out

my notes, and have been writing for five hours, and there is

shortly the prospect of another savage seance. The distractions,

as you can imagine, are many. At this moment a savage is taking a

cup of sake by the fire in the centre of the floor. He salutes me

by extending his hands and waving them towards his face, and then

dips a rod in the sake, and makes six libations to the god--an

upright piece of wood with a fringe of shavings planted in the

floor of the room. Then he waves the cup several times towards

himself, makes other libations to the fire, and drinks. Ten other

men and women are sitting along each side of the fire-hole, the

chief's wife is cooking, the men are apathetically contemplating

the preparation of their food; and the other women, who are never

idle, are splitting the bark of which they make their clothes. I

occupy the guest seat--a raised platform at one end of the fire,

with the skin of a black bear thrown over it.

I have reserved all I have to say about the Ainos till I had been

actually among them, and I hope you will have patience to read to

the end. Ito is very greedy and self-indulgent, and whimpered very

much about coming to Biratori at all,--one would have thought he

was going to the stake. He actually borrowed for himself a

sleeping mat and futons, and has brought a chicken, onions,

potatoes, French beans, Japanese sauce, tea, rice, a kettle, a

stew-pan, and a rice-pan, while I contented myself with a cold fowl

and potatoes.

We took three horses and a mounted Aino guide, and found a beaten

track the whole way. It turns into the forest at once on leaving

Sarufuto, and goes through forest the entire distance, with an

abundance of reedy grass higher than my hat on horseback along it,

and, as it is only twelve inches broad and much overgrown, the

horses were constantly pushing through leafage soaking from a

night's rain, and I was soon wet up to my shoulders. The forest

trees are almost solely the Ailanthus glandulosus and the Zelkowa

keaki, often matted together with a white-flowered trailer of the

Hydrangea genus. The undergrowth is simply hideous, consisting

mainly of coarse reedy grass, monstrous docks, the large-leaved

Polygonum cuspidatum, several umbelliferous plants, and a "ragweed"

which, like most of its gawky fellows, grows from five to six feet

high. The forest is dark and very silent, threaded by this narrow

path, and by others as narrow, made by the hunters in search of

game. The "main road" sometimes plunges into deep bogs, at others

is roughly corduroyed by the roots of trees, and frequently hangs

over the edge of abrupt and much-worn declivities, in going up one

of which the baggage-horse rolled down a bank fully thirty feet

high, and nearly all the tea was lost. At another the guide's

pack-saddle lost its balance, and man, horse, and saddle went over

the slope, pots, pans, and packages flying after them. At another

time my horse sank up to his chest in a very bad bog, and, as he

was totally unable to extricate himself, I was obliged to scramble

upon his neck and jump to terra firma over his ears.

There is something very gloomy in the solitude of this silent land,

with its beast-haunted forests, its great patches of pasture, the

resort of wild animals which haunt the lower regions in search of

food when the snow drives them down from the mountains, and its

narrow track, indicating the single file in which the savages of

the interior walk with their bare, noiseless feet. Reaching the

Sarufutogawa, a river with a treacherous bottom, in which Mr. Von

Siebold and his horse came to grief, I hailed an Aino boy, who took

me up the stream in a "dug-out," and after that we passed through

Biroka, Saruba, and Mina, all purely Aino villages, situated among

small patches of millet, tobacco, and pumpkins, so choked with

weeds that it was doubtful whether they were crops. I was much

surprised with the extreme neatness and cleanliness outside the

houses; "model villages" they are in these respects, with no litter

lying in sight anywhere, nothing indeed but dog troughs, hollowed

out of logs, like "dug-outs," for the numerous yellow dogs, which

are a feature of Aino life. There are neither puddles nor heaps,

but the houses, all trim and in good repair, rise clean out of the

sandy soil.

Biratori, the largest of the Aino settlements in this region, is

very prettily situated among forests and mountains, on rising

ground, with a very sinuous river winding at its feet and a wooded

height above. A lonelier place could scarcely be found. As we

passed among the houses the yellow dogs barked, the women looked

shy and smiled, and the men made their graceful salutation. We

stopped at the chief's house, where, of course, we were unexpected

guests; but Shinondi, his nephew, and two other men came out,

saluted us, and with most hospitable intent helped Ito to unload

the horses. Indeed their eager hospitality created quite a

commotion, one running hither and the other thither in their

anxiety to welcome a stranger. It is a large house, the room being

35 by 25, and the roof 20 feet high; but you enter by an ante-

chamber, in which are kept the millet-mill and other articles.

There is a doorway in this, but the inside is pretty dark, and

Shinondi, taking my hand, raised the reed curtain bound with hide,

which concealed the entrance into the actual house, and, leading me

into it, retired a footstep, extended his arms, waved his arms

inwards three times, and then stroked his beard several times,

after which he indicated by a sweep of his hand and a beautiful

smile that the house and all it contained were mine. An aged

woman, the chief's mother, who was splitting bark by the fire,

waved her hands also. She is the queen-regnant of the house.

Again taking my hand, Shinondi led me to the place of honour at the

head of the fire--a rude, movable platform six feet long by four

broad, and a foot high, on which he laid an ornamental mat,

apologising for not having at that moment a bearskin wherewith to

cover it. The baggage was speedily brought in by several willing

pairs of hands; some reed mats fifteen feet long were laid down

upon the very coarse ones which covered the whole floor, and when

they saw Ito putting up my stretcher they hung a fine mat along the

rough wall to conceal it, and suspended another on the beams of the

roof for a canopy. The alacrity and instinctive hospitality with

which these men rushed about to make things comfortable were very

fascinating, though comfort is a word misapplied in an Aino hut.

The women only did what the men told them.

They offered food at once, but I told them that I had brought my

own, and would only ask leave to cook it on their fire. I need not

have brought any cups, for they have many lacquer bowls, and

Shinondi brought me on a lacquer tray a bowl full of water from one

of their four wells. They said that Benri, the chief, would wish

me to make his house my own for as long as I cared to stay, and I

must excuse them in all things in which their ways were different

from my own. Shinondi and four others in the village speak

tolerable Japanese, and this of course is the medium of

communication. Ito has exerted himself nobly as an interpreter,

and has entered into my wishes with a cordiality and intelligence

which have been perfectly invaluable; and, though he did growl at

Mr. Von Siebold's injunctions regarding politeness, he has carried

them out to my satisfaction, and even admits that the mountain

Ainos are better than he expected; "but," he added "they have

learned their politeness from the Japanese!" They have never seen

a foreign woman, and only three foreign men, but there is neither

crowding nor staring as among the Japanese, possibly in part from

apathy and want of intelligence. For three days they have kept up

their graceful and kindly hospitality, going on with their ordinary

life and occupations, and, though I have lived among them in this

room by day and night, there has been nothing which in any way

could offend the most fastidious sense of delicacy.

They said they would leave me to eat and rest, and all retired but

the chief's mother, a weird, witch-like woman of eighty, with

shocks of yellow-white hair, and a stern suspiciousness in her

wrinkled face. I have come to feel as if she had the evil eye, as

she sits there watching, watching always, and for ever knotting the

bark thread like one of the Fates, keeping a jealous watch on her

son's two wives, and on other young women who come in to weave--

neither the dulness nor the repose of old age about her; and her

eyes gleam with a greedy light when she sees sake, of which she

drains a bowl without taking breath. She alone is suspicious of

strangers, and she thinks that my visit bodes no good to her tribe.

I see her eyes fixed upon me now, and they make me shudder.

I had a good meal seated in my chair on the top of the guest-seat

to avoid the fleas, which are truly legion. At dusk Shinondi

returned, and soon people began to drop in, till eighteen were

assembled, including the sub-chief and several very grand-looking

old men, with full, grey, wavy beards. Age is held in much

reverence, and it is etiquette for these old men to do honour to a

guest in the chief's absence. As each entered he saluted me

several times, and after sitting down turned towards me and saluted

again, going through the same ceremony with every other person.

They said they had come "to bid me welcome." They took their

places in rigid order at each side of the fireplace, which is six

feet long, Benri's mother in the place of honour at the right, then

Shinondi, then the sub-chief, and on the other side the old men.

Besides these, seven women sat in a row in the background splitting

bark. A large iron pan hung over the fire from a blackened

arrangement above, and Benri's principal wife cut wild roots, green

beans, and seaweed, and shred dried fish and venison among them,

adding millet, water, and some strong-smelling fish-oil, and set

the whole on to stew for three hours, stirring the "mess" now and

then with a wooden spoon.

Several of the older people smoke, and I handed round some mild

tobacco, which they received with waving hands. I told them that I

came from a land in the sea, very far away, where they saw the sun

go down--so very far away that a horse would have to gallop day and

night for five weeks to reach it--and that I had come a long

journey to see them, and that I wanted to ask them many questions,

so that when I went home I might tell my own people something about

them. Shinondi and another man, who understood Japanese, bowed,

and (as on every occasion) translated what I said into Aino for the

venerable group opposite. Shinondi then said "that he and

Shinrichi, the other Japanese speaker, would tell me all they knew,

but they were but young men, and only knew what was told to them.

They would speak what they believed to be true, but the chief knew

more than they, and when he came back he might tell me differently,

and then I should think that they had spoken lies." I said that no

one who looked into their faces could think that they ever told

lies. They were very much pleased, and waved their hands and

stroked their beards repeatedly. Before they told me anything they

begged and prayed that I would not inform the Japanese Government

that they had told me of their customs, or harm might come to them!

For the next two hours, and for two more after supper, I asked them

questions concerning their religion and customs, and again

yesterday for a considerable time, and this morning, after Benri's

return, I went over the same subjects with him, and have also

employed a considerable time in getting about 300 words from them,

which I have spelt phonetically of course, and intend to go over

again when I visit the coast Ainos. {19}

The process was slow, as both question and answer had to pass

through three languages. There was a very manifest desire to tell

the truth, and I think that their statements concerning their few

and simple customs may be relied upon. I shall give what they told

me separately when I have time to write out my notes in an orderly

manner. I can only say that I have seldom spent a more interesting

evening.

About nine the stew was ready, and the women ladled it into lacquer

bowls with wooden spoons. The men were served first, but all ate

together. Afterwards sake, their curse, was poured into lacquer

bowls, and across each bowl a finely-carved "sake-stick" was laid.

These sticks are very highly prized. The bowls were waved several

times with an inward motion, then each man took his stick and,

dipping it into the sake, made six libations to the fire and

several to the "god"--a wooden post, with a quantity of spiral

white shavings falling from near the top. The Ainos are not

affected by sake nearly so easily as the Japanese. They took it

cold, it is true, but each drank about three times as much as would

have made a Japanese foolish, and it had no effect upon them.

After two hours more talk one after another got up and went out,

making profuse salutations to me and to the others. My candles had

been forgotten, and our seance was held by the fitful light of the

big logs on the fire, aided by a succession of chips of birch bark,

with which a woman replenished a cleft stick that was stuck into

the fire-hole. I never saw such a strangely picturesque sight as

that group of magnificent savages with the fitful firelight on

their faces, and for adjuncts the flare of the torch, the strong

lights, the blackness of the recesses of the room and of the roof,

at one end of which the stars looked in, and the row of savage

women in the background--eastern savagery and western civilisation

met in this hut, savagery giving and civilisation receiving, the

yellow-skinned Ito the connecting-link between the two, and the

representative of a civilisation to which our own is but an "infant

of days."

I found it very exciting, and when all had left crept out into the

starlight. The lodges were all dark and silent, and the dogs, mild

like their masters, took no notice of me. The only sound was the

rustle of a light breeze through the surrounding forest. The verse

came into my mind, "It is not the will of your Father which is in

heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Surely these

simple savages are children, as children to be judged; may we not

hope as children to be saved through Him who came "not to judge the

world, but to save the world"?

I crept back again and into my mosquito net, and suffered not from

fleas or mosquitoes, but from severe cold. Shinondi conversed with

Ito for some time in a low musical voice, having previously asked

if it would keep me from sleeping. No Japanese ever intermitted

his ceaseless chatter at any hour of the night for a similar

reason. Later, the chief's principal wife, Noma, stuck a triply-

cleft stick in the fire-hole, put a potsherd with a wick and some

fish-oil upon it, and by the dim light of this rude lamp sewed

until midnight at a garment of bark cloth which she was ornamenting

for her lord with strips of blue cloth, and when I opened my eyes

the next morning she was at the window sewing by the earliest

daylight. She is the most intelligent-looking of all the women,

but looks sad and almost stern, and speaks seldom. Although she is

the principal wife of the chief she is not happy, for she is

childless, and I thought that her sad look darkened into something

evil as the other wife caressed a fine baby boy. Benri seems to me

something of a brute, and the mother-in-law obviously holds the

reins of government pretty tight. After sewing till midnight she

swept the mats with a bunch of twigs, and then crept into her bed

behind a hanging mat. For a moment in the stillness I felt a

feeling of panic, as if I were incurring a risk by being alone

among savages, but I conquered it, and, after watching the fire

till it went out, fell asleep till I was awoke by the severe cold

of the next day's dawn.

LETTER XXXVI--(Continued)

A Supposed Act of Worship--Parental Tenderness--Morning Visits--

Wretched Cultivation--Honesty and Generosity--A "Dug-out"--Female

Occupations--The Ancient Fate--A New Arrival--A Perilous

Prescription--The Shrine of Yoshitsune--The Chief's Return.

When I crept from under my net much benumbed with cold, there were

about eleven people in the room, who all made their graceful

salutation. It did not seem as if they had ever heard of washing,

for, when water was asked for, Shinondi brought a little in a

lacquer bowl, and held it while I bathed my face and hands,

supposing the performance to be an act of worship! I was about to

throw some cold tea out of the window by my bed when he arrested me

with an anxious face, and I saw, what I had not observed before,

that there was a god at that window--a stick with festoons of

shavings hanging from it, and beside it a dead bird. The Ainos

have two meals a day, and their breakfast was a repetition of the

previous night's supper. We all ate together, and I gave the

children the remains of my rice, and it was most amusing to see

little creatures of three, four, and five years old, with no other

clothing than a piece of pewter hanging round their necks, first

formally asking leave of the parents before taking the rice, and

then waving their hands. The obedience of the children is

instantaneous. Their parents are more demonstrative in their

affection than the Japanese are, caressing them a good deal, and

two of the men are devoted to children who are not their own.

These little ones are as grave and dignified as Japanese children,

and are very gentle.

I went out soon after five, when the dew was glittering in the

sunshine, and the mountain hollow in which Biratori stands was

looking its very best, and the silence of the place, even though

the people were all astir, was as impressive as that of the night

before. What a strange life! knowing nothing, hoping nothing,

fearing a little, the need for clothes and food the one motive

principle, sake in abundance the one good! How very few points of

contact it is possible to have! I was just thinking so when

Shinondi met me, and took me to his house to see if I could do

anything for a child sorely afflicted with skin disease, and his

extreme tenderness for this very loathsome object made me feel that

human affections were the same among them as with us. He had

carried it on his back from a village, five miles distant, that

morning, in the hope that it might be cured. As soon as I entered

he laid a fine mat on the floor, and covered the guest-seat with a

bearskin. After breakfast he took me to the lodge of the sub-

chief, the largest in the village, 45 feet square, and into about

twenty others all constructed in the same way, but some of them

were not more than 20 feet square. In all I was received with the

same courtesy, but a few of the people asked Shinondi not to take

me into their houses, as they did not want me to see how poor they

are. In every house there was the low shelf with more or fewer

curios upon it, but, besides these, none but the barest necessaries

of life, though the skins which they sell or barter every year

would enable them to surround themselves with comforts, were it not

that their gains represent to them sake, and nothing else. They

are not nomads. On the contrary, they cling tenaciously to the

sites on which their fathers have lived and died. But anything

more deplorable than the attempts at cultivation which surround

their lodges could not be seen. The soil is little better than

white sand, on which without manure they attempt to grow millet,

which is to them in the place of rice, pumpkins, onions, and

tobacco; but the look of their plots is as if they had been

cultivated ten years ago, and some chance-sown grain and vegetables

had come up among the weeds. When nothing more will grow, they

partially clear another bit of forest, and exhaust that in its

turn.

In every house the same honour was paid to a guest. This seems a

savage virtue which is not strong enough to survive much contact

with civilisation. Before I entered one lodge the woman brought

several of the finer mats, and arranged them as a pathway for me to

walk to the fire upon. They will not accept anything for lodging,

or for anything that they give, so I was anxious to help them by

buying some of their handiwork, but found even this a difficult

matter. They were very anxious to give, but when I desired to buy

they said they did not wish to part with their things. I wanted

what they had in actual use, such as a tobacco-box and pipe-sheath,

and knives with carved handles and scabbards, and for three of

these I offered 2.5 dollars. They said they did not care to sell

them, but in the evening they came saying they were not worth more

than 1 dollar 10 cents, and they would sell them for that; and I

could not get them to take more. They said it was "not their

custom." I bought a bow and three poisoned arrows, two reed-mats,

with a diamond pattern on them in reeds stained red, some knives

with sheaths, and a bark cloth dress. I tried to buy the sake-

sticks with which they make libations to their gods, but they said

it was "not their custom" to part with the sake-stick of any living

man; however, this morning Shinondi has brought me, as a very

valuable present, the stick of a dead man! This morning the man

who sold the arrows brought two new ones, to replace two which were

imperfect. I found them, as Mr. Von Siebold had done,

punctiliously honest in all their transactions. They wear very

large earrings with hoops an inch and a half in diameter, a pair

constituting the dowry of an Aino bride; but they would not part

with these.

A house was burned down two nights ago, and "custom" in such a case

requires that all the men should work at rebuilding it, so in their

absence I got two boys to take me in a "dug-out" as far as we could

go up the Sarufutogawa--a lovely river, which winds tortuously

through the forests and mountains in unspeakable loveliness. I had

much of the feeling of the ancient mariner -

"We were the first

Who ever burst

Into that silent sea."

For certainly no European had ever previously floated on the dark

and forest-shrouded waters. I enjoyed those hours thoroughly, for

the silence was profound, and the faint blue of the autumn sky, and

the soft blue veil which "spiritualised" the distances, were so

exquisitely like the Indian summer.

The evening was spent like the previous one, but the hearts of the

savages were sad, for there was no more sake in Biratori, so they

could not "drink to the god," and the fire and the post with the

shavings had to go without libations. There was no more oil, so

after the strangers retired the hut was in complete darkness.

Yesterday morning we all breakfasted soon after daylight, and the

able-bodied men went away to hunt. Hunting and fishing are their

occupations, and for "indoor recreation" they carve tobacco-boxes,

knife-sheaths, sake-sticks, and shuttles. It is quite unnecessary

for them to do anything; they are quite contented to sit by the

fire, and smoke occasionally, and eat and sleep, this apathy being

varied by spasms of activity when there is no more dried flesh in

the kuras, and when skins must be taken to Sarufuto to pay for

sake. The women seem never to have an idle moment. They rise

early to sew, weave, and split bark, for they not only clothe

themselves and their husbands in this nearly indestructible cloth,

but weave it for barter, and the lower class of Japanese are

constantly to be seen wearing the product of Aino industry. They

do all the hard work, such as drawing water, chopping wood,

grinding millet, and cultivating the soil, after their fashion;

but, to do the men justice, I often see them trudging along

carrying one and even two children. The women take the exclusive

charge of the kuras, which are never entered by men.

I was left for some hours alone with the women, of whom there were

seven in the hut, with a few children. On the one side of the fire

the chief's mother sat like a Fate, for ever splitting and knotting

bark, and petrifying me by her cold, fateful eyes. Her thick, grey

hair hangs in shocks, the tattooing round her mouth has nearly

faded, and no longer disguises her really handsome features. She

is dressed in a much ornamented bark-cloth dress, and wears two

silver beads tied round her neck by a piece of blue cotton, in

addition to very large earrings. She has much sway in the house,

sitting on the men's side of the fire, drinking plenty of sake, and

occasionally chiding her grandson Shinondi for telling me too much,

saying that it will bring harm to her people. Though her

expression is so severe and forbidding, she is certainly very

handsome, and it is a European, not an Asiatic, beauty.

The younger women were all at work; two were seated on the floor

weaving without a loom, and the others were making and mending the

bark coats which are worn by both sexes. Noma, the chief's

principal wife, sat apart, seldom speaking. Two of the youngest

women are very pretty--as fair as ourselves, and their comeliness

is of the rosy, peasant kind. It turns out that two of them,

though they would not divulge it before men, speak Japanese, and

they prattled to Ito with great vivacity and merriment, the ancient

Fate scowling at them the while from under her shaggy eyebrows. I

got a number of words from them, and they laughed heartily at my

erroneous pronunciation. They even asked me a number of questions

regarding their own sex among ourselves, but few of these would

bear repetition, and they answered a number of mine. As the

merriment increased the old woman looked increasingly angry and

restless, and at last rated them sharply, as I have heard since,

telling them that if they spoke another word she should tell their

husbands that they had been talking to strangers. After this not

another word was spoken, and Noma, who is an industrious housewife,

boiled some millet into a mash for a mid-day lunch. During the

afternoon a very handsome young Aino, with a washed, richly-

coloured skin and fine clear eyes, came up from the coast, where he

had been working at the fishing. He saluted the old woman and

Benri's wife on entering, and presented the former with a gourd of

sake, bringing a greedy light into her eyes as she took a long

draught, after which, saluting me, he threw himself down in the

place of honour by the fire, with the easy grace of a staghound, a

savage all over. His name is Pipichari, and he is the chief's

adopted son. He had cut his foot badly with a root, and asked me

to cure it, and I stipulated that it should be bathed for some time

in warm water before anything more was done, after which I bandaged

it with lint. He said "he did not like me to touch his foot, it

was not clean enough, my hands were too white," etc.; but when I

had dressed it, and the pain was much relieved, he bowed very low

and then kissed my hand! He was the only one among them all who

showed the slightest curiosity regarding my things. He looked at

my scissors, touched my boots, and watched me, as I wrote, with the

simple curiosity of a child. He could speak a little Japanese, but

he said he was "too young to tell me anything, the older men would

know." He is a "total abstainer" from sake, and he says that there

are four such besides himself among the large number of Ainos who

are just now at the fishing at Mombets, and that the others keep

separate from them, because they think that the gods will be angry

with them for not drinking.

Several "patients," mostly children, were brought in during the

afternoon. Ito was much disgusted by my interest in these people,

who, he repeated, "are just dogs," referring to their legendary

origin, of which they are not ashamed. His assertion that they

have learned politeness from the Japanese is simply baseless.

Their politeness, though of quite another and more manly stamp, is

savage, not civilised. The men came back at dark, the meal was

prepared, and we sat round the fire as before; but there was no

sake, except in the possession of the old woman; and again the

hearts of the savages were sad. I could multiply instances of

their politeness. As we were talking, Pipichari, who is a very

"untutored" savage, dropped his coat from one shoulder, and at once

Shinondi signed to him to put it on again. Again, a woman was sent

to a distant village for some oil as soon as they heard that I

usually burned a light all night. Little acts of courtesy were

constantly being performed; but I really appreciated nothing more

than the quiet way in which they went on with the routine of their

ordinary lives.

During the evening a man came to ask if I would go and see a woman

who could hardly breathe; and I found her very ill of bronchitis,

accompanied with much fever. She was lying in a coat of skins,

tossing on the hard boards of her bed, with a matting-covered roll

under her head, and her husband was trying to make her swallow some

salt-fish. I took her dry, hot hand--such a small hand, tattooed

all over the back--and it gave me a strange thrill. The room was

full of people, and they all seemed very sorry. A medical

missionary would be of little use here; but a medically-trained

nurse, who would give medicines and proper food, with proper

nursing, would save many lives and much suffering. It is of no use

to tell these people to do anything which requires to be done more

than once: they are just like children. I gave her some

chlorodyne, which she swallowed with difficulty, and left another

dose ready mixed, to give her in a few hours; but about midnight

they came to tell me that she was worse; and on going I found her

very cold and weak, and breathing very hard, moving her head

wearily from side to side. I thought she could not live for many

hours, and was much afraid that they would think that I had killed

her. I told them that I thought she would die; but they urged me

to do something more for her, and as a last hope I gave her some

brandy, with twenty-five drops of chlorodyne, and a few spoonfuls

of very strong beef-tea. She was unable, or more probably

unwilling, to make the effort to swallow it, and I poured it down

her throat by the wild glare of strips of birch bark. An hour

later they came back to tell me that she felt as if she were very

drunk; but, going back to her house, I found that she was sleeping

quietly, and breathing more easily; and, creeping back just at

dawn, I found her still sleeping, and with her pulse stronger and

calmer. She is now decidedly better and quite sensible, and her

husband, the sub-chief, is much delighted. It seems so sad that

they have nothing fit for a sick person's food; and though I have

made a bowl of beef-tea with the remains of my stock, it can only

last one day.

I was so tired with these nocturnal expeditions and anxieties that

on lying down I fell asleep, and on waking found more than the

usual assemblage in the room, and the men were obviously agog about

something. They have a singular, and I hope an unreasonable, fear

of the Japanese Government. Mr. Von Siebold thinks that the

officials threaten and knock them about; and this is possible; but

I really think that the Kaitaikushi Department means well by them,

and, besides removing the oppressive restrictions by which, as a

conquered race, they were fettered, treats them far more humanely

and equitably than the U.S. Government, for instance, treats the

North American Indians. However, they are ignorant; and one of the

men, who had been most grateful because I said I would get Dr.

Hepburn to send some medicine for his child, came this morning and

begged me not to do so, as, he said, "the Japanese Government would

be angry." After this they again prayed me not to tell the

Japanese Government that they had told me their customs and then

they began to talk earnestly together.

The sub-chief then spoke, and said that I had been kind to their

sick people, and they would like to show me their temple, which had

never been seen by any foreigner; but they were very much afraid of

doing so, and they asked me many times "not to tell the Japanese

Government that they showed it to me, lest some great harm should

happen to them." The sub-chief put on a sleeveless Japanese war-

cloak to go up, and he, Shinondi, Pipichari, and two others

accompanied me. It was a beautiful but very steep walk, or rather

climb, to the top of an abrupt acclivity beyond the village, on

which the temple or shrine stands. It would be impossible to get

up were it not for the remains of a wooden staircase, not of Aino

construction. Forest and mountain surround Biratori, and the only

breaks in the dense greenery are glints of the shining waters of

the Sarufutogawa, and the tawny roofs of the Aino lodges. It is a

lonely and a silent land, fitter for the HIDING place than the

DWELLING place of men.

When the splendid young savage, Pipichari, saw that I found it

difficult to get up, he took my hand and helped me up, as gently as

an English gentleman would have done; and when he saw that I had

greater difficulty in getting down, he all but insisted on my

riding down on his back, and certainly would have carried me had

not Benri, the chief, who arrived while we were at the shrine, made

an end of it by taking my hand and helping me down himself. Their

instinct of helpfulness to a foreign woman strikes me as so odd,

because they never show any courtesy to their own women, whom they

treat (though to a less extent than is usual among savages) as

inferior beings.

On the very edge of the cliff, at the top of the zigzag, stands a

wooden temple or shrine, such as one sees in any grove, or on any

high place on the main island, obviously of Japanese construction,

but concerning which Aino tradition is silent. No European had

ever stood where I stood, and there was a solemnity in the

knowledge. The sub-chief drew back the sliding doors, and all

bowed with much reverence, It was a simple shrine of unlacquered

wood, with a broad shelf at the back, on which there was a small

shrine containing a figure of the historical hero Yoshitsune, in a

suit of inlaid brass armour, some metal gohei, a pair of tarnished

brass candle-sticks, and a coloured Chinese picture representing a

junk. Here, then, I was introduced to the great god of the

mountain Ainos. There is something very pathetic in these people

keeping alive the memory of Yoshitsune, not on account of his

martial exploits, but simply because their tradition tells them

that he was kind to them. They pulled the bell three times to

attract his attention, bowed three times, and made six libations of

sake, without which ceremony he cannot be approached. They asked

me to worship their god, but when I declined on the ground that I

could only worship my own God, the Lord of Earth and Heaven, of the

dead and of the living, they were too courteous to press their

request. As to Ito, it did not signify to him whether or not he

added another god to his already crowded Pantheon, and he

"worshipped," i.e. bowed down, most willingly before the great hero

of his own, the conquering race.

While we were crowded there on the narrow ledge of the cliff,

Benri, the chief, arrived--a square-built, broad-shouldered,

elderly man, strong as an ox, and very handsome, but his expression

is not pleasing, and his eyes are bloodshot with drinking. The

others saluted him very respectfully, but I noticed then and since

that his manner is very arbitrary, and that a blow not infrequently

follows a word. He had sent a message to his people by Ito that

they were not to answer any questions till he returned, but Ito

very tactfully neither gave it nor told me of it, and he was

displeased with the young men for having talked to me so much. His

mother had evidently "peached." I like him less than any of his

tribe. He has some fine qualities, truthfulness among others, but

he has been contaminated by the four or five foreigners that he has

seen, and is a brute and a sot. The hearts of his people are no

longer sad, for there is sake in every house to-night.

I. L. B.

LETTER XXXVII

Barrenness of Savage Life--Irreclaimable Savages--The Aino

Physique--Female Comeliness- Torture and Ornament--Child Life--

Docility and Obedience.

BIRATORI, YEZO, August 24.

I expected to have written out my notes on the Ainos in the

comparative quiet and comfort of Sarufuto, but the delay in Benri's

return, and the non-arrival of the horses, have compelled me to

accept Aino hospitality for another night, which involves living on

tea and potatoes, for my stock of food is exhausted. In some

respects I am glad to remain longer, as it enables me to go over my

stock of words, as well as my notes, with the chief, who is

intelligent and it is a pleasure to find that his statements

confirm those which have been made by the young men. The glamour

which at first disguises the inherent barrenness of savage life has

had time to pass away, and I see it in all its nakedness as a life

not much raised above the necessities of animal existence, timid,

monotonous, barren of good, dark, dull, "without hope, and without

God in the world;" though at its lowest and worst considerably

higher and better than that of many other aboriginal races, and--

must I say it?--considerably higher and better than that of

thousands of the lapsed masses of our own great cities who are

baptized into Christ's name, and are laid at last in holy ground,

inasmuch as the Ainos are truthful, and, on the whole, chaste,

hospitable, honest, reverent, and kind to the aged. Drinking,

their great vice, is not, as among us, in antagonism to their

religion, but is actually a part of it, and as such would be

exceptionally difficult to eradicate.

The early darkness has once again come on, and once again the

elders have assembled round the fire in two long lines, with the

younger men at the ends, Pipichari, who yesterday sat in the place

of honour and was helped to food first as the newest arrival,

taking his place as the youngest at the end of the right-hand row.

The birch-bark chips beam with fitful glare, the evening sake bowls

are filled, the fire-god and the garlanded god receive their

libations, the ancient woman, still sitting like a Fate, splits

bark, and the younger women knot it, and the log-fire lights up as

magnificent a set of venerable heads as painter or sculptor would

desire to see,--heads, full of--what? They have no history, their

traditions are scarcely worthy the name, they claim descent from a

dog, their houses and persons swarm with vermin, they are sunk in

the grossest ignorance, they have no letters or any numbers above a

thousand, they are clothed in the bark of trees and the untanned

skins of beasts, they worship the bear, the sun, moon, fire, water,

and I know not what, they are uncivilisable and altogether

irreclaimable savages, yet they are attractive, and in some ways

fascinating, and I hope I shall never forget the music of their

low, sweet voices, the soft light of their mild, brown eyes, and

the wonderful sweetness of their smile.

After the yellow skins, the stiff horse hair, the feeble eyelids,

the elongated eyes, the sloping eyebrows, the flat noses, the

sunken chests, the Mongolian features, the puny physique, the shaky

walk of the men, the restricted totter of the women, and the

general impression of degeneracy conveyed by the appearance of the

Japanese, the Ainos make a very singular impression. All but two

or three that I have seen are the most ferocious-looking of

savages, with a physique vigorous enough for carrying out the most

ferocious intentions, but as soon as they speak the countenance

brightens into a smile as gentle as that of a woman, something

which can never be forgotten.

The men are about the middle height, broad-chested, broad-

shouldered, "thick set," very strongly built, the arms and legs

short, thick, and muscular, the hands and feet large. The bodies,

and specially the limbs, of many are covered with short bristly

hair. I have seen two boys whose backs are covered with fur as

fine and soft as that of a cat. The heads and faces are very

striking. The foreheads are very high, broad, and prominent, and

at first sight give one the impression of an unusual capacity for

intellectual development; the ears are small and set low; the noses

are straight but short, and broad at the nostrils; the mouths are

wide but well formed; and the lips rarely show a tendency to

fulness. The neck is short, the cranium rounded, the cheek-bones

low, and the lower part of the face is small as compared with the

upper, the peculiarity called a "jowl" being unknown. The eyebrows

are full, and form a straight line nearly across the face. The

eyes are large, tolerably deeply set, and very beautiful, the

colour a rich liquid brown, the expression singularly soft, and the

eyelashes long, silky, and abundant. The skin has the Italian

olive tint, but in most cases is thin, and light enough to show the

changes of colour in the cheek. The teeth are small, regular, and

very white; the incisors and "eye teeth" are not disproportionately

large, as is usually the case among the Japanese; there is no

tendency towards prognathism; and the fold of integument which

conceals the upper eyelids of the Japanese is never to be met with.

The features, expression, and aspect, are European rather than

Asiatic.

The "ferocious savagery" of the appearance of the men is produced

by a profusion of thick, soft, black hair, divided in the middle,

and falling in heavy masses nearly to the shoulders. Out of doors

it is kept from falling over the face by a fillet round the brow.

The beards are equally profuse, quite magnificent, and generally

wavy, and in the case of the old men they give a truly patriarchal

and venerable aspect, in spite of the yellow tinge produced by

smoke and want of cleanliness. The savage look produced by the

masses of hair and beard, and the thick eyebrows, is mitigated by

the softness in the dreamy brown eyes, and is altogether

obliterated by the exceeding sweetness of the smile, which belongs

in greater or less degree to all the rougher sex.

I have measured the height of thirty of the adult men of this

village, and it ranges from 5 feet 4 inches to 5 feet 6.5 inches.

The circumference of the heads averages 22.1 inches, and the arc,

from ear to ear, 13 inches. According to Mr. Davies, the average

weight of the Aino adult masculine brain, ascertained by

measurement of Aino skulls, is 45.90 ounces avoirdupois, a brain

weight said to exceed that of all the races, Hindoo and Mussulman,

on the Indian plains, and that of the aboriginal races of India and

Ceylon, and is only paralleled by that of the races of the

Himalayas, the Siamese, and the Chinese Burmese. Mr. Davies says,

further, that it exceeds the mean brain weight of Asiatic races in

general. Yet with all this the Ainos are a stupid people!

Passing travellers who have seen a few of the Aino women on the

road to Satsuporo speak of them as very ugly, but as making amends

for their ugliness by their industry and conjugal fidelity. Of the

latter there is no doubt, but I am not disposed to admit the

former. The ugliness is certainly due to art and dirt. The Aino

women seldom exceed five feet and half an inch in height, but they

are beautifully formed, straight, lithe, and well-developed, with

small feet and hands, well-arched insteps, rounded limbs, well-

developed busts, and a firm, elastic gait. Their heads and faces

are small; but the hair, which falls in masses on each side of the

face like that of the men, is equally redundant. They have superb

teeth, and display them liberally in smiling. Their mouths are

somewhat wide, but well formed, and they have a ruddy comeliness

about them which is pleasing, in spite of the disfigurement of the

band which is tattooed both above and below the mouth, and which,

by being united at the corners, enlarges its apparent size and

width. A girl at Shiraoi, who, for some reason, has not been

subjected to this process, is the most beautiful creature in

features, colouring, and natural grace of form, that I have seen

for a long time. Their complexions are lighter than those of the

men. There are not many here even as dark as our European

brunettes. A few unite the eyebrows by a streak of tattooing, so

as to produce a straight line. Like the men, they cut their hair

short for two or three inches above the nape of the neck, but

instead of using a fillet they take two locks from the front and

tie them at the back.

They are universally tattooed, not only with the broad band above

and below the mouth, but with a band across the knuckles, succeeded

by an elaborate pattern on the back of the hand, and a series of

bracelets extending to the elbow. The process of disfigurement

begins at the age of five, when some of the sufferers are yet

unweaned. I saw the operation performed on a dear little bright

girl this morning. A woman took a large knife with a sharp edge,

and rapidly cut several horizontal lines on the upper lip,

following closely the curve of the very pretty mouth, and before

the slight bleeding had ceased carefully rubbed in some of the

shiny soot which collects on the mat above the fire. In two or

three days the scarred lip will be washed with the decoction of the

bark of a tree to fix the pattern, and give it that blue look which

makes many people mistake it for a daub of paint. A child who had

this second process performed yesterday has her lip fearfully

swollen and inflamed. The latest victim held her hands clasped

tightly together while the cuts were inflicted, but never cried.

The pattern on the lips is deepened and widened every year up to

the time of marriage, and the circles on the arm are extended in a

similar way. The men cannot give any reason for the universality

of this custom. It is an old custom, they say, and part of their

religion, and no woman could marry without it. Benri fancies that

the Japanese custom of blackening the teeth is equivalent to it;

but he is mistaken, as that ceremony usually succeeds marriage.

They begin to tattoo the arms when a girl is five or six, and work

from the elbow downwards. They expressed themselves as very much

grieved and tormented by the recent prohibition of tattooing. They

say the gods will be angry, and that the women can't marry unless

they are tattooed; and they implored both Mr. Von Siebold and me to

intercede with the Japanese Government on their behalf in this

respect. They are less apathetic on this than on any subject, and

repeat frequently, "It's a part of our religion."

The children are very pretty and attractive, and their faces give

promise of an intelligence which is lacking in those of the adults.

They are much loved, and are caressing as well as caressed. The

infants of the mountain Ainos have seeds of millet put into their

mouths as soon as they are born, and those of the coast Ainos a

morsel of salt-fish; and whatever be the hour of birth, "custom"

requires that they shall not be fed until a night has passed. They

are not weaned until they are at least three years old. Boys are

preferred to girls, but both are highly valued, and a childless

wife may be divorced.

Children do not receive names till they are four or five years old,

and then the father chooses a name by which his child is afterwards

known. Young children when they travel are either carried on their

mothers' backs in a net, or in the back of the loose garment; but

in both cases the weight is mainly supported by a broad band which

passes round the woman's forehead. When men carry them they hold

them in their arms. The hair of very young children is shaven, and

from about five to fifteen the boys wear either a large tonsure or

tufts above the ears, while the girls are allowed to grow hair all

over their heads.

Implicit and prompt obedience is required from infancy; and from a

very early age the children are utilised by being made to fetch and

carry and go on messages. I have seen children apparently not more

than two years old sent for wood; and even at this age they are so

thoroughly trained in the observances of etiquette that babies just

able to walk never toddle into or out of this house without formal

salutations to each person within it, the mother alone excepted.

They don't wear any clothing till they are seven or eight years

old, and are then dressed like their elders. Their manners to

their parents are very affectionate. Even to-day, in the chief's

awe-inspiring presence, one dear little nude creature, who had been

sitting quietly for two hours staring into the fire with her big

brown eyes, rushed to meet her mother when she entered, and threw

her arms round her, to which the woman responded by a look of true

maternal tenderness and a kiss. These little creatures, in the

absolute unconsciousness of innocence, with their beautiful faces,

olive-tinted bodies,--all the darker, sad to say, from dirt,--their

perfect docility, and absence of prying curiosity, are very

bewitching. They all wear silver or pewter ornaments tied round

their necks by a wisp of blue cotton.

Apparently the ordinary infantile maladies, such as whooping-cough

and measles, do not afflict the Ainos fatally; but the children

suffer from a cutaneous affection, which wears off as they reach

the age of ten or eleven years, as well as from severe toothache

with their first teeth.

LETTER XXXVII--(Continued)

Aino Clothing--Holiday Dress--Domestic Architecture--Household

Gods--Japanese Curios--The Necessaries of Life--Clay Soup--Arrow

Poison--Arrow-Traps--Female Occupations--Bark Cloth--The Art of

Weaving.

Aino clothing, for savages, is exceptionally good. In the winter

it consists of one, two, or more coats of skins, with hoods of the

same, to which the men add rude moccasins when they go out hunting.

In summer they wear kimonos, or loose coats, made of cloth woven

from the split bark of a forest tree. This is a durable and

beautiful fabric in various shades of natural buff, and somewhat

resembles what is known to fancy workers as "Panama canvas." Under

this a skin or bark-cloth vest may or may not be worn. The men

wear these coats reaching a little below the knees, folded over

from right to left, and confined at the waist by a narrow girdle of

the same cloth, to which is attached a rude, dagger-shaped knife,

with a carved and engraved wooden handle and sheath. Smoking is by

no means a general practice; consequently the pipe and tobacco-box

are not, as with the Japanese, a part of ordinary male attire.

Tightly-fitting leggings, either of bark-cloth or skin, are worn by

both sexes, but neither shoes nor sandals. The coat worn by the

women reaches half-way between the knees and ankles, and is quite

loose and without a girdle. It is fastened the whole way up to the

collar-bone; and not only is the Aino woman completely covered, but

she will not change one garment for another except alone or in the

dark. Lately a Japanese woman at Sarufuto took an Aino woman into

her house, and insisted on her taking a bath, which she absolutely

refused to do till the bath-house had been made quite private by

means of screens. On the Japanese woman going back a little later

to see what had become of her, she found her sitting in the water

in her clothes; and on being remonstrated with, she said that the

gods would be angry if they saw her without clothes!

Many of the garments for holiday occasions are exceedingly

handsome, being decorated with "geometrical" patterns, in which the

"Greek fret" takes part, in coarse blue cotton, braided most

dexterously with scarlet and white thread. Some of the handsomest

take half a year to make. The masculine dress is completed by an

apron of oblong shape decorated in the same elaborate manner.

These handsome savages, with their powerful physique, look

remarkably well in their best clothes. I have not seen a boy or

girl above nine who is not thoroughly clothed. The "jewels" of the

women are large, hoop earrings of silver or pewter, with

attachments of a classical pattern, and silver neck ornaments, and

a few have brass bracelets soldered upon their arms. The women

have a perfect passion for every hue of red, and I have made

friends with them by dividing among them a large turkey-red silk

handkerchief, strips of which are already being utilised for the

ornamenting of coats.

The houses in the five villages up here are very good. So they are

at Horobets, but at Shiraoi, where the aborigines suffer from the

close proximity of several grog shops, they are inferior. They

differ in many ways from any that I have before seen, approaching

most nearly to the grass houses of the natives of Hawaii. Custom

does not appear to permit either of variety or innovations; in all

the style is the same, and the difference consists in the size and

plenishings. The dwellings seem ill-fitted for a rigorous climate,

but the same thing may be said of those of the Japanese. In their

houses, as in their faces, the Ainos are more European than their

conquerors, as they possess doorways, windows, central fireplaces,

like those of the Highlanders of Scotland, and raised sleeping-

places.

The usual appearance is that of a small house built on at the end

of a larger one. The small house is the vestibule or ante-room,

and is entered by a low doorway screened by a heavy mat of reeds.

It contains the large wooden mortar and pestle with two ends, used

for pounding millet, a wooden receptacle for millet, nets or

hunting gear, and some bundles of reeds for repairing roof or

walls. This room never contains a window. From it the large room

is entered by a doorway, over which a heavy reed-mat, bound with

hide, invariably hangs. This room in Benri's case is 35 feet long

by 25 feet broad, another is 45 feet square, the smallest measures

20 feet by 15. On entering, one is much impressed by the great

height and steepness of the roof, altogether out of proportion to

the height of the walls.

The frame of the house is of posts, 4 feet 10 inches high, placed 4

feet apart, and sloping slightly inwards. The height of the walls

is apparently regulated by that of the reeds, of which only one

length is used, and which never exceed 4 feet 10 inches. The posts

are scooped at the top, and heavy poles, resting on the scoops, are

laid along them to form the top of the wall. The posts are again

connected twice by slighter poles tied on horizontally. The wall

is double; the outer part being formed of reeds tied very neatly to

the framework in small, regular bundles, the inner layer or wall

being made of reeds attached singly. From the top of the pole,

which is secured to the top of the posts, the framework of the roof

rises to a height of twenty-two feet, made, like the rest, of poles

tied to a heavy and roughly-hewn ridge-beam. At one end under the

ridge-beam there is a large triangular aperture for the exit of

smoke. Two very stout, roughly-hewn beams cross the width of the

house, resting on the posts of the wall, and on props let into the

floor, and a number of poles are laid at the same height, by means

of which a secondary roof formed of mats can be at once

extemporised, but this is only used for guests. These poles answer

the same purpose as shelves. Very great care is bestowed upon the

outside of the roof, which is a marvel of neatness and prettiness,

and has the appearance of a series of frills being thatched in

ridges. The ridge-pole is very thickly covered, and the thatch

both there and at the corners is elaborately laced with a pattern

in strong peeled twigs. The poles, which, for much of the room,

run from wall to wall, compel one to stoop, to avoid fracturing

one's skull, and bringing down spears, bows and arrows, arrow-

traps, and other primitive property. The roof and rafters are

black and shiny from wood smoke. Immediately under them, at one

end and one side, are small, square windows, which are closed at

night by wooden shutters, which during the day-time hang by ropes.

Nothing is a greater insult to an Aino than to look in at his

window.

On the left of the doorway is invariably a fixed wooden platform,

eighteen inches high, and covered with a single mat, which is the

sleeping-place. The pillows are small stiff bolsters, covered with

ornamental matting. If the family be large there are several of

these sleeping platforms. A pole runs horizontally at a fitting

distance above the outside edge of each, over which mats are thrown

to conceal the sleepers from the rest of the room. The inside half

of these mats is plain, but the outside, which is seen from the

room, has a diamond pattern woven into it in dull reds and browns.

The whole floor is covered with a very coarse reed-mat, with

interstices half an inch wide. The fireplace, which is six feet

long, is oblong. Above it, on a very black and elaborate

framework, hangs a very black and shiny mat, whose superfluous soot

forms the basis of the stain used in tattooing, and whose apparent

purpose is to prevent the smoke ascending, and to diffuse it

equally throughout the room. From this framework depends the great

cooking-pot, which plays a most important part in Aino economy.

Household gods form an essential part of the furnishing of every

house. In this one, at the left of the entrance, there are ten

white wands, with shavings depending from the upper end, stuck in

the wall; another projects from the window which faces the sunrise,

and the great god--a white post, two feet high, with spirals of

shavings depending from the top--is always planted in the floor,

near the wall, on the left side, opposite the fire, between the

platform bed of the householder and the low, broad shelf placed

invariably on the same side, and which is a singular feature of all

Aino houses, coast and mountain, down to the poorest, containing,

as it does, Japanese curios, many of them very valuable objects of

antique art, though much destroyed by damp and dust. They are true

curiosities in the dwellings of these northern aborigines, and look

almost solemn ranged against the wall. In this house there are

twenty-four lacquered urns, or tea-chests, or seats, each standing

two feet high on four small legs, shod with engraved or filigree

brass. Behind these are eight lacquered tubs, and a number of

bowls and lacquer trays, and above are spears with inlaid handles,

and fine Kaga and Awata bowls. The lacquer is good, and several of

the urns have daimiyo's crests in gold upon them. One urn and a

large covered bowl are beautifully inlaid with Venus' ear. The

great urns are to be seen in every house, and in addition there are

suits of inlaid armour, and swords with inlaid hilts, engraved

blades, and repousse scabbards, for which a collector would give

almost anything. No offers, however liberal, can tempt them to

sell any of these antique possessions. "They were presents," they

say in their low, musical voices; "they were presents from those

who were kind to our fathers; no, we cannot sell them; they were

presents." And so gold lacquer, and pearl inlaying, and gold

niello-work, and daimiyo's crests in gold, continue to gleam in the

smoky darkness of their huts. Some of these things were doubtless

gifts to their fathers when they went to pay tribute to the

representative of the Shogun and the Prince of Matsumae, soon after

the conquest of Yezo. Others were probably gifts from samurai, who

took refuge here during the rebellion, and some must have been

obtained by barter. They are the one possession which they will

not barter for sake, and are only parted with in payment of fines

at the command of a chief, or as the dower of a girl.

Except in the poorest houses, where the people can only afford to

lay down a mat for a guest, they cover the coarse mat with fine

ones on each side of the fire. These mats and the bark-cloth are

really their only manufactures. They are made of fine reeds, with

a pattern in dull reds or browns, and are 14 feet long by 3 feet 6

inches wide. It takes a woman eight days to make one of them. In

every house there are one or two movable platforms 6 feet by 4 and

14 inches high, which are placed at the head of the fireplace, and

on which guests sit and sleep on a bearskin or a fine mat. In many

houses there are broad seats a few inches high, on which the elder

men sit cross-legged, as their custom is, not squatting Japanese

fashion on the heels. A water-tub always rests on a stand by the

door, and the dried fish and venison or bear for daily use hang

from the rafters, as well as a few skins. Besides these things

there are a few absolute necessaries,--lacquer or wooden bowls for

food and sake, a chopping-board and rude chopping-knife, a cleft-

stick for burning strips of birch-bark, a triply-cleft stick for

supporting the potsherd in which, on rare occasions, they burn a

wick with oil, the component parts of their rude loom, the bark of

which they make their clothes, the reeds of which they make their

mats,--and the inventory of the essentials of their life is nearly

complete. No iron enters into the construction of their houses,

its place being supplied by a remarkably tenacious fibre.

I have before described the preparation of their food, which

usually consists of a stew "of abominable things." They eat salt

and fresh fish, dried fish, seaweed, slugs, the various vegetables

which grow in the wilderness of tall weeds which surrounds their

villages, wild roots and berries, fresh and dried venison and bear;

their carnival consisting of fresh bear's flesh and sake, seaweed,

mushrooms, and anything they can get, in fact, which is not

poisonous, mixing everything up together. They use a wooden spoon

for stirring, and eat with chopsticks. They have only two regular

meals a day, but eat very heartily. In addition to the eatables

just mentioned they have a thick soup made from a putty-like clay

which is found in one or two of the valleys. This is boiled with

the bulb of a wild lily, and, after much of the clay has been

allowed to settle, the liquid, which is very thick, is poured off.

In the north, a valley where this earth is found is called Tsie-

toi-nai, literally "eat-earth-valley."

The men spend the autumn, winter, and spring in hunting deer and

bears. Part of their tribute or taxes is paid in skins, and they

subsist on the dried meat. Up to about this time the Ainos have

obtained these beasts by means of poisoned arrows, arrow-traps, and

pitfalls, but the Japanese Government has prohibited the use of

poison and arrow-traps, and these men say that hunting is becoming

extremely difficult, as the wild animals are driven back farther

and farther into the mountains by the sound of the guns. However,

they add significantly, "the eyes of the Japanese Government are

not in every place!"

Their bows are only three feet long, and are made of stout saplings

with the bark on, and there is no attempt to render them light or

shapely at the ends. The wood is singularly inelastic. The arrows

(of which I have obtained a number) are very peculiar, and are made

in three pieces, the point consisting of a sharpened piece of bone

with an elongated cavity on one side for the reception of the

poison. This point or head is very slightly fastened by a lashing

of bark to a fusiform piece of bone about four inches long, which

is in its turn lashed to a shaft about fourteen inches long, the

other end of which is sometimes equipped with a triple feather and

sometimes is not.

The poison is placed in the elongated cavity in the head in a very

soft state, and hardens afterwards. In some of the arrow-heads

fully half a teaspoonful of the paste is inserted. From the nature

of the very slight lashings which attach the arrow-head to the

shaft, it constantly remains fixed in the slight wound that it

makes, while the shaft falls off.

Pipichari has given me a small quantity of the poisonous paste, and

has also taken me to see the plant from the root of which it is

made, the Aconitum Japonicum, a monkshood, whose tall spikes of

blue flowers are brightening the brushwood in all directions. The

root is pounded into a pulp, mixed with a reddish earth like an

iron ore pulverised, and again with animal fat, before being placed

in the arrow. It has been said that the poison is prepared for use

by being buried in the earth, but Benri says that this is needless.

They claim for it that a single wound kills a bear in ten minutes,

but that the flesh is not rendered unfit for eating, though they

take the precaution of cutting away a considerable quantity of it

round the wound.

Dr. Eldridge, formerly of Hakodate, obtained a small quantity of

the poison, and, after trying some experiments with it, came to the

conclusion that it is less virulent than other poisons employed for

a like purpose, as by the natives of Java, the Bushmen, and certain

tribes of the Amazon and Orinoco. The Ainos say that if a man is

accidentally wounded by a poisoned arrow the only cure is immediate

excision of the part.

I do not wonder that the Government has prohibited arrow-traps, for

they made locomotion unsafe, and it is still unsafe a little

farther north, where the hunters are more out of observation than

here. The traps consist of a large bow with a poisoned arrow,

fixed in such a way that when the bear walks over a cord which is

attached to it he is simultaneously transfixed. I have seen as

many as fifty in one house. The simple contrivance for inflicting

this silent death is most ingenious.

The women are occupied all day, as I have before said. They look

cheerful, and even merry when they smile, and are not like the

Japanese, prematurely old, partly perhaps because their houses are

well ventilated, and the use of charcoal is unknown. I do not

think that they undergo the unmitigated drudgery which falls to the

lot of most savage women, though they work hard. The men do not

like them to speak to strangers, however, and say that their place

is to work and rear children. They eat of the same food, and at

the same time as the men, laugh and talk before them, and receive

equal support and respect in old age. They sell mats and bark-

cloth in the piece, and made up, when they can, and their husbands

do not take their earnings from them. All Aino women understand

the making of bark-cloth. The men bring in the bark in strips,

five feet long, having removed the outer coating. This inner bark

is easily separated into several thin layers, which are split into

very narrow strips by the older women, very neatly knotted, and

wound into balls weighing about a pound each. No preparation of

either the bark or the thread is required to fit it for weaving,

but I observe that some of the women steep it in a decoction of a

bark which produces a brown dye to deepen the buff tint.

The loom is so simple that I almost fear to represent it as

complicated by description. It consists of a stout hook fixed in

the floor, to which the threads of the far end of the web are

secured, a cord fastening the near end to the waist of the worker,

who supplies, by dexterous rigidity, the necessary tension; a frame

like a comb resting on the ankles, through which the threads pass,

a hollow roll for keeping the upper and under threads separate, a

spatula-shaped shuttle of engraved wood, and a roller on which the

cloth is rolled as it is made. The length of the web is fifteen

feet, and the width of the cloth fifteen inches. It is woven with

great regularity, and the knots in the thread are carefully kept on

the under side. {20} It is a very slow and fatiguing process, and

a woman cannot do much more than a foot a day. The weaver sits on

the floor with the whole arrangement attached to her waist, and the

loom, if such it may be called, on her ankles. It takes long

practice before she can supply the necessary tension by spinal

rigidity. As the work proceeds she drags herself almost

imperceptibly nearer the hook. In this house and other large ones

two or three women bring in their webs in the morning, fix their

hooks, and weave all day, while others, who have not equal

advantages, put their hooks in the ground and weave in the

sunshine. The web and loom can be bundled up in two minutes, and

carried away quite as easily as a knitted soft blanket. It is the

simplest and perhaps the most primitive form of hand-loom, and

comb, shuttle, and roll, are all easily fashioned with an ordinary

knife.

LETTER XXXVII--(Continued)

A Simple Nature-Worship--Aino Gods--A Festival Song--Religious

Intoxication--Bear-Worship--The Annual Saturnalia--The Future

State--Marriage and Divorce--Musical Instruments--Etiquette--The

Chieftainship--Death and Burial--Old Age--Moral Qualities.

There cannot be anything more vague and destitute of cohesion than

Aino religious notions. With the exception of the hill shrines of

Japanese construction dedicated to Yoshitsune, they have no

temples, and they have neither priests, sacrifices, nor worship.

Apparently through all traditional time their cultus has been the

rudest and most primitive form of nature-worship, the attaching of

a vague sacredness to trees, rivers, rocks, and mountains, and of

vague notions of power for good or evil to the sea, the forest, the

fire, and the sun and moon. I cannot make out that they possess a

trace of the deification of ancestors, though their rude nature

worship may well have been the primitive form of Japanese Shinto.

The solitary exception to their adoration of animate and inanimate

nature appears to be the reverence paid to Yoshitsune, to whom they

believe they are greatly indebted, and who, it is supposed by some,

will yet interfere on their behalf. {21} Their gods--that is, the

outward symbols of their religion, corresponding most likely with

the Shinto gohei--are wands and posts of peeled wood, whittled

nearly to the top, from which the pendent shavings fall down in

white curls. These are not only set up in their houses, sometimes

to the number of twenty, but on precipices, banks of rivers and

streams, and mountain-passes, and such wands are thrown into the

rivers as the boatmen descend rapids and dangerous places. Since

my baggage horse fell over an acclivity on the trail from Sarufuto,

four such wands have been placed there. It is nonsense to write of

the religious ideas of a people who have none, and of beliefs among

people who are merely adult children. The traveller who formulates

an Aino creed must "evolve it from his inner consciousness." I

have taken infinite trouble to learn from themselves what their

religious notions are, and Shinondi tells me that they have told me

all they know, and the whole sum is a few vague fears and hopes,

and a suspicion that there are things outside themselves more

powerful than themselves, whose good influences may be obtained, or

whose evil influences may be averted, by libations of sake.

The word worship is in itself misleading. When I use it of these

savages it simply means libations of sake, waving bowls and waving

hands, without any spiritual act of deprecation or supplication.

In such a sense and such alone they worship the sun and moon (but

not the stars), the forest, and the sea. The wolf, the black

snake, the owl, and several other beasts and birds have the word

kamoi, god, attached to them, as the wolf is the "howling god," the

owl "the bird of the gods," a black snake the "raven god;" but none

of these things are now "worshipped," wolf-worship having quite

lately died out. Thunder, "the voice of the gods," inspires some

fear. The sun, they say, is their best god, and the fire their

next best, obviously the divinities from whom their greatest

benefits are received. Some idea of gratitude pervades their rude

notions, as in the case of the "worship" paid to Yoshitsune, and it

appears in one of the rude recitations chanted at the Saturnalia

which in several places conclude the hunting and fishing seasons:-

"To the sea which nourishes us, to the forest which protects us, we

present our grateful thanks. You are two mothers that nourish the

same child; do not be angry if we leave one to go to the other.

"The Ainos will always be the pride of the forest and of the sea."

The solitary act of sacrifice which they perform is the placing of

a worthless, dead bird, something like a sparrow, near one of their

peeled wands, where it is left till it reaches an advanced stage of

putrefaction. "To drink for the god" is the chief act of

"worship," and thus drunkenness and religion are inseparably

connected, as the more sake the Ainos drink the more devout they

are, and the better pleased are the gods. It does not appear that

anything but sake is of sufficient value to please the gods. The

libations to the fire and the peeled post are never omitted, and

are always accompanied by the inward waving of the sake bowls.

The peculiarity which distinguishes this rude mythology is the

"worship" of the bear, the Yezo bear being one of the finest of his

species; but it is impossible to understand the feelings by which

it is prompted, for they worship it after their fashion, and set up

its head in their villages, yet they trap it, kill it, eat it, and

sell its skin. There is no doubt that this wild beast inspires

more of the feeling which prompts worship than the inanimate forces

of nature, and the Ainos may be distinguished as bear-worshippers,

and their greatest religious festival or Saturnalia as the Festival

of the Bear. Gentle and peaceable as they are, they have a great

admiration for fierceness and courage; and the bear, which is the

strongest, fiercest, and most courageous animal known to them, has

probably in all ages inspired them with veneration. Some of their

rude chants are in praise of the bear, and their highest eulogy on

a man is to compare him to a bear. Thus Shinondi said of Benri,

the chief, "He is as strong as a bear," and the old Fate praising

Pipichari called him "The young bear."

In all Aino villages, specially near the chief's house, there are

several tall poles with the fleshless skull of a bear on the top of

each, and in most there is also a large cage, made grid-iron

fashion, of stout timbers, and raised two or three feet from the

ground. At the present time such cages contain young but well-

grown bears, captured when quite small in the early spring. After

the capture the bear cub is introduced into a dwelling-house,

generally that of the chief, or sub-chief, where it is suckled by a

woman, and played with by the children, till it grows too big and

rough for domestic ways, and is placed in a strong cage, in which

it is fed and cared for, as I understand, till the autumn of the

following year, when, being strong and well-grown, the Festival of

the Bear is celebrated. The customs of this festival vary

considerably, and the manner of the bear's death differs among the

mountain and coast Ainos, but everywhere there is a general

gathering of the people, and it is the occasion of a great feast,

accompanied with much sake and a curious dance, in which men alone

take part.

Yells and shouts are used to excite the bear, and when he becomes

much agitated a chief shoots him with an arrow, inflicting a slight

wound which maddens him, on which the bars of the cage are raised,

and he springs forth, very furious. At this stage the Ainos run

upon him with various weapons, each one striving to inflict a

wound, as it brings good luck to draw his blood. As soon as he

falls down exhausted, his head is cut off, and the weapons with

which he has been wounded are offered to it, and he is asked to

avenge himself upon them. Afterwards the carcass, amidst a

frenzied uproar, is distributed among the people, and amidst

feasting and riot the head, placed upon a pole, is worshipped, i.e.

it receives libations of sake, and the festival closes with general

intoxication. In some villages it is customary for the foster-

mother of the bear to utter piercing wails while he is delivered to

his murderers, and after he is slain to beat each one of them with

a branch of a tree. [Afterwards at Usu, on Volcano Bay, the old

men told me that at their festival they despatch the bear after a

different manner. On letting it loose from the cage two men seize

it by the ears, and others simultaneously place a long, stout pole

across the nape of its neck, upon which a number of Ainos mount,

and after a prolonged struggle the neck is broken. As the bear is

seen to approach his end, they shout in chorus, "We kill you, O

bear! come back soon into an Aino."] When a bear is trapped or

wounded by an arrow, the hunters go through an apologetic or

propitiatory ceremony. They appear to have certain rude ideas of

metempsychosis, as is evidenced by the Usu prayer to the bear and

certain rude traditions; but whether these are indigenous, or have

arisen by contact with Buddhism at a later period, it is impossible

to say.

They have no definite ideas concerning a future state, and the

subject is evidently not a pleasing one to them. Such notions as

they have are few and confused. Some think that the spirits of

their friends go into wolves and snakes; others, that they wander

about the forests; and they are much afraid of ghosts. A few think

that they go to "a good or bad place," according to their deeds;

but Shinondi said, and there was an infinite pathos in his words,

"How can we know? No one ever came back to tell us!" On asking

him what were bad deeds, he said, "Being bad to parents, stealing,

and telling lies." The future, however, does not occupy any place

in their thoughts, and they can hardly be said to believe in the

immortality of the soul, though their fear of ghosts shows that

they recognise a distinction between body and spirit.

Their social customs are very simple. Girls never marry before the

age of seventeen, or men before twenty-one. When a man wishes to

marry he thinks of some particular girl, and asks the chief if he

may ask for her. If leave is given, either through a "go-between"

or personally, he asks her father for her, and if he consents the

bridegroom gives him a present, usually a Japanese "curio." This

constitutes betrothal, and the marriage, which immediately follows,

is celebrated by carousals and the drinking of much sake. The

bride receives as her dowry her earrings and a highly ornamented

kimono. It is an essential that the husband provides a house to

which to take his wife. Each couple lives separately, and even the

eldest son does not take his bride to his father's house. Polygamy

is only allowed in two cases. The chief may have three wives; but

each must have her separate house. Benri has two wives; but it

appears that he took the second because the first was childless.

[The Usu Ainos told me that among the tribes of Volcano Bay

polygamy is not practised, even by the chiefs.] It is also

permitted in the case of a childless wife; but there is no instance

of it in Biratori, and the men say that they prefer to have one

wife, as two quarrel.

Widows are allowed to marry again with the chief's consent; but

among these mountain Ainos a woman must remain absolutely secluded

within the house of her late husband for a period varying from six

to twelve months, only going to the door at intervals to throw sake

to the right and left. A man secludes himself similarly for thirty

days. [So greatly do the customs vary, that round Volcano Bay I

found that the period of seclusion for a widow is only thirty days,

and for a man twenty-five; but that after a father's death the

house in which he has lived is burned down after the thirty days of

seclusion, and the widow and her children go to a friend's house

for three years, after which the house is rebuilt on its former

site.]

If a man does not like his wife, by obtaining the chief's consent

he can divorce her; but he must send her back to her parents with

plenty of good clothes; but divorce is impracticable where there

are children, and is rarely if ever practised. Conjugal fidelity

is a virtue among Aino women; but "custom" provides that, in case

of unfaithfulness, the injured husband may bestow his wife upon her

paramour, if he be an unmarried man; in which case the chief fixes

the amount of damages which the paramour must pay; and these are

usually valuable Japanese curios.

The old and blind people are entirely supported by their children,

and receive until their dying day filial reverence and obedience.

If one man steals from another he must return what he has taken,

and give the injured man a present besides, the value of which is

fixed by the chief.

Their mode of living you already know, as I have shared it, and am

still receiving their hospitality. "Custom" enjoins the exercise

of hospitality on every Aino. They receive all strangers as they

received me, giving them of their best, placing them in the most

honourable place, bestowing gifts upon them, and, when they depart,

furnishing them with cakes of boiled millet.

They have few amusements, except certain feasts. Their dance,

which they have just given in my honour, is slow and mournful, and

their songs are chants or recitative. They have a musical

instrument, something like a guitar, with three, five, or six

strings, which are made from sinews of whales cast up on the shore.

They have another, which is believed to be peculiar to themselves,

consisting of a thin piece of wood, about five inches long and two

and a half inches broad, with a pointed wooden tongue, about two

lines in breadth and sixteen in length, fixed in the middle, and

grooved on three sides. The wood is held before the mouth, and the

tongue is set in motion by the vibration of the breath in singing.

Its sound, though less penetrating, is as discordant as that of a

Jew's harp, which it somewhat resembles. One of the men used it as

an accompaniment of a song; but they are unwilling to part with

them, as they say that it is very seldom that they can find a piece

of wood which will bear the fine splitting necessary for the

tongue.

They are a most courteous people among each other. The salutations

are frequent--on entering a house, on leaving it, on meeting on the

road, on receiving anything from the hand of another, and on

receiving a kind or complimentary speech. They do not make any

acknowledgments of this kind to the women, however. The common

salutation consists in extending the hands and waving them inwards,

once or oftener, and stroking the beard; the formal one in raising

the hands with an inward curve to the level of the head two or

three times, lowering them, and rubbing them together; the ceremony

concluding with stroking the beard several times. The latter and

more formal mode of salutation is offered to the chief, and by the

young to the old men. The women have no "manners!"

They have no "medicine men," and, though they are aware of the

existence of healing herbs, they do not know their special virtues

or the manner of using them. Dried and pounded bear's liver is

their specific, and they place much reliance on it in colic and

other pains. They are a healthy race. In this village of 300

souls, there are no chronically ailing people; nothing but one case

of bronchitis, and some cutaneous maladies among children. Neither

is there any case of deformity in this and five other large

villages which I have visited, except that of a girl, who has one

leg slightly shorter than the other.

They ferment a kind of intoxicating liquor from the root of a tree,

and also from their own millet and Japanese rice, but Japanese sake

is the one thing that they care about. They spend all their gains

upon it, and drink it in enormous quantities. It represents to

them all the good of which they know, or can conceive. Beastly

intoxication is the highest happiness to which these poor savages

aspire, and the condition is sanctified to them under the fiction

of "drinking to the gods." Men and women alike indulge in this

vice. A few, however, like Pipichari, abstain from it totally,

taking the bowl in their hands, making the libations to the gods,

and then passing it on. I asked Pipichari why he did not take

sake, and he replied with a truthful terseness, "Because it makes

men like dogs."

Except the chief, who has two horses, they have no domestic animals

except very large, yellow dogs, which are used in hunting, but are

never admitted within the houses.

The habits of the people, though by no means destitute of decency

and propriety, are not cleanly. The women bathe their hands once a

day, but any other washing is unknown. They never wash their

clothes, and wear the same by day and night. I am afraid to

speculate on the condition of their wealth of coal-black hair.

They may be said to be very dirty--as dirty fully as masses of our

people at home. Their houses swarm with fleas, but they are not

worse in this respect than the Japanese yadoyas. The mountain

villages have, however, the appearance of extreme cleanliness,

being devoid of litter, heaps, puddles, and untidiness of all

kinds, and there are no unpleasant odours inside or outside the

houses, as they are well ventilated and smoked, and the salt fish

and meat are kept in the godowns. The hair and beards of the old

men, instead of being snowy as they ought to be, are yellow from

smoke and dirt.

They have no mode of computing time, and do not know their own

ages. To them the past is dead, yet, like other conquered and

despised races, they cling to the idea that in some far-off age

they were a great nation. They have no traditions of internecine

strife, and the art of war seems to have been lost long ago. I

asked Benri about this matter, and he says that formerly Ainos

fought with spears and knives as well as with bows and arrows, but

that Yoshitsune, their hero god, forbade war for ever, and since

then the two-edged spear, with a shaft nine feet long, has only

been used in hunting bears.

The Japanese Government, of course, exercises the same authority

over the Ainos as over its other subjects, but probably it does not

care to interfere in domestic or tribal matters, and within this

outside limit despotic authority is vested in the chiefs. The

Ainos live in village communities, and each community has its own

chief, who is its lord paramount. It appears to me that this

chieftainship is but an expansion of the paternal relation, and

that all the village families are ruled as a unit. Benri, in whose

house I am, is the chief of Biratori, and is treated by all with

very great deference of manner. The office is nominally for life;

but if a chief becomes blind, or too infirm to go about, he

appoints a successor. If he has a "smart" son, who he thinks will

command the respect of the people, he appoints him; but if not, he

chooses the most suitable man in the village. The people are

called upon to approve the choice, but their ratification is never

refused. The office is not hereditary anywhere.

Benri appears to exercise the authority of a very strict father.

His manner to all the men is like that of a master to slaves, and

they bow when they speak to him. No one can marry without his

approval. If any one builds a house he chooses the site. He has

absolute jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases, unless (which is

very rare) the latter should be of sufficient magnitude to be

reported to the Imperial officials. He compels restitution of

stolen property, and in all cases fixes the fines which are to be

paid by delinquents. He also fixes the hunting arrangements and

the festivals. The younger men were obviously much afraid of

incurring his anger in his absence.

An eldest son does not appear to be, as among the Japanese, a

privileged person. He does not necessarily inherit the house and

curios. The latter are not divided, but go with the house to the

son whom the father regards as being the "smartest." Formal

adoption is practised. Pipichari is an adopted son, and is likely

to succeed to Benri's property to the exclusion of his own

children. I cannot get at the word which is translated

"smartness," but I understand it as meaning general capacity. The

chief, as I have mentioned before, is allowed three wives among the

mountain Ainos, otherwise authority seems to be his only privilege.

The Ainos have a singular dread of snakes. Even their bravest fly

from them. One man says that it is because they know of no cure

for their bite; but there is something more than this, for they

flee from snakes which they know to be harmless.

They have an equal dread of their dead. Death seems to them very

specially "the shadow fear'd of man." When it comes, which it

usually does from bronchitis in old age, the corpse is dressed in

its best clothing, and laid upon a shelf for from one to three

days. In the case of a woman her ornaments are buried with her,

and in that of a man his knife and sake-stick, and, if he were a

smoker, his smoking apparatus. The corpse is sewn up with these

things in a mat, and, being slung on poles, is carried to a

solitary grave, where it is laid in a recumbent position. Nothing

will induce an Aino to go near a grave. Even if a valuable bird or

animal falls near one, he will not go to pick it up. A vague dread

is for ever associated with the departed, and no dream of Paradise

ever lights for the Aino the "Stygian shades."

Benri is, for an Aino, intelligent. Two years ago Mr. Dening of

Hakodate came up here and told him that there was but one God who

made us all, to which the shrewd old man replied, "If the God who

made you made us, how is it that you are so different--you so rich,

we so poor?" On asking him about the magnificent pieces of lacquer

and inlaying which adorn his curio shelf, he said that they were

his father's, grandfather's, and great-grandfather's at least, and

he thinks they were gifts from the daimiyo of Matsumae soon after

the conquest of Yezo. He is a grand-looking man, in spite of the

havoc wrought by his intemperate habits. There is plenty of room

in the house, and this morning, when I asked him to show me the use

of the spear, he looked a truly magnificent savage, stepping well

back with the spear in rest, and then springing forward for the

attack, his arms and legs turning into iron, the big muscles

standing out in knots, his frame quivering with excitement, the

thick hair falling back in masses from his brow, and the fire of

the chase in his eye. I trembled for my boy, who was the object of

the imaginary onslaught, the passion of sport was so admirably

acted.

As I write, seven of the older men are sitting by the fire. Their

grey beards fall to their waists in rippled masses, and the slight

baldness of age not only gives them a singularly venerable

appearance, but enhances the beauty of their lofty brows. I took a

rough sketch of one of the handsomest, and, showing it to him,

asked if he would have it, but instead of being amused or pleased

he showed symptoms of fear, and asked me to burn it, saying it

would bring him bad luck and he should die. However, Ito pacified

him, and he accepted it, after a Chinese character, which is

understood to mean good luck, had been written upon it; but all the

others begged me not to "make pictures" of them, except Pipichari,

who lies at my feet like a staghound.

The profusion of black hair, and a curious intensity about their

eyes, coupled with the hairy limbs and singularly vigorous

physique, give them a formidably savage appearance; but the smile,

full of "sweetness and light," in which both eyes and mouth bear

part, and the low, musical voice, softer and sweeter than anything

I have previously heard, make me at times forget that they are

savages at all. The venerable look of these old men harmonises

with the singular dignity and courtesy of their manners, but as I

look at the grand heads, and reflect that the Ainos have never

shown any capacity, and are merely adult children, they seem to

suggest water on the brain rather than intellect. I am more and

more convinced that the expression of their faces is European. It

is truthful, straightforward, manly, but both it and the tone of

voice are strongly tinged with pathos.

Before these elders Benri asked me, in a severe tone, if I had been

annoyed in any way during his absence. He feared, he said, that

the young men and the women would crowd about me rudely. I made a

complimentary speech in return, and all the ancient hands were

waved, and the venerable beards were stroked in acknowledgment.

These Ainos, doubtless, stand high among uncivilised peoples. They

are, however, as completely irreclaimable as the wildest of nomad

tribes, and contact with civilisation, where it exists, only

debases them. Several young Ainos were sent to Tokiyo, and

educated and trained in various ways, but as soon as they returned

to Yezo they relapsed into savagery, retaining nothing but a

knowledge of Japanese. They are charming in many ways, but make

one sad, too, by their stupidity, apathy, and hopelessness, and all

the sadder that their numbers appear to be again increasing; and as

their physique is very fine, there does not appear to be a prospect

of the race dying out at present.

They are certainly superior to many aborigines, as they have an

approach to domestic life. They have one word for HOUSE, and

another for HOME, and one word for husband approaches very nearly

to house-band. Truth is of value in their eyes, and this in itself

raises them above some peoples. Infanticide is unknown, and aged

parents receive filial reverence, kindness, and support, while in

their social and domestic relations there is much that is

praiseworthy.

I must conclude this letter abruptly, as the horses are waiting,

and I must cross the rivers, if possible, before the bursting of an

impending storm. I. L. B.

LETTER XXXVIII

A Parting Gift--A Delicacy--Generosity--A Seaside Village--

Pipichari's Advice--A Drunken Revel--Ito's Prophecies--The Kocho's

Illness--Patent Medicines.

SARUFUTO, YEZO, August 27.

I left the Ainos yesterday with real regret, though I must confess

that sleeping in one's clothes and the lack of ablutions are very

fatiguing. Benri's two wives spent the early morning in the

laborious operation of grinding millet into coarse flour, and

before I departed, as their custom is, they made a paste of it,

rolled it with their unclean fingers into well-shaped cakes, boiled

them in the unwashed pot in which they make their stew of

"abominable things," and presented them to me on a lacquer tray.

They were distressed that I did not eat their food, and a woman

went to a village at some distance and brought me some venison fat

as a delicacy. All those of whom I had seen much came to wish me

good-bye, and they brought so many presents (including a fine

bearskin) that I should have needed an additional horse to carry

them had I accepted but one-half.

I rode twelve miles through the forest to Mombets, where I intended

to spend Sunday, but I had the worst horse I ever rode, and we took

five hours. The day was dull and sad, threatening a storm, and

when we got out of the forest, upon a sand-hill covered with oak

scrub, we encountered a most furious wind. Among the many views

which I have seen, that is one to be remembered. Below lay a

bleached and bare sand-hill, with a few grey houses huddled in its

miserable shelter, and a heaped-up shore of grey sand, on which a

brown-grey sea was breaking with clash and boom in long, white,

ragged lines, with all beyond a confusion of surf, surge, and mist,

with driving brown clouds mingling sea and sky, and all between

showing only in glimpses amidst scuds of sand.

At a house in the scrub a number of men were drinking sake with

much uproar, and a superb-looking Aino came out, staggered a few

yards, and then fell backwards among the weeds, a picture of

debasement. I forgot to tell you that before I left Biratori, I

inveighed to the assembled Ainos against the practice and

consequences of sake-drinking, and was met with the reply, "We must

drink to the gods, or we shall die;" but Pipichari said, "You say

that which is good; let us give sake to the gods, but not drink

it," for which bold speech he was severely rebuked by Benri.

Mombets is a stormily-situated and most wretched cluster of twenty-

seven decayed houses, some of them Aino, and some Japanese. The

fish-oil and seaweed fishing trades are in brisk operation there

now for a short time, and a number of Aino and Japanese strangers

are employed. The boats could not get out because of the surf, and

there was a drunken debauch. The whole place smelt of sake. Tipsy

men were staggering about and falling flat on their backs, to lie

there like dogs till they were sober,--Aino women were vainly

endeavouring to drag their drunken lords home, and men of both

races were reduced to a beastly equality. I went to the yadoya

where I intended to spend Sunday, but, besides being very dirty and

forlorn, it was the very centre of the sake traffic, and in its

open space there were men in all stages of riotous and stupid

intoxication. It was a sad scene, yet one to be matched in a

hundred places in Scotland every Saturday afternoon. I am told by

the Kocho here that an Aino can drink four or five times as much as

a Japanese without being tipsy, so for each tipsy Aino there had

been an outlay of 6s. or 7s., for sake is 8d. a cup here!

I had some tea and eggs in the daidokoro, and altered my plans

altogether on finding that if I proceeded farther round the east

coast, as I intended, I should run the risk of several days'

detention on the banks of numerous "bad rivers" if rain came on, by

which I should run the risk of breaking my promise to deliver Ito

to Mr. Maries by a given day. I do not surrender this project,

however, without an equivalent, for I intend to add 100 miles to my

journey, by taking an almost disused track round Volcano Bay, and

visiting the coast Ainos of a very primitive region. Ito is very

much opposed to this, thinking that he has made a sufficient

sacrifice of personal comfort at Biratori, and plies me with

stories, such as that there are "many bad rivers to cross," that

the track is so worn as to be impassable, that there are no

yadoyas, and that at the Government offices we shall neither get

rice nor eggs! An old man who has turned back unable to get horses

is made responsible for these stories. The machinations are very

amusing. Ito was much smitten with the daughter of the house-

master at Mororan, and left some things in her keeping, and the

desire to see her again is at the bottom of his opposition to the

other route.

Monday.--The horse could not or would not carry me farther than

Mombets, so, sending the baggage on, I walked through the oak wood,

and enjoyed its silent solitude, in spite of the sad reflections

upon the enslavement of the Ainos to sake. I spent yesterday

quietly in my old quarters, with a fearful storm of wind and rain

outside. Pipichari appeared at noon, nominally to bring news of

the sick woman, who is recovering, and to have his nearly healed

foot bandaged again, but really to bring me a knife sheath which he

has carved for me. He lay on the mat in the corner of my room most

of the afternoon, and I got a great many more words from him. The

house-master, who is the Kocho of Sarufuto, paid me a courteous

visit, and in the evening sent to say that he would be very glad of

some medicine, for he was "very ill and going to have fever." He

had caught a bad cold and sore throat, had bad pains in his limbs,

and was bemoaning himself ruefully. To pacify his wife, who was

very sorry for him, I gave him some "Cockle's Pills" and the

trapper's remedy of "a pint of hot water with a pinch of cayenne

pepper," and left him moaning and bundled up under a pile of

futons, in a nearly hermetically sealed room, with a hibachi of

charcoal vitiating the air. This morning when I went and inquired

after him in a properly concerned tone, his wife told me very

gleefully that he was quite well and had gone out, and had left 25

sen for some more of the medicines that I had given him, so with

great gravity I put up some of Duncan and Flockhart's most pungent

cayenne pepper, and showed her how much to use. She was not

content, however, without some of the "Cockles," a single box of

which has performed six of those "miraculous cures" which rejoice

the hearts and fill the pockets of patent medicine makers!

I. L. B.

LETTER XXXIX

A Welcome Gift--Recent Changes--Volcanic Phenomena--Interesting

Tufa Cones--Semi-strangulation--A Fall into a Bear-trap--The

Shiraoi Ainos--Horsebreaking and Cruelty.

OLD MORORAN, VOLCANO BAY, YEZO,

September 2.

After the storm of Sunday, Monday was a grey, still, tender day,

and the ranges of wooded hills were bathed in the richest indigo

colouring. A canter of seventeen miles among the damask roses on a

very rough horse only took me to Yubets, whose indescribable

loneliness fascinated me into spending a night there again, and

encountering a wild clatter of wind and rain; and another canter of

seven miles the next morning took me to Tomakomai, where I rejoined

my kuruma, and after a long delay, three trotting Ainos took me to

Shiraoi, where the "clear shining after rain," and the mountains

against a lemon-coloured sky, were extremely beautiful; but the

Pacific was as unrestful as a guilty thing, and its crash and

clamour and the severe cold fatigued me so much that I did not

pursue my journey the next day, and had the pleasure of a flying

visit from Mr. Von Siebold and Count Diesbach, who bestowed a

chicken upon me.

I like Shiraoi very much, and if I were stronger would certainly

make it a basis for exploring a part of the interior, in which

there is much to reward the explorer. Obviously the changes in

this part of Yezo have been comparatively recent, and the energy of

the force which has produced them is not yet extinct. The land has

gained from the sea along the whole of this part of the coast to

the extent of two or three miles, the old beach with its bays and

headlands being a marked feature of the landscape. This new

formation appears to be a vast bed of pumice, covered by a thin

layer of vegetable mould, which cannot be more than fifty years

old. This pumice fell during the eruption of the volcano of

Tarumai, which is very near Shiraoi, and is also brought down in

large quantities from the interior hills and valleys by the

numerous rivers, besides being washed up by the sea. At the last

eruption pumice fell over this region of Yezo to a medium depth of

3 feet 6 inches. In nearly all the rivers good sections of the

formation may be seen in their deeply-cleft banks, broad, light-

coloured bands of pumice, with a few inches of rich, black,

vegetable soil above, and several feet of black sea-sand below.

During a freshet which occurred the first night I was at Shiraoi, a

single stream covered a piece of land with pumice to the depth of

nine inches, being the wash from the hills of the interior, in a

course of less than fifteen miles.

Looking inland, the volcano of Tarumai, with a bare grey top and a

blasted forest on its sides, occupies the right of the picture. To

the left and inland are mountains within mountains, tumbled

together in most picturesque confusion, densely covered with forest

and cleft by magnificent ravines, here and there opening out into

narrow valleys. The whole of the interior is jungle penetrable for

a few miles by shallow and rapid rivers, and by nearly smothered

trails made by the Ainos in search of game. The general lie of the

country made me very anxious to find out whether a much-broken

ridge lying among the mountains is or is not a series of tufa cones

of ancient date; and, applying for a good horse and Aino guide on

horseback, I left Ito to amuse himself, and spent much of a most

splendid day in investigations and in attempting to get round the

back of the volcano and up its inland side. There is a great deal

to see and learn there. Oh that I had strength! After hours of

most tedious and exhausting work I reached a point where there were

several great fissures emitting smoke and steam, with occasional

subterranean detonations. These were on the side of a small, flank

crack which was smoking heavily. There was light pumice

everywhere, but nothing like recent lava or scoriae. One fissure

was completely lined with exquisite, acicular crystals of sulphur,

which perished with a touch. Lower down there were two hot springs

with a deposit of sulphur round their margins, and bubbles of gas,

which, from its strong, garlicky smell, I suppose to be

sulphuretted hydrogen. Farther progress in that direction was

impossible without a force of pioneers. I put my arm down several

deep crevices which were at an altitude of only about 500 feet, and

had to withdraw it at once, owing to the great heat, in which some

beautiful specimens of tropical ferns were growing. At the same

height I came to a hot spring--hot enough to burst one of my

thermometers, which was graduated above the boiling point of

Fahrenheit; and tying up an egg in a pocket-handkerchief and

holding it by a stick in the water, it was hard boiled in 8.5

minutes. The water evaporated without leaving a trace of deposit

on the handkerchief, and there was no crust round its margin. It

boiled and bubbled with great force.

Three hours more of exhausting toil, which almost knocked up the

horses, brought us to the apparent ridge, and I was delighted to

find that it consisted of a lateral range of tufa cones, which I

estimate as being from 200 to 350, or even 400 feet high. They are

densely covered with trees of considerable age, and a rich deposit

of mould; but their conical form is still admirably defined. An

hour of very severe work, and energetic use of the knife on the

part of the Aino, took me to the top of one of these through a mass

of entangled and gigantic vegetation, and I was amply repaid by

finding a deep, well-defined crateriform cavity of great depth,

with its sides richly clothed with vegetation, closely resembling

some of the old cones in the island of Kauai. This cone is

partially girdled by a stream, which in one place has cut through a

bank of both red and black volcanic ash. All the usual phenomena

of volcanic regions are probably to be met with north of Shiraoi,

and I hope they will at some future time be made the object of

careful investigation.

In spite of the desperate and almost overwhelming fatigue, I have

enjoyed few things more than that "exploring expedition." If the

Japanese have no one to talk to they croon hideous discords to

themselves, and it was a relief to leave Ito behind and get away

with an Aino, who was at once silent, trustworthy, and faithful.

Two bright rivers bubbling over beds of red pebbles run down to

Shiraoi out of the back country, and my directions, which were

translated to the Aino, were to follow up one of these and go into

the mountains in the direction of one I pointed out till I said

"Shiraoi." It was one of those exquisite mornings which are seen

sometimes in the Scotch Highlands before rain, with intense

clearness and visibility, a blue atmosphere, a cloudless sky, blue

summits, heavy dew, and glorious sunshine, and under these

circumstances scenery beautiful in itself became entrancing.

The trailers are so formidable that we had to stoop over our

horses' necks at all times, and with pushing back branches and

guarding my face from slaps and scratches, my thick dogskin gloves

were literally frayed off, and some of the skin of my hands and

face in addition, so that I returned with both bleeding and

swelled. It was on the return ride, fortunately, that in stooping

to escape one great liana the loop of another grazed my nose, and,

being unable to check my unbroken horse instantaneously, the loop

caught me by the throat, nearly strangled me, and in less time than

it takes to tell it I was drawn over the back of the saddle, and

found myself lying on the ground, jammed between a tree and the

hind leg of the horse, which was quietly feeding. The Aino, whose

face was very badly scratched, missing me, came back, said never a

word, helped me up, brought me some water in a leaf, brought my

hat, and we rode on again. I was little the worse for the fall,

but on borrowing a looking-glass I see not only scratches and

abrasions all over my face, but a livid mark round my throat as if

I had been hung! The Aino left portions of his bushy locks on many

of the branches. You would have been amused to see me in this

forest, preceded by this hairy and formidable-looking savage, who

was dressed in a coat of skins with the fur outside, seated on the

top of a pack-saddle covered with a deer hide, and with his hairy

legs crossed over the horse's neck--a fashion in which the Ainos

ride any horses over any ground with the utmost serenity.

It was a wonderful region for beauty. I have not seen so beautiful

a view in Japan as from the river-bed from which I had the first

near view of the grand assemblage of tufa cones, covered with an

ancient vegetation, backed by high mountains of volcanic origin, on

whose ragged crests the red ash was blazing vermilion against the

blue sky, with a foreground of bright waters flashing through a

primeval forest. The banks of these streams were deeply excavated

by the heavy rains, and sometimes we had to jump three and even

four feet out of the forest into the river, and as much up again,

fording the Shiraoi river only more than twenty times, and often

making a pathway of its treacherous bed and rushing waters, because

the forest was impassable from the great size of the prostrate

trees. The horses look at these jumps, hold back, try to turn, and

then, making up their minds, suddenly plunge down or up. When the

last vestige of a trail disappeared, I signed to the Aino to go on,

and our subsequent "exploration" was all done at the rate of about

a mile an hour. On the openings the grass grows stiff and strong

to the height of eight feet, with its soft reddish plumes waving in

the breeze. The Aino first forced his horse through it, but of

course it closed again, so that constantly when he was close in

front I was only aware of his proximity by the tinkling of his

horse's bells, for I saw nothing of him or of my own horse except

the horn of my saddle. We tumbled into holes often, and as easily

tumbled out of them; but once we both went down in the most

unexpected manner into what must have been an old bear-trap, both

going over our horses' heads, the horses and ourselves struggling

together in a narrow space in a mist of grassy plumes, and, being

unable to communicate with my guide, the sense of the ridiculous

situation was so overpowering that, even in the midst of the

mishap, I was exhausted with laughter, though not a little bruised.

It was very hard to get out of that pitfall, and I hope I shall

never get into one again. It is not the first occasion on which I

have been glad that the Yezo horses are shoeless. It was through

this long grass that we fought our way to the tufa cones, with the

red ragged crests against the blue sky.

The scenery was magnificent, and after getting so far I longed to

explore the sources of the rivers, but besides the many

difficulties the day was far spent. I was also too weak for any

energetic undertaking, yet I felt an intuitive perception of the

passion and fascination of exploring, and understood how people

could give up their lives to it. I turned away from the tufa cones

and the glory of the ragged crests very sadly, to ride a tired

horse through great difficulties; and the animal was so thoroughly

done up that I had to walk, or rather wade, for the last hour, and

it was nightfall when I returned, to find that Ito had packed up

all my things, had been waiting ever since noon to start for

Horobets, was very grumpy at having to unpack, and thoroughly

disgusted when I told him that I was so tired and bruised that I

should have to remain the next day to rest. He said indignantly,

"I never thought that when you'd got the Kaitakushi kuruma you'd go

off the road into those woods!" We had seen some deer and many

pheasants, and a successful hunter brought in a fine stag, so that

I had venison steak for supper, and was much comforted, though Ito

seasoned the meal with well-got-up stories of the impracticability

of the Volcano Bay route.

Shiraoi consists of a large old Honjin, or yadoya, where the

daimiyo and his train used to lodge in the old days, and about

eleven Japanese houses, most of which are sake shops--a fact which

supplies an explanation of the squalor of the Aino village of

fifty-two houses, which is on the shore at a respectful distance.

There is no cultivation, in which it is like all the fishing

villages on this part of the coast, but fish-oil and fish-manure

are made in immense quantities, and, though it is not the season

here, the place is pervaded by "an ancient and fish-like smell."

The Aino houses are much smaller, poorer, and dirtier than those of

Biratori. I went into a number of them, and conversed with the

people, many of whom understand Japanese. Some of the houses

looked like dens, and, as it was raining, husband, wife, and five

or six naked children, all as dirty as they could be, with unkempt,

elf-like locks, were huddled round the fires. Still, bad as it

looked and smelt, the fire was the hearth, and the hearth was

inviolate, and each smoked and dirt-stained group was a family, and

it was an advance upon the social life of, for instance, Salt Lake

City. The roofs are much flatter than those of the mountain Ainos,

and, as there are few store-houses, quantities of fish, "green"

skins, and venison, hang from the rafters, and the smell of these

and the stinging of the smoke were most trying. Few of the houses

had any guest-seats, but in the very poorest, when I asked shelter

from the rain, they put their best mat upon the ground, and

insisted, much to my distress, on my walking over it in muddy

boots, saying, "It is Aino custom." Ever, in those squalid homes

the broad shelf, with its rows of Japanese curios, always has a

place. I mentioned that it is customary for a chief to appoint a

successor when he becomes infirm, and I came upon a case in point,

through a mistaken direction, which took us to the house of the

former chief, with a great empty bear cage at its door. On

addressing him as the chief, he said, "I am old and blind, I cannot

go out, I am of no more good," and directed us to the house of his

successor. Altogether it is obvious, from many evidences in this

village, that Japanese contiguity is hurtful, and that the Ainos

have reaped abundantly of the disadvantages without the advantages

of contact with Japanese civilisation.

That night I saw a specimen of Japanese horse-breaking as practised

in Yezo. A Japanese brought into the village street a handsome,

spirited young horse, equipped with a Japanese demi-pique saddle,

and a most cruel gag bit. The man wore very cruel spurs, and was

armed with a bit of stout board two feet long by six inches broad.

The horse had not been mounted before, and was frightened, but not

the least vicious. He was spurred into a gallop, and ridden at

full speed up and down the street, turned by main force, thrown on

his haunches, goaded with the spurs, and cowed by being mercilessly

thrashed over the ears and eyes with the piece of board till he was

blinded with blood. Whenever he tried to stop from exhaustion he

was spurred, jerked, and flogged, till at last, covered with sweat,

foam, and blood, and with blood running from his mouth and

splashing the road, he reeled, staggered, and fell, the rider

dexterously disengaging himself. As soon as he was able to stand,

he was allowed to crawl into a shed, where he was kept without food

till morning, when a child could do anything with him. He was

"broken," effectually spirit-broken, useless for the rest of his

life. It was a brutal and brutalising exhibition, as triumphs of

brute force always are.

LETTER XXXIX--(Continued)

The Universal Language--The Yezo Corrals--A "Typhoon Rain"--

Difficult Tracks--An Unenviable Ride--Drying Clothes--A Woman's

Remorse.

This morning I left early in the kuruma with two kind and

delightful savages. The road being much broken by the rains I had

to get out frequently, and every time I got in again they put my

air-pillow behind me, and covered me up in a blanket; and when we

got to a rough river, one made a step of his back by which I

mounted their horse, and gave me nooses of rope to hold on by, and

the other held my arm to keep me steady, and they would not let me

walk up or down any of the hills. What a blessing it is that,

amidst the confusion of tongues, the language of kindness and

courtesy is universally understood, and that a kindly smile on a

savage face is as intelligible as on that of one's own countryman!

They had never drawn a kuruma, and were as pleased as children when

I showed them how to balance the shafts. They were not without the

capacity to originate ideas, for, when they were tired of the

frolic of pulling, they attached the kuruma by ropes to the horse,

which one of them rode at a "scramble," while the other merely ran

in the shafts to keep them level. This is an excellent plan.

Horobets is a fishing station of antique and decayed aspect, with

eighteen Japanese and forty-seven Aino houses. The latter are much

larger than at Shiraoi, and their very steep roofs are beautifully

constructed. It was a miserable day, with fog concealing the

mountains and lying heavily on the sea, but as no one expected rain

I sent the kuruma back to Mororan and secured horses. On principle

I always go to the corral myself to choose animals, if possible,

without sore backs, but the choice is often between one with a mere

raw and others which have holes in their backs into which I could

put my hand, or altogether uncovered spines. The practice does no

immediate good, but by showing the Japanese that foreign opinion

condemns these cruelties an amendment may eventually be brought

about. At Horobets, among twenty horses, there was not one that I

would take,--I should like to have had them all shot. They are

cheap and abundant, and are of no account. They drove a number

more down from the hills, and I chose the largest and finest horse

I have seen in Japan, with some spirit and action, but I soon found

that he had tender feet. We shortly left the high-road, and in

torrents of rain turned off on "unbeaten tracks," which led us

through a very bad swamp and some much swollen and very rough

rivers into the mountains, where we followed a worn-out track for

eight miles. It was literally "FOUL weather," dark and still, with

a brown mist, and rain falling in sheets. I threw my paper

waterproof away as useless, my clothes were of course soaked, and

it was with much difficulty that I kept my shomon and paper money

from being reduced to pulp. Typhoons are not known so far north as

Yezo, but it was what they call a "typhoon rain" without the

typhoon, and in no time it turned the streams into torrents barely

fordable, and tore up such of a road as there is, which at its best

is a mere water-channel. Torrents, bringing tolerable-sized

stones, tore down the track, and when the horses had been struck

two or three times by these, it was with difficulty that they could

be induced to face the rushing water. Constantly in a pass, the

water had gradually cut a track several feet deep between steep

banks, and the only possible walking place was a stony gash not

wide enough for the two feet of a horse alongside of each other,

down which water and stones were rushing from behind, with all

manner of trailers matted overhead, and between avoiding being

strangled and attempting to keep a tender-footed horse on his legs,

the ride was a very severe one. The poor animal fell five times

from stepping on stones, and in one of his falls twisted my left

wrist badly. I thought of the many people who envied me my tour in

Japan, and wondered whether they would envy me that ride!

After this had gone on for four hours, the track, with a sudden dip

over a hillside, came down on Old Mororan, a village of thirty Aino

and nine Japanese houses, very unpromising-looking, although

exquisitely situated on the rim of a lovely cove. The Aino huts

were small and poor, with an unusual number of bear skulls on

poles, and the village consisted mainly of two long dilapidated

buildings, in which a number of men were mending nets. It looked a

decaying place, of low, mean lives. But at a "merchant's" there

was one delightful room with two translucent sides--one opening on

the village, the other looking to the sea down a short, steep

slope, on which is a quaint little garden, with dwarfed fir-trees

in pots, a few balsams, and a red cabbage grown with much pride as

a "foliage plant."

It is nearly midnight, but my bed and bedding are so wet that I am

still sitting up and drying them, patch by patch, with tedious

slowness, on a wooden frame placed over a charcoal brazier, which

has given my room the dryness and warmth which are needed when a

person has been for many hours in soaked clothing, and has nothing

really dry to put on. Ito bought a chicken for my supper, but when

he was going to kill it an hour later its owner in much grief

returned the money, saying she had brought it up and could not bear

to see it killed. This is a wild, outlandish place, but an

intuition tells me that it is beautiful. The ocean at present is

thundering up the beach with the sullen force of a heavy ground-

swell, and the rain is still falling in torrents.

I. L. B.

LETTER XL

"More than Peace"--Geographical Difficulties--Usu-taki--Swimming

the Osharu--A Dream of Beauty--A Sunset Effect--A Nocturnal Alarm--

The Coast Ainos.

LEBUNGE, VOLCANO BAY, YEZO,

September 6.

"Weary wave and dying blast

Sob and moan along the shore,

All is peace at last."

And more than peace. It was a heavenly morning. The deep blue sky

was perfectly unclouded, a blue sea with diamond flash and a "many-

twinkling smile" rippled gently on the golden sands of the lovely

little bay, and opposite, forty miles away, the pink summit of the

volcano of Komono-taki, forming the south-western point of Volcano

Bay, rose into a softening veil of tender blue haze. There was a

balmy breeziness in the air, and tawny tints upon the hill, patches

of gold in the woods, and a scarlet spray here and there heralded

the glories of the advancing autumn. As the day began, so it

closed. I should like to have detained each hour as it passed. It

was thorough enjoyment. I visited a good many of the Mororan

Ainos, saw their well-grown bear in its cage, and, tearing myself

away with difficulty at noon, crossed a steep hill and a wood of

scrub oak, and then followed a trail which runs on the amber sands

close to the sea, crosses several small streams, and passes the

lonely Aino village of Maripu, the ocean always on the left and

wooded ranges on the right, and in front an apparent bar to farther

progress in the volcano of Usu-taki, an imposing mountain, rising

abruptly to a height of nearly 3000 feet, I should think.

In Yezo, as on the main island, one can learn very little about any

prospective route. Usually when one makes an inquiry a Japanese

puts on a stupid look, giggles, tucks his thumbs into his girdle,

hitches up his garments, and either professes perfect ignorance or

gives one some vague second-hand information, though it is quite

possible that he may have been over every foot of the ground

himself more than once. Whether suspicion of your motives in

asking, or a fear of compromising himself by answering, is at the

bottom of this I don't know, but it is most exasperating to a

traveller. In Hakodate I failed to see Captain Blakiston, who has

walked round the whole Yezo sea-board, and all I was able to learn

regarding this route was that the coast was thinly peopled by

Ainos, that there were Government horses which could be got, and

that one could sleep where one got them; that rice and salt fish

were the only food; that there were many "bad rivers," and that the

road went over "bad mountains;" that the only people who went that

way were Government officials twice a year, that one could not get

on more than four miles a day, that the roads over the passes were

"all big stones," etc. etc. So this Usu-taki took me altogether by

surprise, and for a time confounded all my carefully-constructed

notions of locality. I had been told that the one volcano in the

bay was Komono-taki, near Mori, and this I believed to be eighty

miles off, and there, confronting me, within a distance of two

miles, was this grand, splintered, vermilion-crested thing, with a

far nobler aspect than that of "THE" volcano, with a curtain range

in front, deeply scored, and slashed with ravines and abysses whose

purple gloom was unlighted even by the noon-day sun. One of the

peaks was emitting black smoke from a deep crater, another steam

and white smoke from various rents and fissures in its side--

vermilion peaks, smoke, and steam all rising into a sky of

brilliant blue, and the atmosphere was so clear that I saw

everything that was going on there quite distinctly, especially

when I attained an altitude exceeding that of the curtain range.

It was not for two days that I got a correct idea of its

geographical situation, but I was not long in finding out that it

was not Komono-taki! There is much volcanic activity about it. I

saw a glare from it last night thirty miles away. The Ainos said

that it was "a god," but did not know its name, nor did the

Japanese who were living under its shadow. At some distance from

it in the interior rises a great dome-like mountain, Shiribetsan,

and the whole view is grand.

A little beyond Mombets flows the river Osharu, one of the largest

of the Yezo streams. It was much swollen by the previous day's

rain; and as the ferry-boat was carried away we had to swim it, and

the swim seemed very long. Of course, we and the baggage got very

wet. The coolness with which the Aino guide took to the water

without giving us any notice that its broad, eddying flood was a

swim, and not a ford, was very amusing.

From the top of a steepish ascent beyond the Osharugawa there is a

view into what looks like a very lovely lake, with wooded

promontories, and little bays, and rocky capes in miniature, and

little heights, on which Aino houses, with tawny roofs, are

clustered; and then the track dips suddenly, and deposits one, not

by a lake at all, but on Usu Bay, an inlet of the Pacific, much

broken up into coves, and with a very narrow entrance, only obvious

from a few points. Just as the track touches the bay there is a

road-post, with a prayer-wheel in it, and by the shore an upright

stone of very large size, inscribed with Sanskrit characters, near

to a stone staircase and a gateway in a massive stone-faced

embankment, which looked much out of keeping with the general

wildness of the place. On a rocky promontory in a wooded cove

there is a large, rambling house, greatly out of repair, inhabited

by a Japanese man and his son, who are placed there to look after

Government interests, exiles among 500 Ainos. From among the

number of rat-haunted, rambling rooms which had once been handsome,

I chose one opening on a yard or garden with some distorted yews in

it, but found that the great gateway and the amado had no bolts,

and that anything might be appropriated by any one with dishonest

intentions; but the house-master and his son, who have lived for

ten years among the Ainos, and speak their language, say that

nothing is ever taken, and that the Ainos are thoroughly honest and

harmless. Without this assurance I should have been distrustful of

the number of wide-mouthed youths who hung about, in the

listlessness and vacuity of savagery, if not of the bearded men who

sat or stood about the gateway with children in their arms.

Usu is a dream of beauty and peace. There is not much difference

between the height of high and low water on this coast, and the

lake-like illusion would have been perfect had it not been that the

rocks were tinged with gold for a foot or so above the sea by a

delicate species of fucus. In the exquisite inlet where I spent

the night, trees and trailers drooped into the water and were

mirrored in it, their green, heavy shadows lying sharp against the

sunset gold and pink of the rest of the bay; log canoes, with

planks laced upon their gunwales to heighten them, were drawn upon

a tiny beach of golden sand, and in the shadiest cove, moored to a

tree, an antique and much-carved junk was "floating double."

Wooded, rocky knolls, with Aino huts, the vermilion peaks of the

volcano of Usu-taki redder than ever in the sinking sun, a few

Ainos mending their nets, a few more spreading edible seaweed out

to dry, a single canoe breaking the golden mirror of the cove by

its noiseless motion, a few Aino loungers, with their "mild-eyed,

melancholy" faces and quiet ways suiting the quiet evening scene,

the unearthly sweetness of a temple bell--this was all, and yet it

was the loveliest picture I have seen in Japan.

In spite of Ito's remonstrances and his protestations that an

exceptionally good supper would be spoiled, I left my rat-haunted

room, with its tarnished gilding and precarious fusuma, to get the

last of the pink and lemon-coloured glory, going up the staircase

in the stone-faced embankment, and up a broad, well-paved avenue,

to a large temple, within whose open door I sat for some time

absolutely alone, and in a wonderful stillness; for the sweet-toned

bell which vainly chimes for vespers amidst this bear-worshipping

population had ceased. This temple was the first symptom of

Japanese religion that I remember to have seen since leaving

Hakodate, and worshippers have long since ebbed away from its shady

and moss-grown courts. Yet it stands there to protest for the

teaching of the great Hindu; and generations of Aino heathen pass

away one after another; and still its bronze bell tolls, and its

altar lamps are lit, and incense burns for ever before Buddha. The

characters on the great bell of this temple are said to be the same

lines which are often graven on temple bells, and to possess the

dignity of twenty-four centuries:

"All things are transient;

They being born must die,

And being born are dead;

And being dead are glad

To be at rest."

The temple is very handsome, the baldachino is superb, and the

bronzes and brasses on the altar are specially fine. A broad ray

of sunlight streamed in, crossed the matted floor, and fell full

upon the figure of Sakya-muni in his golden shrine; and just at

that moment a shaven priest, in silk-brocaded vestments of faded

green, silently passed down the stream of light, and lit the

candles on the altar, and fresh incense filled the temple with a

drowsy fragrance. It was a most impressive picture. His curiosity

evidently shortened his devotions, and he came and asked me where I

had been and where I was going, to which, of course, I replied in

excellent Japanese, and then stuck fast.

Along the paved avenue, besides the usual stone trough for holy

water, there are on one side the thousand-armed Kwan-non, a very

fine relief, and on the other a Buddha, throned on the eternal

lotus blossom, with an iron staff, much resembling a crozier, in

his hand, and that eternal apathy on his face which is the highest

hope of those who hope at all. I went through a wood, where there

are some mournful groups of graves on the hillside, and from the

temple came the sweet sound of the great bronze bell and the beat

of the big drum, and then, more faintly, the sound of the little

bell and drum, with which the priest accompanies his ceaseless

repetition of a phrase in the dead tongue of a distant land. There

is an infinite pathos about the lonely temple in its splendour, the

absence of even possible worshippers, and the large population of

Ainos, sunk in yet deeper superstitions than those which go to make

up popular Buddhism. I sat on a rock by the bay till the last pink

glow faded from Usu-taki and the last lemon stain from the still

water; and a beautiful crescent, which hung over the wooded hill,

had set, and the heavens blazed with stars:

"Ten thousand stars were in the sky,

Ten thousand in the sea,

And every wave with dimpled face,

That leapt upon the air,

Had caught a star in its embrace,

And held it trembling there."

The loneliness of Usu Bay is something wonderful--a house full of

empty rooms falling to decay, with only two men in it--one Japanese

house among 500 savages, yet it was the only one in which I have

slept in which they bolted neither the amado nor the gate. During

the night the amado fell out of the worn-out grooves with a crash,

knocking down the shoji, which fell on me, and rousing Ito, who

rushed into my room half-asleep, with a vague vision of blood-

thirsty Ainos in his mind. I then learned what I have been very

stupid not to have learned before, that in these sliding wooden

shutters there is a small door through which one person can creep

at a time called the jishindo, or "earthquake door," because it

provides an exit during the alarm of an earthquake, in case of the

amado sticking in their grooves, or their bolts going wrong. I

believe that such a door exists in all Japanese houses.

The next morning was as beautiful as the previous evening, rose and

gold instead of gold and pink. Before the sun was well up I

visited a number of the Aino lodges, saw the bear, and the chief,

who, like all the rest, is a monogamist, and, after breakfast, at

my request, some of the old men came to give me such information as

they had. These venerable elders sat cross-legged in the verandah,

the house-master's son, who kindly acted as interpreter, squatting,

Japanese fashion, at the side, and about thirty Ainos, mostly

women, with infants, sitting behind. I spent about two hours in

going over the same ground as at Biratori, and also went over the

words, and got some more, including some synonyms. The click of

the ts before the ch at the beginning of a word is strongly marked

among these Ainos. Some of their customs differ slightly from

those of their brethren of the interior, specially as to the period

of seclusion after a death, the non-allowance of polygamy to the

chief, and the manner of killing the bear at the annual festival.

Their ideas of metempsychosis are more definite, but this, I think,

is to be accounted for by the influence and proximity of Buddhism.

They spoke of the bear as their chief god, and next the sun and

fire. They said that they no longer worship the wolf, and that

though they call the volcano and many other things kamoi, or god,

they do not worship them. I ascertained beyond doubt that worship

with them means simply making libations of sake and "drinking to

the god," and that it is unaccompanied by petitions, or any vocal

or mental act.

These Ainos are as dark as the people of southern Spain, and very

hairy. Their expression is earnest and pathetic, and when they

smiled, as they did when I could not pronounce their words, their

faces had a touching sweetness which was quite beautiful, and

European, not Asiatic. Their own impression is that they are now

increasing in numbers after diminishing for many years. I left Usu

sleeping in the loveliness of an autumn noon with great regret. No

place that I have seen has fascinated me so much.

LETTER XL--(Continued)

The Sea-shore--A "Hairy Aino"--A Horse Fight--The Horses of Yezo--

"Bad Mountains"--A Slight Accident--Magnificent Scenery--A Bleached

Halting-Place--A Musty Room--Aino "Good-breeding."

A charge of 3 sen per ri more for the horses for the next stage,

because there were such "bad mountains to cross," prepared me for

what followed--many miles of the worst road for horses I ever saw.

I should not have complained if they had charged double the price.

As an almost certain consequence, it was one of the most

picturesque routes I have ever travelled. For some distance,

however, it runs placidly along by the sea-shore, on which big,

blue, foam-crested rollers were disporting themselves noisily, and

passes through several Aino hamlets, and the Aino village of Abuta,

with sixty houses, rather a prosperous-looking place, where the

cultivation was considerably more careful, and the people possessed

a number of horses. Several of the houses were surrounded by

bears' skulls grinning from between the forked tops of high poles,

and there was a well-grown bear ready for his doom and apotheosis.

In nearly all the houses a woman was weaving bark-cloth, with the

hook which holds the web fixed into the ground several feet outside

the house. At a deep river called the Nopkobets, which emerges

from the mountains close to the sea, we were ferried by an Aino

completely covered with hair, which on his shoulders was wavy like

that of a retriever, and rendered clothing quite needless either

for covering or warmth. A wavy, black beard rippled nearly to his

waist over his furry chest, and, with his black locks hanging in

masses over his shoulders, he would have looked a thorough savage

had it not been for the exceeding sweetness of his smile and eyes.

The Volcano Bay Ainos are far more hairy than the mountain Ainos,

but even among them it is quite common to see men not more so than

vigorous Europeans, and I think that the hairiness of the race as a

distinctive feature has been much exaggerated, partly by the

smooth-skinned Japanese.

The ferry scow was nearly upset by our four horses beginning to

fight. At first one bit the shoulders of another; then the one

attacked uttered short, sharp squeals, and returned the attack by

striking with his fore feet, and then there was a general melee of

striking and biting, till some ugly wounds were inflicted. I have

watched fights of this kind on a large scale every day in the

corral. The miseries of the Yezo horses are the great drawback of

Yezo travelling. They are brutally used, and are covered with

awful wounds from being driven at a fast "scramble" with the rude,

ungirthed pack-saddle and its heavy load rolling about on their

backs, and they are beaten unmercifully over their eyes and ears

with heavy sticks. Ito has been barbarous to these gentle, little-

prized animals ever since we came to Yezo; he has vexed me more by

this than by anything else, especially as he never dared even to

carry a switch on the main island, either from fear of the horses

or their owners. To-day he was beating the baggage horse

unmercifully, when I rode back and interfered with some very strong

language, saying, "You are a bully, and, like all bullies, a

coward." Imagine my aggravation when, at our first halt, he

brought out his note-book, as usual, and quietly asked me the

meaning of the words "bully" and "coward." It was perfectly

impossible to explain them, so I said a bully was the worst name I

could call him, and that a coward was the meanest thing a man could

be. Then the provoking boy said, "Is bully a worse name than

devil?" "Yes, far worse," I said, on which he seemed rather

crestfallen, and he has not beaten his horse since, in my sight at

least

The breaking-in process is simply breaking the spirit by an hour or

two of such atrocious cruelty as I saw at Shiraoi, at the end of

which the horse, covered with foam and blood, and bleeding from

mouth and nose, falls down exhausted. Being so ill used they have

all kinds of tricks, such as lying down in fords, throwing

themselves down head foremost and rolling over pack and rider,

bucking, and resisting attempts to make them go otherwise than in

single file. Instead of bits they have bars of wood on each side

of the mouth, secured by a rope round the nose and chin. When

horses which have been broken with bits gallop they put up their

heads till the nose is level with the ears, and it is useless to

try either to guide or check them. They are always wanting to join

the great herds on the hillside or sea-shore, from which they are

only driven down as they are needed. In every Yezo village the

first sound that one hears at break of day is the gallop of forty

or fifty horses, pursued by an Aino, who has hunted them from the

hills. A horse is worth from twenty-eight shillings upwards. They

are very sure-footed when their feet are not sore, and cross a

stream or chasm on a single rickety plank, or walk on a narrow

ledge above a river or gulch without fear. They are barefooted,

their hoofs are very hard, and I am glad to be rid of the perpetual

tying and untying and replacing of the straw shoes of the well-

cared-for horses of the main island. A man rides with them, and

for a man and three horses the charge is only sixpence for each 2.5

miles. I am now making Ito ride in front of me, to make sure that

he does not beat or otherwise misuse his beast.

After crossing the Nopkobets, from which the fighting horses have

led me to make so long a digression, we went right up into the "bad

mountains," and crossed the three tremendous passes of Lebungetoge.

Except by saying that this disused bridle-track is impassable,

people have scarcely exaggerated its difficulties. One horse broke

down on the first pass, and we were long delayed by sending the

Aino back for another. Possibly these extraordinary passes do not

exceed 1500 feet in height, but the track ascends them through a

dense forest with most extraordinary abruptness, to descend as

abruptly, to rise again sometimes by a series of nearly washed-away

zigzags, at others by a straight, ladder-like ascent deeply

channelled, the bottom of the trough being filled with rough

stones, large and small, or with ledges of rock with an entangled

mass of branches and trailers overhead, which render it necessary

to stoop over the horse's head while he is either fumbling,

stumbling, or tumbling among the stones in a gash a foot wide, or

else is awkwardly leaping up broken rock steps nearly the height of

his chest, the whole performance consisting of a series of

scrambling jerks at the rate of a mile an hour.

In one of the worst places the Aino's horse, which was just in

front of mine, in trying to scramble up a nearly breast-high and

much-worn ledge, fell backwards, nearly overturning my horse, the

stretcher poles, which formed part of his pack, striking me so hard

above my ankle that for some minutes afterwards I thought the bone

was broken. The ankle was severely cut and bruised, and bled a

good deal, and I was knocked out of the saddle. Ito's horse fell

three times, and eventually the four were roped together. Such are

some of the divertissements of Yezo travel.

Ah, but it was glorious! The views are most magnificent. This is

really Paradise. Everything is here--huge headlands magnificently

timbered, small, deep bays into which the great green waves roll

majestically, great, grey cliffs, too perpendicular for even the

most adventurous trailer to find root-hold, bold bluffs and

outlying stacks cedar-crested, glimpses of bright, blue ocean

dimpling in the sunshine or tossing up wreaths of foam among ferns

and trailers, and inland ranges of mountains forest-covered, with

tremendous gorges between, forest filled, where wolf, bear, and

deer make their nearly inaccessible lairs, and outlying

battlements, and ridges of grey rock with hardly six feet of level

on their sinuous tops, and cedars in masses giving deep shadow, and

sprays of scarlet maple or festoons of a crimson vine lighting the

gloom. The inland view suggested infinity. There seemed no limit

to the forest-covered mountains and the unlighted ravines. The

wealth of vegetation was equal in luxuriance and entanglement to

that of the tropics, primeval vegetation, on which the lumberer's

axe has never rung. Trees of immense height and girth, specially

the beautiful Salisburia adiantifolia, with its small fan-shaped

leaves, all matted together by riotous lianas, rise out of an

impenetrable undergrowth of the dwarf, dark-leaved bamboo, which,

dwarf as it is, attains a height of seven feet, and all is dark,

solemn, soundless, the haunt of wild beasts, and of butterflies and

dragonflies of the most brilliant colours. There was light without

heat, leaves and streams sparkled, and there was nothing of the

half-smothered sensation which is often produced by the choking

greenery of the main island, for frequently, far below, the Pacific

flashed in all its sunlit beauty, and occasionally we came down

unexpectedly on a little cove with abrupt cedar-crested headlands

and stacks, and a heavy surf rolling in with the deep thunder music

which alone breaks the stillness of this silent land.

There was one tremendous declivity where I got off to walk, but

found it too steep to descend on foot with comfort. You can

imagine how steep it was, when I tell you that the deep groove

being too narrow for me to get to the side of my horse, I dropped

down upon him from behind, between his tail and the saddle, and so

scrambled on!

The sun had set and the dew was falling heavily when the track

dipped over the brow of a headland, becoming a waterway so steep

and rough that I could not get down it on foot without the

assistance of my hands, and terminating on a lonely little bay of

great beauty, walled in by impracticable-looking headlands, which

was the entrance to an equally impracticable-looking, densely-

wooded valley running up among densely-wooded mountains. There was

a margin of grey sand above the sea, and on this the skeleton of an

enormous whale was bleaching. Two or three large "dug-outs," with

planks laced with stout fibre on their gunwales, and some bleached

drift-wood lay on the beach, the foreground of a solitary,

rambling, dilapidated grey house, bleached like all else, where

three Japanese men with an old Aino servant live to look after

"Government interests," whatever these may be, and keep rooms and

horses for Government officials--a great boon to travellers who,

like me, are belated here. Only one person has passed Lebunge this

year, except two officials and a policeman.

There was still a red glow on the water, and one horn of a young

moon appeared above the wooded headland; but the loneliness and

isolation are overpowering, and it is enough to produce madness to

be shut in for ever with the thunder of the everlasting surf, which

compels one to raise one's voice in order to be heard. In the

wood, half a mile from the sea, there is an Aino village of thirty

houses, and the appearance of a few of the savages gliding

noiselessly over the beach in the twilight added to the ghastliness

and loneliness of the scene. The horses were unloaded by the time

I arrived, and several courteous Ainos showed me to my room,

opening on a small courtyard with a heavy gate. The room was

musty, and, being rarely used, swarmed with spiders. A saucer of

fish-oil and a wick rendered darkness visible, and showed faintly

the dark, pathetic faces of a row of Ainos in the verandah, who

retired noiselessly with their graceful salutation when I bade them

good-night. Food was hardly to be expected, yet they gave me rice,

potatoes, and black beans boiled in equal parts of brine and syrup,

which are very palatable. The cuts and bruises of yesterday became

so very painful with the cold of the early morning that I have been

obliged to remain here.

I. L. B.

LETTER XLI

A Group of Fathers--The Lebunge Ainos--The Salisburia adiantifolia-

-A Family Group--The Missing Link--Oshamambe--Disorderly Horses--

The River Yurapu--The Seaside--Aino Canoes--The Last Morning--

Dodging Europeans.

HAKODATE, September 12.

Lebunge is a most fascinating place in its awful isolation. The

house-master was a friendly man, and much attached to the Ainos.

If other officials entrusted with Aino concerns treat the Ainos as

fraternally as those of Usu and Lebunge, there is not much to

lament. This man also gave them a high character for honesty and

harmlessness, and asked if they might come and see me before I

left; so twenty men, mostly carrying very pretty children, came

into the yard with the horses. They had never seen a foreigner,

but, either from apathy or politeness, they neither stare nor press

upon one as the Japanese do, and always make a courteous

recognition. The bear-skin housing of my saddle pleased them very

much, and my boots of unblacked leather, which they compare to the

deer-hide moccasins which they wear for winter hunting. Their

voices were the lowest and most musical that I have heard,

incongruous sounds to proceed from such hairy, powerful-looking

men. Their love for their children was most marked. They caressed

them tenderly, and held them aloft for notice, and when the house-

master told them how much I admired the brown, dark-eyed, winsome

creatures, their faces lighted with pleasure, and they saluted me

over and over again. These, like other Ainos, utter a short

screeching sound when they are not pleased, and then one recognises

the savage.

These Lebunge Ainos differ considerably from those of the eastern

villages, and I have again to notice the decided sound or click of

the ts at the beginning of many words. Their skins are as swarthy

as those of Bedaween, their foreheads comparatively low, their eyes

far more deeply set their stature lower, their hair yet more

abundant, the look of wistful melancholy more marked, and two, who

were unclothed for hard work in fashioning a canoe, were almost

entirely covered with short, black hair, specially thick on the

shoulders and back, and so completely concealing the skin as to

reconcile one to the lack of clothing. I noticed an enormous

breadth of chest, and a great development of the muscles of the

arms and legs. All these Ainos shave their hair off for two inches

above their brows, only allowing it there to attain the length of

an inch. Among the well-clothed Ainos in the yard there was one

smooth-faced, smooth-skinned, concave-chested, spindle-limbed,

yellow Japanese, with no other clothing than the decorated bark-

cloth apron which the Ainos wear in addition to their coats and

leggings. Escorted by these gentle, friendly savages, I visited

their lodges, which are very small and poor, and in every way

inferior to those of the mountain Ainos. The women are short and

thick-set, and most uncomely.

From their village I started for the longest, and by reputation the

worst, stage of my journey, seventeen miles, the first ten of which

are over mountains. So solitary and disused is this track that on

a four days' journey we have not met a human being. In the Lebunge

valley, which is densely forested, and abounds with fordable

streams and treacherous ground, I came upon a grand specimen of the

Salisburia adiantifolia, which, at a height of three feet from the

ground, divides into eight lofty stems, none of them less than 2

feet 5 inches in diameter. This tree, which grows rapidly, is so

well adapted to our climate that I wonder it has not been

introduced on a large scale, as it may be seen by everybody in Kew

Gardens. There is another tree with orbicular leaves in pairs,

which grows to an immense size.

From this valley a worn-out, stony bridle-track ascends the western

side of Lebungetoge, climbing through a dense forest of trees and

trailers to a height of about 2000 feet, where, contented with its

efforts, it reposes, and, with only slight ups and downs, continues

along the top of a narrow ridge within the seaward mountains,

between high walls of dense bamboo, which, for much of that day's

journey, is the undergrowth alike of mountain and valley, ragged

peak, and rugged ravine. The scenery was as magnificent as on the

previous day. A guide was absolutely needed, as the track ceased

altogether in one place, and for some time the horses had to

blunder their way along a bright, rushing river, swirling rapidly

downwards, heavily bordered with bamboo, full of deep holes, and

made difficult by trees which have fallen across it. There Ito,

whose horse could not keep up with the others, was lost, or rather

lost himself, which led to a delay of two hours. I have never seen

grander forest than on that two days' ride.

At last the track, barely passable after its recovery, dips over a

precipitous bluff, and descends close to the sea, which has

evidently receded considerably. Thence it runs for six miles on a

level, sandy strip, covered near the sea with a dwarf bamboo about

five inches high, and farther inland with red roses and blue

campanula.

At the foot of the bluff there is a ruinous Japanese house, where

an Aino family has been placed to give shelter and rest to any who

may be crossing the pass. I opened my bento bako of red lacquer,

and found that it contained some cold, waxy potatoes, on which I

dined, with the addition of some tea, and then waited wearily for

Ito, for whom the guide went in search. The house and its inmates

were a study. The ceiling was gone, and all kinds of things, for

which I could not imagine any possible use, hung from the blackened

rafters. Everything was broken and decayed, and the dirt was

appalling. A very ugly Aino woman, hardly human in her ugliness,

was splitting bark fibre. There were several irori, Japanese

fashion, and at one of them a grand-looking old man was seated

apathetically contemplating the boiling of a pot. Old, and sitting

among ruins, he represented the fate of a race which, living, has

no history, and perishing leaves no monument. By the other irori

sat, or rather crouched, the "MISSING LINK." I was startled when I

first saw it. It was--shall I say?--a man, and the mate, I cannot

write the husband, of the ugly woman. It was about fifty. The

lofty Aino brow had been made still loftier by shaving the head for

three inches above it. The hair hung, not in shocks, but in snaky

wisps, mingling with a beard which was grey and matted. The eyes

were dark but vacant, and the face had no other expression than

that look of apathetic melancholy which one sometimes sees on the

faces of captive beasts. The arms and legs were unnaturally long

and thin, and the creature sat with the knees tucked into the

armpits. The limbs and body, with the exception of a patch on each

side, were thinly covered with fine black hair, more than an inch

long, which was slightly curly on the shoulders. It showed no

other sign of intelligence than that evidenced by boiling water for

my tea. When Ito arrived he looked at it with disgust, exclaiming,

"The Ainos are just dogs; they had a dog for their father," in

allusion to their own legend of their origin.

The level was pleasant after the mountains, and a canter took us

pleasantly to Oshamambe, where we struck the old road from Mori to

Satsuporo, and where I halted for a day to rest my spine, from

which I was suffering much. Oshamambe looks dismal even in the

sunshine, decayed and dissipated, with many people lounging about

in it doing nothing, with the dazed look which over-indulgence in

sake gives to the eyes. The sun was scorching hot, and I was glad

to find refuge from it in a crowded and dilapidated yadoya, where

there were no black beans, and the use of eggs did not appear to be

recognised. My room was only enclosed by shoji, and there were

scarcely five minutes of the day in which eyes were not applied to

the finger-holes with which they were liberally riddled; and during

the night one of them fell down, revealing six Japanese sleeping in

a row, each head on a wooden pillow.

The grandeur of the route ceased with the mountain-passes, but in

the brilliant sunshine the ride from Oshamambe to Mori, which took

me two days, was as pretty and pleasant as it could be. At first

we got on very slowly, as besides my four horses there were four

led ones going home, which got up fights and entangled their ropes,

and occasionally lay down and rolled; and besides these there were

three foals following their mothers, and if they stayed behind the

mares hung back neighing, and if they frolicked ahead the mares

wanted to look after them, and the whole string showed a combined

inclination to dispense with their riders and join the many herds

of horses which we passed. It was so tedious that, after enduring

it for some time I got Ito's horse and mine into a scow at a river

of some size, and left the disorderly drove to follow at leisure.

At Yurapu, where there is an Aino village of thirty houses, we saw

the last of the aborigines, and the interest of the journey ended.

Strips of hard sand below high-water mark, strips of red roses,

ranges of wooded mountains, rivers deep and shallow, a few villages

of old grey houses amidst grey sand and bleaching driftwood, and

then came the river Yurapu, a broad, deep stream, navigable in a

canoe for fourteen miles. The scenery there was truly beautiful in

the late and splendid afternoon. The long blue waves rolled on

shore, each one crested with light as it curled before it broke,

and hurled its snowy drift for miles along the coast with a deep

booming music. The glorious inland view was composed of six ranges

of forest-covered mountains, broken, chasmed, caverned, and dark

with timber, and above them bald, grey peaks rose against a green

sky of singular purity. I longed to take a boat up the Yurapu,

which penetrates by many a gorge into their solemn recesses, but

had not strength to carry my wish.

After this I exchanged the silence or low musical speech of Aino

guides for the harsh and ceaseless clatter of Japanese. At

Yamakushinoi, a small hamlet on the sea-shore, where I slept, there

was a sweet, quiet yadoya, delightfully situated, with a wooded

cliff at the back, over which a crescent hung out of a pure sky;

and besides, there were the more solid pleasures of fish, eggs, and

black beans. Thus, instead of being starved and finding wretched

accommodation, the week I spent on Volcano Bay has been the best

fed, as it was certainly the most comfortable, week of my travels

in northern Japan.

Another glorious day favoured my ride to Mori, but I was

unfortunate in my horse at each stage, and the Japanese guide was

grumpy and ill-natured--a most unusual thing. Otoshibe and a few

other small villages of grey houses, with "an ancient and fish-like

smell," lie along the coast, busy enough doubtless in the season,

but now looking deserted and decayed, and houses are rather

plentifully sprinkled along many parts of the shore, with a

wonderful profusion of vegetables and flowers about them, raised

from seeds liberally supplied by the Kaitakushi Department from its

Nanai experimental farm and nurseries. For a considerable part of

the way to Mori there is no track at all, though there is a good

deal of travel. One makes one's way fatiguingly along soft sea

sand or coarse shingle close to the sea, or absolutely in it, under

cliffs of hardened clay or yellow conglomerate, fording many small

streams, several of which have cut their way deeply through a

stratum of black volcanic sand. I have crossed about 100 rivers

and streams on the Yezo coast, and all the larger ones are marked

by a most noticeable peculiarity, i.e. that on nearing the sea they

turn south, and run for some distance parallel with it, before they

succeed in finding an exit through the bank of sand and shingle

which forms the beach and blocks their progress.

On the way I saw two Ainos land through the surf in a canoe, in

which they had paddled for nearly 100 miles. A river canoe is dug

out of a single log, and two men can fashion one in five days; but

on examining this one, which was twenty-five feet long, I found

that it consisted of two halves, laced together with very strong

bark fibre for their whole length, and with high sides also laced

on. They consider that they are stronger for rough sea and surf

work when made in two parts. Their bark-fibre rope is beautifully

made, and they twist it of all sizes, from twine up to a nine-inch

hawser.

Beautiful as the blue ocean was, I had too much of it, for the

horses were either walking in a lather of sea foam or were crowded

between the cliff and the sea, every larger wave breaking over my

foot and irreverently splashing my face; and the surges were so

loud-tongued and incessant, throwing themselves on the beach with a

tremendous boom, and drawing the shingle back with them with an

equally tremendous rattle, so impolite and noisy, bent only on

showing their strength, reckless, rude, self-willed, and

inconsiderate! This purposeless display of force, and this

incessant waste of power, and the noisy self-assertion in both,

approach vulgarity!

Towards evening we crossed the last of the bridgeless rivers, and

put up at Mori, which I left three weeks before, and I was very

thankful to have accomplished my object without disappointment,

disaster, or any considerable discomfort. Had I not promised to

return Ito to his master by a given day, I should like to spend the

next six weeks in the Yezo wilds, for the climate is good, the

scenery beautiful, and the objects of interest are many.

Another splendid day favoured my ride from Mori to Togenoshita,

where I remained for the night, and I had exceptionally good horses

for both days, though the one which Ito rode, while going at a

rapid "scramble," threw himself down three times and rolled over to

rid himself from flies. I had not admired the wood between Mori

and Ginsainoma (the lakes) on the sullen, grey day on which I saw

it before, but this time there was an abundance of light and shadow

and solar glitter, and many a scarlet spray and crimson trailer,

and many a maple flaming in the valleys, gladdened me with the

music of colour. From the top of the pass beyond the lakes there

is a grand view of the volcano in all its nakedness, with its lava

beds and fields of pumice, with the lakes of Onuma, Konuma, and

Ginsainoma, lying in the forests at its feet, and from the top of

another hill there is a remarkable view of windy Hakodate, with its

headland looking like Gibraltar. The slopes of this hill are

covered with the Aconitum Japonicum, of which the Ainos make their

arrow poison.

The yadoya at Togenoshita was a very pleasant and friendly one, and

when Ito woke me yesterday morning, saying, "Are you sorry that

it's the last morning? I am," I felt we had one subject in common,

for I was very sorry to end my pleasant Yezo tour, and very sorry

to part with the boy who had made himself more useful and

invaluable even than before. It was most wearisome to have

Hakodate in sight for twelve miles, so near across the bay, so far

across the long, flat, stony strip which connects the headland upon

which it is built with the mainland. For about three miles the

road is rudely macadamised, and as soon as the bare-footed horses

get upon it they seem lame of all their legs; they hang back,

stumbling, dragging, edging to the side, and trying to run down

every opening, so that when we got into the interminable main

street I sent Ito on to the Consulate for my letters, and

dismounted, hoping that as it was raining I should not see any

foreigners; but I was not so lucky, for first I met Mr. Dening, and

then, seeing the Consul and Dr. Hepburn coming down the road,

evidently dressed for dining in the flag-ship, and looking spruce

and clean, I dodged up an alley to avoid them; but they saw me, and

did not wonder that I wished to escape notice, for my old betto's

hat, my torn green paper waterproof, and my riding-skirt and boots,

were not only splashed but CAKED with mud, and I had the general

look of a person "fresh from the wilds." I. L. B.

ITINERARY OF TOUR IN YEZO.

Hakodate to

No. of Houses.

Jap. Aino. Ri. Cho.

Ginsainoma 4 7 18

Mori 105 4

Mororan 57 11

Horobets 18 47 5 1

Shiraoi 11 51 6 32

Tomakomai 38 5 21

Yubets 7 3 3 5

Sarufuto 63 7 5

Biratori 53 5

Mombets 27 5 1

From Horobets to

Jap. Aino. Ri. Cho.

Old Mororan 9 30 4 28

Usu 3 99 6 2

Lebunge 1 27 5 22

Oshamambe 56 38 6 34

Yamakushinai 40 4 18

Otoshibe 40 2 3

Mori 105 3 29

Togenoshita 55 6 7

Hakodate 37,000 souls 3 29

About 358 English miles.

LETTER XLII

Pleasant Last Impressions--The Japanese Junk--Ito Disappears--My

Letter of Thanks.

HAKODATE, YEZO, September 14, 1878.

This is my last day in Yezo, and the sun, shining brightly over the

grey and windy capital, is touching the pink peaks of Komono-taki

with a deeper red, and is brightening my last impressions, which,

like my first, are very pleasant. The bay is deep blue, flecked

with violet shadows, and about sixty junks are floating upon it at

anchor. There are vessels of foreign rig too, but the wan, pale

junks lying motionless, or rolling into the harbour under their

great white sails, fascinate me as when I first saw them in the

Gulf of Yedo. They are antique-looking and picturesque, but are

fitter to give interest to a picture than to battle with stormy

seas.

Most of the junks in the bay are about 120 tons burthen, 100 feet

long, with an extreme beam, far aft, of twenty-five feet. The bow

is long, and curves into a lofty stem, like that of a Roman galley,

finished with a beak head, to secure the forestay of the mast.

This beak is furnished with two large, goggle eyes. The mast is a

ponderous spar, fifty feet high, composed of pieces of pine,

pegged, glued, and hooped together. A heavy yard is hung

amidships. The sail is an oblong of widths of strong, white cotton

artistically "PUCKERED," not sewn together, but laced vertically,

leaving a decorative lacing six inches wide between each two

widths. Instead of reefing in a strong wind, a width is unlaced,

so as to reduce the canvas vertically, not horizontally. Two blue

spheres commonly adorn the sail. The mast is placed well abaft,

and to tack or veer it is only necessary to reverse the sheet.

When on a wind the long bow and nose serve as a head-sail. The

high, square, piled-up stern, with its antique carving, and the

sides with their lattice-work, are wonderful, together with the

extraordinary size and projection of the rudder, and the length of

the tiller. The anchors are of grapnel shape, and the larger junks

have from six to eight arranged on the fore-end, giving one an idea

of bad holding-ground along the coast. They really are much like

the shape of a Chinese "small-footed" woman's shoe, and look very

unmanageable. They are of unpainted wood, and have a wintry,

ghastly look about them. {22}

I have parted with Ito finally to-day, with great regret. He has

served me faithfully, and on most common topics I can get much more

information through him than from any foreigner. I miss him

already, though he insisted on packing for me as usual, and put all

my things in order. His cleverness is something surprising. He

goes to a good, manly master, who will help him to be good and set

him a virtuous example, and that is a satisfaction. Before he left

he wrote a letter for me to the Governor of Mororan, thanking him

on my behalf for the use of the kuruma and other courtesies.

I. L. B.

LETTER XLIII

Pleasant Prospects--A Miserable Disappointment--Caught in a

Typhoon--A Dense Fog--Alarmist Rumours--A Welcome at Tokiyo--The

Last of the Mutineers.

H. B. M.'s LEGATION, YEDO, September 21.

A placid sea, which after much disturbance had sighed itself to

rest, and a high, steady barometer promised a fifty hours' passage

to Yokohama, and when Dr. and Mrs. Hepburn and I left Hakodate, by

moonlight, on the night of the 14th, as the only passengers in the

Hiogo Maru, Captain Moore, her genial, pleasant master,

congratulated us on the rapid and delightful passage before us, and

we separated at midnight with many projects for pleasant

intercourse and occupation.

But a more miserable voyage I never made, and it was not until the

afternoon of the 17th that we crawled forth from our cabins to

speak to each other. On the second day out, great heat came on

with suffocating closeness, the mercury rose to 85 degrees, and in

lat. 38 degrees 0' N. and long. 141 degrees 30' E. we encountered

a "typhoon," otherwise a "cyclone," otherwise a "revolving

hurricane," which lasted for twenty-five hours, and "jettisoned"

the cargo. Captain Moor has given me a very interesting diagram of

it, showing the attempts which he made to avoid its vortex, through

which our course would have taken us, and to keep as much outside

it as possible. The typhoon was succeeded by a dense fog, so that

our fifty-hour passage became seventy-two hours, and we landed at

Yokohama near upon midnight of the 17th, to find traces of much

disaster, the whole low-lying country flooded, the railway between

Yokohama and the capital impassable, great anxiety about the rice

crop, the air full of alarmist rumours, and paper money, which was

about par when I arrived in May, at a discount of 13 per cent! In

the early part of this year (1880) it has touched 42 per cent.

Late in the afternoon the railroad was re-opened, and I came here

with Mr. Wilkinson, glad to settle down to a period of rest and

ease under this hospitable roof. The afternoon was bright and

sunny, and Tokiyo was looking its best. The long lines of yashikis

looked handsome, the castle moat was so full of the gigantic leaves

of the lotus, that the water was hardly visible, the grass

embankments of the upper moat were a brilliant green, the pines on

their summits stood out boldly against the clear sky, the hill on

which the Legation stands looked dry and cheerful, and, better than

all, I had a most kindly welcome from those who have made this

house my home in a strange land.

Tokiyo is tranquil, that is, it is disturbed only by fears for the

rice crop, and by the fall in satsu. The military mutineers have

been tried, popular rumour says tortured, and fifty-two have been

shot. The summer has been the worst for some years, and now dark

heat, moist heat, and nearly ceasless rain prevail. People have

been "rained up" in their summer quarters. "Surely it will change

soon," people say, and they have said the same thing for three

months.

I. L. B.

LETTER XLIV

Fine Weather--Cremation in Japan--The Governor of Tokiyo--An

Awkward Question--An Insignificant Building--Economy in Funeral

Expenses--Simplicity of the Cremation Process--The Last of Japan.

H. B. M.'s LEGATION, YEDO, December 18.

I have spent the last ten days here, in settled fine weather, such

as should have begun two months ago if the climate had behaved as

it ought. The time has flown by in excursions, shopping, select

little dinner-parties, farewell calls, and visits made with Mr.

Chamberlain to the famous groves and temples of Ikegami, where the

Buddhist bishop and priests entertained us in one of the guest-

rooms, and to Enoshima and Kamakura, "vulgar" resorts which nothing

can vulgarise so long as Fujisan towers above them.

I will mention but one "sight," which is so far out of the beaten

track that it was only after prolonged inquiry that its whereabouts

was ascertained. Among Buddhists, specially of the Monto sect,

cremation was largely practised till it was forbidden five years

ago, as some suppose in deference to European prejudices. Three

years ago, however, the prohibition was withdrawn, and in this

short space of time the number of bodies burned has reached nearly

nine thousand annually. Sir H. Parkes applied for permission for

me to visit the Kirigaya ground, one of five, and after a few

delays it was granted by the Governor of Tokiyo at Mr. Mori's

request, so yesterday, attended by the Legation linguist, I

presented myself at the fine yashiki of the Tokiyo Fu, and quite

unexpectedly was admitted to an audience of the Governor. Mr.

Kusamoto is a well-bred gentleman, and his face expresses the

energy and ability which he has given proof of possessing. He

wears his European clothes becomingly, and in attitude, as well as

manner, is easy and dignified. After asking me a great deal about

my northern tour and the Ainos, he expressed a wish for candid

criticism; but as this in the East must not be taken literally, I

merely ventured to say that the roads lag behind the progress made

in other directions, upon which he entered upon explanations which

doubtless apply to the past road-history of the country. He spoke

of cremation and its "necessity" in large cities, and terminated

the interview by requesting me to dismiss my interpreter and

kuruma, as he was going to send me to Meguro in his own carriage

with one of the Government interpreters, adding very courteously

that it gave him pleasure to show this attention to a guest of the

British Minister, "for whose character and important services to

Japan he has a high value."

An hour's drive, with an extra amount of yelling from the bettos,

took us to a suburb of little hills and valleys, where red

camellias and feathery bamboo against backgrounds of cryptomeria

contrast with the grey monotone of British winters, and, alighting

at a farm road too rough for a carriage, we passed through fields

and hedgerows to an erection which looks too insignificant for such

solemn use. Don't expect any ghastly details. A longish building

of "wattle and dab," much like the northern farmhouses, a high

roof, and chimneys resembling those of the "oast houses" in Kent,

combine with the rural surroundings to suggest "farm buildings"

rather than the "funeral pyre," and all that is horrible is left to

the imagination.

The end nearest the road is a little temple, much crowded with

images, and small, red, earthenware urns and tongs for sale to the

relatives of deceased persons, and beyond this are four rooms with

earthen floors and mud walls; nothing noticeable about them except

the height of the peaked roof and the dark colour of the plaster.

In the middle of the largest are several pairs of granite supports

at equal distances from each other, and in the smallest there is a

solitary pair. This was literally all that was to be seen. In the

large room several bodies are burned at one time, and the charge is

only one yen, about 3s. 8d., solitary cremation costing five yen.

Faggots are used, and 1s. worth ordinarily suffices to reduce a

human form to ashes. After the funeral service in the house the

body is brought to the cremation ground, and is left in charge of

the attendant, a melancholy, smoked-looking man, as well he may be.

The richer people sometimes pay priests to be present during the

burning, but this is not usual. There were five "quick-tubs" of

pine hooped with bamboo in the larger room, containing the remains

of coolies, and a few oblong pine chests in the small rooms

containing those of middle-class people. At 8 p.m. each "coffin"

is placed on the stone trestles, the faggots are lighted

underneath, the fires are replenished during the night, and by 6

a.m. that which was a human being is a small heap of ashes, which

is placed in an urn by the relatives and is honourably interred.

In some cases the priests accompany the relations on this last

mournful errand. Thirteen bodies were burned the night before my

visit, but there was not the slightest odour in or about the

building, and the interpreter told me that, owing to the height of

the chimneys, the people of the neighbourhood never experience the

least annoyance, even while the process is going on. The

simplicity of the arrangement is very remarkable, and there can be

no reasonable doubt that it serves the purpose of the innocuous and

complete destruction of the corpse as well as any complicated

apparatus (if not better), while its cheapness places it within the

reach of the class which is most heavily burdened by ordinary

funeral expenses. {23} This morning the Governor sent his

secretary to present me with a translation of an interesting

account of the practice of cremation and its introduction into

Japan.

SS. "Volga," Christmas Eve, 1878.--The snowy dome of Fujisan

reddening in the sunrise rose above the violet woodlands of

Mississippi Bay as we steamed out of Yokohama Harbour on the 19th,

and three days later I saw the last of Japan--a rugged coast,

lashed by a wintry sea.

I. L. B.

Footnotes:

{1} This is an altogether exceptional aspect of Fujisan, under

exceptional atmospheric conditions. The mountain usually looks

broader and lower, and is often compared to an inverted fan.

{2} I continue hereafter to use the Japanese word kuruma instead

of the Chinese word Jin-ri-ki-sha. Kuruma, literally a wheel or

vehicle, is the word commonly used by the Jin-ri-ki-sha men and

other Japanese for the "man-power-carriage," and is certainly more

euphonious. From kuruma naturally comes kurumaya for the kuruma

runner.

{3} Often in the later months of my residence in Japan, when I

asked educated Japanese questions concerning their history,

religions, or ancient customs, I was put off with the answer, "You

should ask Mr. Satow, he could tell you."

{4} After several months of travelling in some of the roughest

parts of the interior, I should advise a person in average health--

and none other should travel in Japan--not to encumber himself with

tinned meats, soups, claret, or any eatables or drinkables, except

Liebig's extract of meat.

{5} I visited this temple alone many times afterwards, and each

visit deepened the interest of my first impressions. There is

always enough of change and novelty to prevent the interest from

flagging, and the mild, but profoundly superstitious, form of

heathenism which prevails in Japan is nowhere better represented.

{6} The list of my equipments is given as a help to future

travellers, especially ladies, who desire to travel long distances

in the interior of Japan. One wicker basket is enough, as I

afterwards found.

{7} My fears, though quite natural for a lady alone, had really no

justification. I have since travelled 1200 miles in the interior,

and in Yezo, with perfect safety and freedom from alarm, and I

believe that there is no country in the world in which a lady can

travel with such absolute security from danger and rudeness as in

Japan.

{8} In my northern journey I was very frequently obliged to put up

with rough and dirty accommodation, because the better sort of

houses were of this class. If there are few sights which shock the

traveller, there is much even on the surface to indicate vices

which degrade and enslave the manhood of Japan.

{9} I advise every traveller in the ruder regions of Japan to take

a similar stretcher and a good mosquito net. With these he may

defy all ordinary discomforts.

{10} This can only be true of the behaviour of the lowest

excursionists from the Treaty Ports.

{11} Many unpleasant details have necessarily been omitted. If

the reader requires any apology for those which are given here and

elsewhere, it must be found in my desire to give such a faithful

picture of peasant life, as I saw it in Northern Japan, as may be a

contribution to the general sum of knowledge of the country, and,

at the same time, serve to illustrate some of the difficulties

which the Government has to encounter in its endeavour to raise

masses of people as deficient as these are in some of the first

requirements of civilisation.

{12} The excess of males over females in the capital is 36,000,

and in the whole Empire nearly half a million.

{13} By one of these, not fitted up for passengers, I have sent

one of my baskets to Hakodate, and by doing so have come upon one

of the vexatious restrictions by which foreigners are harassed. It

would seem natural to allow a foreigner to send his personal

luggage from one Treaty Port to another without going through a

number of formalities which render it nearly impossible, but it was

only managed by Ito sending mine in his own name to a Japanese at

Hakodate with whom he is slightly acquainted.

{14} This hospital is large and well ventilated, but has not as

yet succeeded in attracting many in-patients; out-patients,

specially sufferers from ophthalmia, are very numerous. The

Japanese chief physician regards the great prevalence of the malady

in this neighbourhood as the result of damp, the reflection of the

sun's rays from sand and snow, inadequate ventilation and charcoal

fumes.

{15} Kak'ke, by William Anderson, F.R.C.S. Transactions of

English Asiatic Society of Japan, January 1878.

{16} I failed to learn what the liquor was which was drunk so

freely, but as no unseemly effects followed its use, I think it

must either have been light wine, or light sake.

{17} I venture to present this journal letter, with a few

omissions, just as it was written, trusting that the interest which

attaches to aboriginal races and little-visited regions will carry

my readers through the minuteness and multiplicity of its details.

{18} The use of kerosene in matted wooden houses is a new cause of

conflagrations. It is not possible to say how it originated, but

just before Christmas 1879 a fire broke out in Hakodate, which in a

few hours destroyed 20 streets, 2500 houses, the British Consulate,

several public buildings, the new native Christian church, and the

church Mission House, leaving 11,000 people homeless.

{19} I went over them with the Ainos of a remote village on

Volcano Bay, and found the differences in pronunciation very

slight, except that the definiteness of the sound which I have

represented by Tsch was more strongly marked. I afterwards went

over them with Mr. Dening, and with Mr. Von Siebold at Tokiyo, who

have made a larger collection of words than I have, and it is

satisfactory to find that we have represented the words in the main

by the same letters, with the single exception that usually the

sound represented by them by the letters ch I have given as Tsch,

and I venture to think that is the most correct rendering.

{20} I have not been able to obtain from any botanist the name of

the tree from the bark of which the thread is made, but suppose it

to be a species of Tiliaceae.

{21} Yoshitsune is the most popular hero of Japanese history, and

the special favourite of boys. He was the brother of Yoritomo, who

was appointed by the Mikado in 1192 Sei-i Tai Shogun (barbarian-

subjugating great general) for his victories, and was the first of

that series of great Shoguns whom our European notions distorted

into "Temporal Emperors" of Japan. Yoshitsune, to whom the real

honour of these victories belonged, became the object of the

jealousy and hatred of his brother, and was hunted from province to

province, till, according to popular belief, he committed hara-

kiri, after killing his wife and children, and his head, preserved

in sake, was sent to his brother at Kamakura. Scholars, however,

are not agreed as to the manner, period, or scene of his death.

Many believe that he escaped to Yezo and lived among the Ainos for

many years, dying among them at the close of the twelfth century.

None believe this more firmly than the Ainos themselves, who assert

that he taught their fathers the arts of civilisation, with letters

and numbers, and gave them righteous laws, and he is worshipped by

many of them under a name which signifies Master of the Law. I

have been told by old men in Biratori, Usu, and Lebunge, that a

later Japanese conqueror carried away the books in which the arts

were written, and that since his time the arts themselves have been

lost, and the Ainos have fallen into their present condition! On

asking why the Ainos do not make vessels of iron and clay as well

as knives and spears, the invariable answer is, "The Japanese took

away the books."

{22} The duty paid by junks is 4s. for each twenty-five tons, by

foreign ships of foreign shape and rig 2 pounds for each 100 tons,

and by steamers 3 pounds for each 100 tons.

{23} The following very inaccurate but entertaining account of

this expedition was given by the Yomi-uri-Shimbun, a daily

newspaper with the largest, though not the most aristocratic,

circulation in Tokiyo, being taken in by the servants and

tradespeople. It is a literal translation made by Mr. Chamberlain.

"The person mentioned in our yesterday's issue as 'an English

subject of the name of Bird' is a lady from Scotland, a part of

England. This lady spends her time in travelling, leaving this

year the two American continents for a passing visit to the

Sandwich Islands, and landing in Japan early in the month of May.

She has toured all over the country, and even made a five months'

stay in the Hokkaido, investigating the local customs and

productions. Her inspection yesterday of the cremation ground at

Kirigaya is believed to have been prompted by a knowledge of the

advantages of this method of disposing of the dead, and a desire to

introduce the same into England(!) On account of this lady's being

so learned as to have published a quantity of books, His Excellency

the Governor was pleased to see her yesterday, and to show her

great civility, sending her to Kirigaya in his own carriage, a mark

of attention which is said to have pleased the lady much(!)"

End of The Project Gutenberg Etext of Unbeaten Tracks in Japan, by Bird