

WHAT PRICE "BUSHIDO" NOW?

Japan Forgets Her Ancient Code Of Honour

Written for "The Listener" by **LIEUTENANT-COLONEL ORDE LEES, A.F.C., O.B.E.**, formerly Lieutenant-Commander (attached) Japanese Naval Air Service, and "Times" correspondent in Tokyo

NO one was more surprised than the writer of this article when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour; more shocked, more pained. A great part of his life has been spent in Japan, and there also are his home and all his property. On the other hand, few people in New Zealand know the Japanese people as well as he does, or the Japanese fighting men, since his wife is a Japanese, and he was for two years a flying instructor in Japan. But with it all he had to leave Japan at a few hours' notice, bringing away with him nothing but his personal luggage.

Colonel Orde Lees spent 21 years in the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines. He was a member of Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition in 1914-1916 and in 1917 he was seconded to the Royal Flying Corps. He was the first British officer to make a parachute landing, and conducted research in this branch of aviation. After the war he went to Japan to instruct in parachute work in the Japanese Naval Air Force, with the rank of Lieutenant-Commander in the Imperial Japanese Navy.

JAPAN has given us all an undeclared stab in the back by launching her blitzkrieg offensive against Hawaii and Manila. Let us try to realise what sort of stuff we are up against in both the mechanisation and personnel of her fighting forces.

Saint Francis Xavier, the first Christian missionary ever to land and preach in Japan, declared three hundred years ago that the Japanese were more fond of weapons and of strife than any other nation. With, perhaps, the possible exception of Germany, this may be said to be almost as true of Japan to-day, save for this significant difference. In Xavier's day, and until quite recently, Japan was proud of what she called *Bushido*. Now *Bushido* is in principle an admirable ethical code of honour comparable in certain respects with medieval chivalry, with the notable difference that, whereas chivalry implies chiefly the honouring and defending of women, *Bushido* almost deliberately goes out of its way to relegate women to a position of utter inferiority and concerns itself with, among other things, such matters as the chivalrous relation between victor and vanquished, attacker and attacked.

In passing, it may be said that *Bushido* is indirectly responsible for that submissive self-effacement among Japanese women which so often intrigues the passing tourist, and not infrequently causes the occidental resident in Japan to take a well-born Japanese girl in marriage.

Now *Bushido* has been cast aside by Japan's rude attack on America without as much as an "on your guard," and all that centuries of noble Samurai (knights) strove to achieve is, in one single day, set at naught. If ever Japan lost face in the eyes of the world she has done it now—disgraced herself for ever by her gangsterlike overture in the Pacific War.

Fighting Code

This shameless breach of her ancient code of gentlemanly behaviour, which is precisely what *Bushido* actually means, will not, however, prevent her fighting men from observing the age-old rules so far as modern warfare permits. That they have not invariably done so in their invasion of China is common knowledge, but there, they say, they are in conflict with soldiers to whom such things as *Bushido* and chivalry are unknown qualities. At least that is the usual Japanese excuse for atrocities on the part of their own men. Such delinquencies have always been claimed to be reprisals.

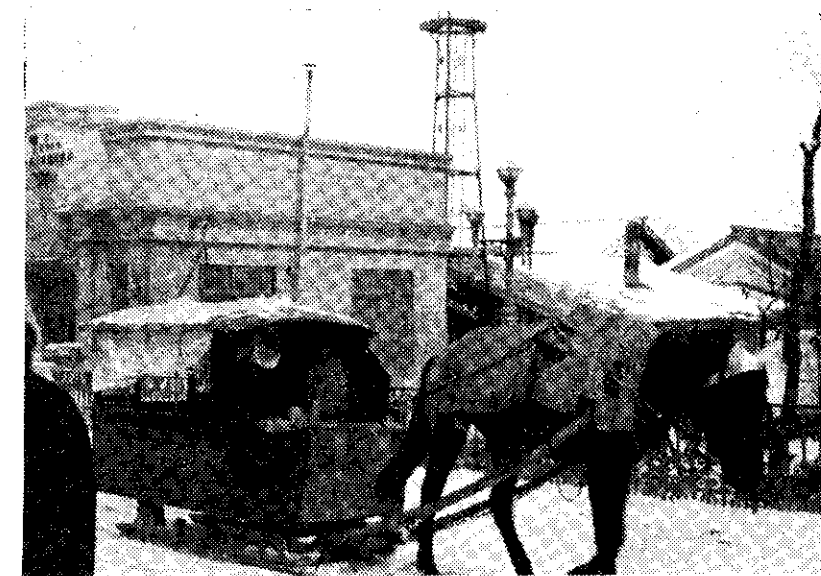
So much for the men in the ranks. Whether their officers will strictly abide by the rules of war when opportunities for unreported aberration may occur, remains to be seen. Those of the Navy, with their very strong English traditions, are more likely to do so; those of the Army are strongly imbued with the Germanic spirit of militarism, and everyone knows what that means.

The Air Force in Japan is not, as yet, a separate body, but is attached to the Army and to the Navy as was ours at the beginning of the last European war. It is a dangerous mistake to despise it.

Militarism From the Cradle

Ever since the last European war, militarism has been increasingly stressed in the schools; first only in High Schools and Universities, then in the Middle Schools, and more recently in the Primary Schools. Now children of the tenderest years are given military drills, regimentation, and lessons in patriotism, and these have lately been regarded as the most important of their daily curriculum. Little tots are taken for overlong marches armed with sticks. Some like it, most don't.

This year the summer holiday for primary schools was cut down from the usual month to only a week, so as to



IN SPITE OF WESTERNISATION and progress in some directions, much of Japan is backward and primitive. Here is a street scene in a town in north Japan, with the crude "bus" which plies to and from the station

impress upon the little ones the necessity of being prepared to defend, or fight for, their country. Middle school boys, i.e., lads of from about 13 to 18, have been out every Sunday of late on extensive field-days and sham fights, those of 17 and 18 being armed with real rifles, their younger schoolmates with dummy ones only; in addition, an hour a day has been devoted every week-day to military exercises on the school campus or playground. High school and university students have the same routine, only more of it, and an extra hour a day is added to their former curricula to allow for it. University students, in fact, during school hours live a life little different from that of conscripts under instruction, so that they know what to expect when their turn comes to be called up for their tour of conscripted service. Most of them regard it as inevitable and put up with it with tolerant grace, though not a few admit privately that they detest it. Official military propaganda is so insistent, and insidious, that, for the most part, parents urge their sons to excel in military exercises for the good of their country.

It is not until they actually become soldiers that they realise what a hard life it is. They have the worst pay, the hardest beds, the roughest food, and the least leisure of any army in the world. The life of an American convict would be luxury in comparison with that of the Japanese private.

Fighting For a Penny a Day

The actual remuneration of a Japanese conscript was quite recently, and probably still is, two yen a month, which is almost exactly a penny a day.

Euphemistically it is termed pocket-money by the authorities and is regarded as such by the conscripts. The officers, a very large proportion of whom come from the ranks, receive proportionately more, but barely a third of what our officers get. So many of them having

themselves served as private soldiers, they know precisely how the latter live and what they have to put up with, which certainly is not, as a rule, the case in our own forces. In Japan, the social distinction between officers and men seems to be very much what we suppose it to be in Russia's red army. The training of the officers, like almost everything in Japan, veers to the academic more than to the practical side of military knowledge; some of them are erudite in military matters.

All For The Emperor

Discipline is maintained less by the penal provisions of an "Army Act," as is mainly the case with us, than by the Japanese traditional sense of loyalty to the Emperor, to die for whom is genuinely regarded as a privilege. So far as the Japanese have any belief in post-mortem survival it is deemed that death for the Emperor's sake will bring a martyr's reward. It is for this reason rather than through inherent courage that Japanese soldiers heed life very lightly and are always ready to undertake without any adieux, dangerous military tasks where death is inevitable. This was the case, for example, in the attack on Shanghai, where three soldiers perfectly cognisant of their fate, walked to certain extinction carrying a heavy demolition bomb which they proceeded to place under a key position from which there was no possible chance of escape for themselves and deliberately detonated it, blowing up themselves and their objective at the same time.

Exactly who the Emperor is at the time is of relatively little importance to a Japanese; like the "throne" with us, it is the emperorship as an entity that is the foundation of all Japanese life, both civil and military. Of purely religious conscience there is practically none, for observing Buddhists are decreasing, and Shintoism, the official state religion, is more of a code than a cult.

(Continued on next page)