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they agreed, be so bad in Japan, but at "home" even the difficulties of house-keeping would be too much—"Why, if you married one of these girls you'd have to start right from scratch with everything; you couldn't even send her down the road to buy a pound of butter."

These men, too, have their house-keeping difficulties. So isolated was Kushiro when we were there that army rations arrived only once each month and with some time to go before fresh supplies were delivered the only meat left in the refrigerator was a lamb. The Nisei officer in charge of the unit typified the American attitude to meat other than pork or beef: "A whole lamb, of all things. Couldn't we pickle it in salt brine and have it as a sort of bacon?" he asked plaintively.

Deflationary Strike

Recently there was almost an economic crisis in Japan. The lumberers and mill workers took a new-found democracy to heart and went on strike for better conditions. One of the results was no paper for bank currency; the usual weekly contribution of a million or so notes could not be made to bolster the inflated economy; and had the strike continued for much longer than it did a first-class crisis would have occurred.

Much of the mountainous areas of Japan is covered with forest, planted to reduce erosion as well as for timber, and Hokkaido, particularly, is noted for its timber products. For days at a time we passed by train through apparently everlasting forest, with small picturesque milling villages built into the shadow of high trees, and with tremendous stacks of timber waiting to be trucked away. Yet to-day one of the products for reconstruction that Japan is gravely short of is building timber. The shortage, actually, is not of timber at all, but of the railways and shipping for its transport; and while millions of families in Honshu are without houses or are living three or four families to a house, there is almost unlimited timber, already milled, deteriorating in the harsh climate of Hokkaido.

Peppermint Factory

Peppermint is another crop that would probably be a useful addition to the agriculture of New Zealand. Peppermint products are an important export to the United States from Hokkaido, and more than 4000 acres are used for growing the 28 main varieties (each with a different flavour). Peppermint oils for flavouring (there is no satisfactory substitute), mint crystals, and menthol are the products. At Bihoro, in the largest peppermint factory in the world, we walked with streaming eyes and noses and gasping for breath, through the distilling rooms; and in the laboratory when we smelt the pungent odours of the different oils in their bottles famous trade-names immediately came to mind—with the oils for toothpaste and chewing gum particularly we could recognise at once not only the brands they were used for but also the different varieties of those brands.

Horse Fair at Kushiro

There was laughter from the crowd; auctioneers were the same in any language, we decided, and we laughed, too, because we could imagine the jokes.

It was the horse fair at Kushiro, where in three days 2000 horses were sold for 52 million yen. The whinnying of the several hundred young horses, the smell of the branding irons, the machine-gun bursts from the auctioneers, the jostling crowd, the buyers with their breeches and eight-inch cigarette holders were all exciting. The average price for these light, young horses was about £150, and as many of the buyers had travelled from as far as southern Kyushu, about 1000 miles away, the eventual selling price to farmers would be much higher.

We were told that the horses were two-year-olds, but to me they looked no more than yearlings and it is probable that the Japanese have the same custom for their animals as they have for their children—counting them as one-year-old at birth.

Near to the fair was a Government stud, with 65 stallions. Originally horses in Japan were of Mongolian stock (from China) and some years ago there was Arabian and Persian blood introduced. Now most of the stallions are Anglo-Norman and Percheron thoroughbreds. The light, strong horses of this mixed breed are especially suitable for the paddy fields, in which a Clydesdale, for instance, working in six inches of water and mud would create havoc. It would be a most indignant

Clydesdale, too, that had to exist on the tough rice straw and soya beans that are the feed of the usual Japanese horse.

Our three weeks in Hokkaido were ended. Our journeying through farms that varied from holdings of linen flax and sugar beet to dry land rice and lily bulbs had been intensely interesting; the mountains and forest lands, with their bears and black foxes, had been magnificent. With some of the countryside we had been reminded of home—and, such is sentimentality, the pleasure of greeting a Japanese cook in one of the hotels who had been a prisoner-of-war in New Zealand for two years was mutual. We had enjoyed the hospitality of the men of the 11th U.S. Airborne Division, and after attending one of their jumps we had no doubt that they earned their money the hard way—just before hitting the ground 600 men had been caught in a ground wind and 25 per cent of them had been injured. We had not minded when a young Japanese child had come running, saying (our interpreter said) "Hello, American man." We wished the best of luck to their 12-year development plan and hoped that never again would "troubles" break out to rouse more interest in some other land "as a finer reclamation country than Hokkaido, where cold is intense."



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