



Photo]

RICE CULTURE IN JAPAN.

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The Northern Isles.—Here are great extremes of temperature, and during the long winter the isles are covered with snow. On account of dangerous currents, prevalent fogs, and ice-drifts brought south in winter by the Arctic current, navigation is difficult along the coasts. Sea-fishing is, however, a staple industry, and salmon are caught in the short rivers and edible seaweed collected along the shores.

The mountains are clad with forests of oak, elm, birch, etc., and at one time were the home of many fur-bearing animals now hunted nearly to extinction. A few cereals are raised, and Hokkaido is rich in coal and sulphur. Population is sparse, but temporarily increased during the fishing season by immigrants from Hondo. The majority of the inhabitants are Japanese, but on Hokkaido there still exist some remnant of a race called **Ainu**, who are thought to belong to the Caucasian group, and are remarkable for their hairy appearance. The chief town in Hokkaido is **Hakodate**, which has an excellent harbour.

Northern and Western Hondo.—Here, too, the climate is extreme, owing to the north-west winds of winter, which bring some snow