THE BATTLE OF SHIMONOSEKI.

BY THE EDITOR.

JAPAN, or Nippon as the natives call it, is a most interesting country, and the study of its history is instructive mainly on account of the many similarities which it offers to the history of Europe. Here as well as there, mankind passed through a period of feudalism, and Buddhism played almost exactly the same part in the East as did Christianity in the West; it brought the blessings of a higher civilisation, a noble morality, and the cultivation of the arts, but introduced at the same time (although in a considerably milder form than in Europe) among the priesthood the craving for power and the insolence of a successful hierarchy.

Among the many details that elicit our interest there is the struggle between the Genji[1] and the Heike, which is a parallel to the War of the Roses in England. Both clans of warriors claim descent from the Mikado family. The coat-of-arms of the former bears three gentian flowers above three bamboo leaves in a white field, and the latter carry a butterfly in their crest, and the color of their banner is red.

There was a third family of nobles of no less consequence, called the Fujiwara, but they abstained from partaking in actual warfare and selected as a field for their activity the more peaceful and safer callings of politics, statecraft, the dispensation of law, the patronage of literature, the arts, and religion, and their coat-of-arms is the blue Wistaria blossom, their emblematic color being blue.

The names Genji and Heike are Chinese forms of the Japanese words Minamoto and Taira, and it has become customary in Japan to call the several members of these families by their Japanese

[1] Pronounce *Gen-zhe* and *Hā-i-kā*, the *i* after the *ā* being almost inaudible. According to the rules of transcribing Japanese words, all vowels must upon the whole be given the continental or Italian pronunciation, while the consonants retain their English significance.

names, the white ones "Minamoto" and the red ones "Taira," while the entire clans are designated as the Genji and the Heike.

The rivalry between the two warrior clans was naturally great, and each party strove for the control of the throne. At last Kiyomori, the leader of the Taira family, succeeded in 1156 in taking possession of the palace. The red flag was victorious. Kiyomori became the Warwick of Japan. He assumed the highest office in the government, had his daughter married to the Mikado, made and unmade emperors, banished his adversaries, and finally, when intoxicated with power, decided to exterminate the entire Minamoto clan.

Yoshitomo, the leader of the Genji, the white flag clan, was killed, and his spouse Tokiwa, a most beautiful woman, fled with her children. Kiyomori then seized Tokiwa's mother, and the dutiful daughter returned to release her. She prevailed upon Kiyomori to spare her mother and children, and so the sons of Yoshitomo escaped, and two of them, Yoritomo and Yoshitsune, grew up finally to become the most famous generals of this celebrated contest.

The story of Yoritomo is a favorite subject of Japanese romancers. The boy was banished to Idzu, a remote and almost inaccessible peninsula (now famous for its hot springs), to be educated for the priesthood in a Buddhist monastery, but the spirit of the boy was unmanageable, and the monks called him a "young bull." They allowed him to leave in a merchant vessel, and he entered the service of a Fujiwara nobleman. Two Taira officers trained him in the art of war, and he cultivated the virtues of valor, endurance, self-control, and courtesy. He married Masago, the daughter of Tokimasa, a man of the Hojo family, who promised his assistance when the time of vengeance for the Taira clan had come.

In the meantime Kiyomori's tyranny transcended all bounds, and one of the princes of the Mikado's household plotted to overthrow him. He requested the Taira retainers to remove the insolent prime minister, but they refused. So the prince appealed to the scattered members of the Genji, and the white flag was raised once more. Yoritomo and Yoshitsune became their leaders. Although defeated in the beginning of the war, their cause grew stronger in time, and they made Kamakura their headquarters. When they prepared for a decisive battle, Kiyomori, the tyrannical leader of the red flag, lay dying in Kioto. We read that Kiyomori's only regret on his dying bed was, that he had not seen the head of Yoritomo cut off. "After I am dead," he commanded, "do not

propitiate Buddha on my behalf, do not chant the sacred liturgies. Only do this,—cut off the head of Yoritomo and hang it on my tomb."

Kiyomori's blood-thirsty wish was never fulfilled, for the two Minamoto brothers, Yorimoto and Yoshitsune, led the white flag to victory. They conquered Kioto, expelled the Taira dynasty with its supporters, and took possession of the imperial palace. A new Mikado was installed who held the scepter subject to Genji influence.

In the straits of Shimonoseki[1] the fleet of the Minamoto clan attacked the fleet of the Taira, who tried to escape with their families under the protection of war-junks. The naval battle was bitter and to the finish, and here the Taira, viz., the Heike as a clan, were annihilated.

The little boy-Mikado Antoku, a grandson of Kiyomori, had been entrusted to the care of his grandmother, Kiyomori's widow, who was a Buddhist nun. When during the engagement the cause of the Taira became hopeless, this ambitious matron seized the royal insignia, and with the boy-emperor in her arms, leaped into the sea, so as not to be taken alive. The boy's mother Taigo followed, vainly trying to save the child, and all three were drowned.

The insignia of royal power in Japan are the mirror, the spheric crystal gem, and the sword, and they are claimed to be of divine workmanship. Their loss might have been considered ominous by the people, and they had therefore to be restored at any price. So the Minamoto leaders declared that they had recovered them from the depth of the sea, and a later Mikado, the great Taiko, who ruled three centuries after the battle in the Shimonoseki Straits, had a monument erected on a ledge of rocks in the channel of the rushing waters, to commemorate the place where the unhappy child-Mikado met his sad fate.

We conclude our tale with a quotation from Mr. William Elliot Griffis's book *Japan in History, Folk-lore, and Art*, which refers to a *lusus naturæ*, the Heike gani (i. e.,.the crab of the Heike clan), a peculiar freak of nature which exhibits plainly on its back the face of an angry man portrayed after the fashion of Japanese art. Mr. Griffis says:

"Many are the legends which tell how the unquiet ghosts of the Taira raise storms, and appear to mariners at night. On one occasion, as Yoshitsune in full armor was crossing the straits, the waves were lashed to fury by a tempest which threatened to foun-

[1] Pronounce *She-mo-no-sey-ke*.

THE HEIKE GANI, OR GHOST CRAB. An incident in the feudal history of Japan adorned by a legend.

der the ship. The sails flapped wildly, and the ship refused to obey her rudder. Out on the tops of the curling spray stood myriads of pale-faced and angry shades of the dead. Ghastly with wounds, they threatened dire calamity to the victor who had sent their souls into the nether world. Yoshitsune, undaunted, stood on deck, and with his sword struck vainly at the ghosts that would not down, cutting nothing but the air. Only when Benkéi, the gigantic priest-warrior, threw down his sword, and pulling out his beads began to exorcise the spirits by appropriate Buddhist prayers, did the storm cease and the shades disappear.

"Even in our own day the fishermen tell stories of ghosts which rise out of the sea at night and beg for a dipper. These ghosts are the Taira men slain in battle, and condemned by the King of the World Under the Sea to cleanse the ocean of its stain of blood. The boatmen always give them a dipper which has no bottom, else they would swamp the boat by filling it with sea-water. The restless souls, long ago condemned to bail out the sea and cleanse it of its stain of blood, still keep hopelessly at work.

"The fishermen, however, say that the Taira ghosts in these late days, only occasionally appear. For centuries after the battle they used to rise up in hosts. A great temple to sacred Amida, the Boundlessly Compassionate Buddha, was erected long ago at Shimonoseki to appease the wrath of the spirits. Since then they have been quiet. Evidently their ghosts have taken the shape of shellfish, as Buddhist doctrine teaches.

"A peculiar kind of crab is found in the Straits. On their backs may be traced the figure of an angry man. These are called Heike-gani, or Heike crabs, and the fisher folk say they were not known to exist here until after the Taira were slaughtered in the great battle."

We reproduce here a picture of the Heike crab from a specimen which Prof. Ernest W. Clement, President of the Duncan Academy, Tokyo, Japan, exhibited at Chicago before a meeting of the International Folk-lore Association and which was kindly lent the writer for the purpose of having it photographed.