SOME ANCIENT RELICS IN JAPAN.

BY KOMYN HITCHCOCK.

Four stone figures in a small inclosure near Hirata Mura, in southern Yamato, are probably the oldest stone images in Japan. I visited the place, in company with Mr. W. Gowland and Mr. K. Nagai, on the afternoon of April 1, 1888. The figures are at the foot of a small circular mound on a slight elevation, near the misasagi of Kimmei Tennō, surrounded by a hedge, with a securely locked gate in front. The small mound itself is said to be the burial place of Kibi hime-ō, the mother of Kokiooku Tennō and Kotoku Tennō.

While at Nara we presented letters to the governor of Nara ken, and stated our desire to have the gate opened that we might examine and make photographs of the figures. An official letter was accordingly sent to the man in charge, and on our arrival we were met by a police officer, a number of local officials, and most of the villagers, who escorted us to the place. But when we asked to have the gate opened we were told that it could not be done without permission from the Imperial Household Department at Kyoto. This is a characteristic example of Japanese official courtesy such as we more than once experienced. The workman is free to enter the mound inclosure and to care for it, but gentlemen engaged in archaeological studies are not permitted to have the gate opened, even when they do not care to tread inside, but only to get a clear field for a photograph. However, with some difficulty we contrived to make several pictures. There being no official regulation about cameras, I ventured to plant mine inside the hedge and work it from without, which was done without remonstrance. The result is shown in PIs. lxiv and lxv, which are different views of the same figures. The resemblance between these rude carvings and the images of Easter Island are quite noticeable.

The story told in a Japanese book, the Koko Nichi Roku, a work on Japanese antiquities, dated the ninth year of Kwansci, was translated by Mr. Nagai as follows: "Long ago, four stone men were dug out of a field near Kimmei Tennō's misasagi. The first one has three faces, the second four, the third three, and the fourth two. Afterwards the natives put them on the misasagi and called them Schichi fuku jin (seven happy gods), which of course means nothing. The significance
of these figures is unknown, but some persons think that they were made for the pleasure of the workmen, and perhaps this may be so."

The figures are undoubtedly of great age, and of far more interest than the above account would indicate. They show traces of more than a common workman's skill, and while speculation concerning them is now profitless, they may some day prove of importance. The largest stands about 4 feet in height.

We can approximate to the date of some of the old Japanese monuments with some degree of confidence. For example, in the Province of Kawachi, a short distance from a much frequented pass over the mountain, there are some very old relics of Buddhism. On the top of a projecting spur of the mountain stands a weather-worn stone pagoda (PI. LXVI), known as the jiu-san to. Its history is unknown, but it is probably one of the oldest Buddhist monuments of Japan. Near by and facing it is the remains of a cave, the roof and sides of which have almost crumbled away, leaving the back clearly exposed. Some roughly-drawn characters may be traced on the back, one of which evidently represented a face of a Buddha. There are other rocks near, which also bear traces of sculptures, but the forms cannot be made out. Somewhat lower down there is a spot where it is evident there once were other stone structures, but it is impossible to infer their character or significance. A short distance from this place, in plain view, on another hillside, there is a second cave, evidently much larger, within which are the ruins of a stone pagoda (PI. LXVIII).

It was during the lifetime of the famous priest Shotoku Taishi, early in the 7th century, that Buddhism became firmly established in Japan, and many of the most celebrated temples were built by him. Among these are Horin-ji, in Yamato, and Temo-ji, in Ozaka. The tumulus of this Mikado is at the temple Eikuku-ji, near the village called Kasuga, in Kawachi, at the foot of the mountain where these relics are found (see PI. XLV, in the preceding paper).

Considering the very active part taken by Shotoku Taishi, in establishing the Buddhist religion, and the fact that these ruins are found between his two most famous temples and near his final resting place, it seems probable that they date from his time or earlier, and are therefore more than 1,200 years old.
Plate LXVI.

Ancient Stone Pagoda.