

Sizing Up Japan's Fighting Man

SOME OF THE FINEST RAW MATERIAL in the world makes up Japan's infantry.

This claim can be justified, we are told, by a quick study of the Japanese soldier. Squat, bullet-headed, flat-nosed, and deep-chested, the Japanese peasantry, from whom the majority of the recruits are drawn, is said to be inured to hardship from childhood.

The native qualities of cheerfulness, simplicity, and reverence for authority are fostered at the elementary schools, and make the recruit readily receptive of the "moral training" on which the Japanese fighting services lay such stress, and which is the foundation of their strength. In an enthusiastic account of the Japanese soldier, J. W. Marsden tells us further in the *London Contemporary Review* that the average recruit has the added advantage of joining the Army with two essentials of the soldier already highly developed—marching and carrying powers. How this happens is thus explained:

"In a land generally unsuited to horses and motors, human traction is largely employed, while in the mountain districts, which form a large part of Japan, vehicular traffic is frequently impossible, so that in the course of centuries a race of men and women has been evolved used to carrying heavy loads for long distances over difficult country.

"The soldier's training is largely devoted to the perfection of his marching powers, and before his service is finished he will have learned

to cover long distances at the 'double,' even when heavily weighted. What irks him most on joining is the restriction of limbs and feet in uniform and boots on the European pattern, for in his natural state he works in easy cotton garments—or none at all—and if shod, it is with straw sandals.

"Moreover, being used to sleep on quilts on the floor, he finds the barrack cot a painful luxury, and has to be taught how to get into bed and to stay there without falling out. However, he is a cheery fellow, and accepts these and other embarrassing novelties with patience and good humor, knowing that he will soon master the difficulties, and be as much at ease as his senior comrades.

"Japan is thus fortunate in possessing some of the finest raw material in the world for its *arme d'élite*, the infantry. The material is not so adaptable for horsed and mechanized units, as the Japanese possess little natural aptitude for dealing with animals or machines."

THE diet of the Japanese soldier, it is noted, consists mainly of rice, bean-soup, fish, and vegetables, washed down with green tea as hot as possible. Chop-sticks take the place of knife and fork. The Japanese do not, as a rule, care for meat, but a small quantity is given periodically to increase stamina, and this contributor to *The Contemporary Review* further informs us:

"The rice has an admixture of barley as a preventive against beriberi. The diet is coarse but wholesome; hard work sharpens the appetite, and the men thrive on it.

"The regulations are strict as to drinking-water. At halts on the march the men fill their water-bottles from the regimental water-cart, which carries a boiler. When excursions are made to places where the water is of unknown quality, the men take their water-bottles filled before leaving barracks."

LITERARY
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