

The Surface of Japan

A Muscular Race—Every Family its Own Perambulator

By WILLIAM ARCHER

HAVING now been ten days in Japan, I am naturally in a position to sum the country up in a sweeping generalisation. People who have lived here for twenty years are chary of attempting such a feat; but why should not I have the courage of my superficiality? Indeed, I am prepared, not with one generalisation, but with two.

Japan is the Land of Children; and it cannot but seem, to European eyes, a Toy-land. This does not mean that the children play with the toys; it means that everything is, or tends to be, toylike in style and scale. And I am convinced that this fact has had far-reaching and terrible historic consequences. We all know that the Czar, while still Czarevitch, travelled in Japan; was not his life attempted in the streets of Tokyo? We have all heard it reported that, before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, he expressed himself in desecutive terms of the little yellow men whom his soldiers would crush like cockroaches.

After a week in Japan, one can easily see that, whether he uttered it or not, he would be apt to fall into this illusion. He could scarcely fail to hold it absurd that the headless toy-soldiers of this country of fragile, flinching, diminutive things, should dream of measuring themselves against his tempestuous Cossacks and his great-headed grenadiers. True, they had beaten the Chinese; but the Chinese were notorious imbeciles and patootrons. True, they had ikons in abundance; but they were the graven images of a grotesque idolatry, not the bejewelled fetiches of the orthodox faith. It seemed absurd and almost blasphemous to suppose that Holy Russia could have anything to fear from this country of toy-gold, toy temples, toy houses, toy gardens, and fields, and trees.

Fighting Value.

What His Majesty failed to observe was that his warships were not toys, that his guns were not toys, and that the fighting value of the soldiers is not to be measured in pounds or inches.

Furthermore, his Majesty probably omitted to do a highly instructive thing which I have done; he did not go for a week's tramping among the mountains. Japan, be it noted, is practically all mountains. In the whole country there is only twelve per cent. of cultivable ground; and no small part of that is obtained by the elaborate terracing of rugged hillsides. Thus the struggle between Japan and Russia was a struggle between why mountaineers, who are their own beasts of burden, and the heavy, lumbering, flat-footed peasantry of interminable plains, accustomed, moreover, to have the heaviest part of their work done for them by horses or oxen.

The coolies who carry your baggage are an object-lesson in themselves. Clad in loose blue cotton coats, each with some Chinese character or fantastic device stamped upon it in white; their legs encased in tight cotton breeches; with a blue and white towel or some nondescript cotton cloth wound round their foreheads; these goggle-eyed, uncomplaining creatures will trot along on their straw sandals for six or eight hours with scarcely a pause, under loads which you or I would not care to carry for twenty yards, and up mountain paths so steep as to make the unburdened climber pause to admire the view almost every second step. For this toil they now receive about three shillings a day, the rate of pay having been nearly doubled within the past few years.

Behind the Guns.

It is clear that a man can keep going all day long, under a burden far heavier than the heaviest military equipment, and at a pace of something like three miles an hour, will make a mighty good soldier if he have any fighting spirit in

him; and in that the Japanese is certainly not deficient. Even a glance at the sturdy calves of the jirtekisha-men (two of whom saved his life) might have taught the Tsar that the toy soldiers of Japan were by no means to be despised. Nor must it be overlooked that, though more "sake" than is strictly speaking desirable is consumed in these islands, its ravages are as nothing to those of vodka in Russia.

"Their own beasts of burden"—in that phrase, I seriously believe, lies the explanation of the physical sturdiness and power of endurance which, as much as anything else, won the battles of Nanshan and of Mukden. Almost from the cradle upwards (though, by the way, he hasn't any cradle) the Japanese is accustomed to carrying great loads. See a bay of eight plodding along with a baby of three or four on his back (a very common spectacle) and you see a recruit already in training. "Every family its own perambulator" is the motto in Japan. True, it is generally the mother or the elder daughter who carries the baby, or the twins; but burden-bearing is not, as in some countries, confined to woman. The men take their full share.

The Man With the Hoe.

Back-horses, no doubt, are employed to a certain extent; but, on the whole, animals contribute comparatively little to Japanese agriculture or transport. The wonderfully regular furrows of the wheat, millet, or barley beds—to call them "fields" would be absurd—are made, for the most part, not with the plough, but with the huge, heavy, adze-like hoe, which takes the place of both plough and spade. One does occasionally see a primitive ox-drawn plough, and in the rice swamps, a sort of rake, like a large back-hair comb, tugged along by ox or horse. But by far the greater part of the field work is sheer manual labour, involving a constant strain upon the muscles of the back and arms. "Bushido," indeed, may do much for Japan, but I fancy it was the hoe and the hod that really drove the Russians out of Manchuria.

Crocodile Catching in Borneo.

It is a common sight in Borneo to see a large crocodile sunning himself on the muddy bank of a river. He takes no notice of the natives, even though they pass quite near him. So common, indeed, is the sight that the Dyaks themselves pay no heed to these dangerous reptiles, and yet it is no unusual thing in Borneo to hear of some human life being taken by a crocodile. For some months, perhaps, says the Rev. E. H. Gomes, writing in "Chambers's Journal," the crocodiles in a river live at peace with mankind, and then suddenly one of these creatures will carry off some lad bathing in the river, or even attack some one paddling along in his boat.

There seems to be no reason why the crocodile should suddenly show a man-eating propensity in this way. The Dyaks account for it by curious superstitions. They say that if food is offered to a person, and he refuses it, and goes away without at least touching it, some misfortune is sure to befall him, and he will most probably be attacked by a crocodile.

The Dyaks of Borneo will not kill a crocodile except in revenge. If the animal will live at peace with him, the Dyak has no wish to start a quarrel; if, however, the crocodile breaks the truce and kills someone, then he feels justified in retaliating. In those circumstances, the Dyaks set to work to find the culprit, and go on catching and killing crocodiles until they succeed in doing so. The Dyaks generally wear brass ornaments, and by cutting open a dead crocodile they can easily find out if he is the creature they wish to punish. The majority of natives will not in-

terfere with the reptiles, or take any part in their capture, probably fearing that if they do anything of the kind they themselves may some time or other suffer for it by being attacked by a crocodile.

The usual way of catching crocodiles in Borneo is with a baited wooden bar and slack cable. A piece of hardwood, about an inch in diameter, and about ten inches long, is sharpened to a point at each end. A length of plaited bark of the bany-tree, about eight feet long, is tied to a shallow notch in the middle of this piece of wood, and a single cane or rattan, forty or fifty feet long, is tied to the end of the bark rope, and forms a long line.

The most irresistible bait is the carcase of a monkey, though often the body of a dog or snake is used. This bait is securely lashed to the wooden bar, and one of the pointed ends is tied back with a few turns of cotton to the bark rope, bringing the bar and rope into the same straight line. The more overpowering the stench of the bait the greater is the probability of its being taken, as the crocodile has a preference for putrefying flesh.

Sometimes as many as ten crocodiles are killed before they manage to find the animal they want to be revenged on. Having succeeded in doing this, they once more live in peace with these reptiles until such time as the truce is broken again by some crocodile killing a human being.

There are men whose business is to catch crocodiles, and who earn their living by that means; and whenever a human being has fallen a victim to one of these brutes, a professional crocodile-catcher is asked to help to destroy the murderer, and a large reward offered him.

he was going in that his sword was fastened on the wrong side." The regulation court clothes for a private gentleman cost from £30 to £50 per suit, according to quality. There is a fixed sum of £10 10/ for the black velvet coat, but room is left for economy in the choice of such items as the sword—which may cost anything between 50/ and 15 guineas—the cocked hat and the shoe buckles.

Good Shooting.

Shooting at a dummy aeroplane and a dummy battery was carried out very successfully by two companies of the 5th North Lancashire Territorial Regiment, who were having week-end practice at Broadhead Valley range, Entwistle. First a monoplane hove in sight, and in half a minute a rifle bullet had ripped through its body, while another shot caught the "aviator" sitting within and "killed" him. A moment later the battery of horse artillery came into sight, but before they had gone twenty yards the "leader" went over with nine bullets in him; next the second horse with three bullets in him, and the first driver, the second driver, and the man on the limber of the gun were all shot. The mechanism of these new targets is the idea of Captain Whitney, of the Royal Fusiliers, adjutant of this force of Territorials. The aeroplane, ten feet long, runs on a steel wire which stretches right across the valley. It is hauled up by a rope, and on release slides by gravity down the wire.

The Cost of Court Dress.

Visitors from the Dominions have often been staggered on learning what it would cost them in hard cash to prepare for an appearance at a Buckingham Palace reception (writes the London correspondent of the "Melbourne Age"). Their point of view is well understood in official quarters, but very slight attention has been paid to it at any time. The rigidity of the rules for court assemblies is emphasised anew in a handbook issued from the Lord Chamberlain's office and in a statement made by a Court tailor who is regularly employed to see that guests invited to Buckingham Palace are correctly attired. This functionary is posted where he can intercept any visitor who has failed to observe the full requirements of the sartorial law, and, if necessary, send him quietly away. He is polite and tactful, but he can be a terribly disconcerting person at a critical moment. A slight account which he has given of some of his official experiences is rich in humorous suggestion. "Sometimes," he states, "people in uniform come to court wearing the trousers prescribed for levee instead of the breeches necessary for court dress. If there is time we insist on their going home to rectify such mistakes, but as there is no need at courts for many of the men to enter the Royal presence at all, they are often allowed to pass with a warning to keep in the background as much as possible." On one occasion the vigilant expert "had to point out to a well known general as

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