

Facts About Japan

A Japanese policeman seldom has much trouble in making an arrest. He is invested with all the majesty of the law, and to the Japanese law is supreme. It seems very peculiar to see him holding a solemn court in the street to settle some dispute between the inhabitants. The surrounding crowd shows no disposition to ridicule and banter. With the utmost gravity he examines the parties interested, notes down the information given and finally pronounces his decision, which is generally obeyed without question. This absolutism strikes the foreigner all the more because the policemen are usually youthful in appearance and small in figure. Five feet two inches is the standard height, and 21 is the minimum age for entrance into the force. Every policeman receives minute instructions as to his deportment, the position of his hands when standing, sitting, etc., and the length of his hair, which must not be more than two inches in front, nor seven-tenths of an inch on the neck.

The Soldier.

The other day, writes a correspondent of London 'Truth,' I spoke of rice and dried fish being the uniform food of the Japanese army in campaigning times. This is the way in which the rice is cooked. It is boiled until quite thick and glutinous. Next it is placed on a ceramic slab, rolled out and cut into squares. The squares are then placed in the sun to dry and often turned. When hard as sea biscuit and greatly reduced in weight they can be stored. A certain number are allowed each day to the soldier. All he has to do is to break up a square in boiling water and to add the dried fish. In a few minutes he has what seems to him a delicious thick soup. If he cannot procure boiling water he simply eats his rice cake dry. In the fruit season he substitutes fruit when he can obtain it for the fish. The Japanese soldier M Pinchon tells me, has muscles like whipcord, is a sure shot, has an eye for landmarks and a memory for locality. He can do with three hours' sleep out of the 24, is cleanly, attends to sanitary instructions, is ardently patriotic, holds his life cheap, and runs up hills like a goat. He costs the State about 1/3d a day and thinks himself well off.

A Tea Party

Directly on the arrival of the guests, who are expected to appear on such occasions in full dress, they are seated in the teahouse within the tea garden, and the beverage served to each one separately. The fixtures of the room and surroundings generally are always the same. There is a platform which is called the 'tokonoma' or 'place to hang the picture'. This platform is also decorated with flowers. The bamboo dipper in which tea is served very properly is attached to the lid of the teapot. Above a large porcelain vessel containing a charcoal fire is placed the kettle. Cute little lacquered caddies are used for holding powdered tea, and a crepe or silk cloth called the 'fukusa' is held in the hostess' hand for the purpose of removing flecks of scattered tea dust. When the water has reached the proper degree of heat the lady dently pours the powdered tea from the caddy and the water from the kettle simultaneously into the bamboo dipper, and proceeds to stir it carefully with a 'chasen,' a sort of leather brush made of bamboo, one end of which is chopped into fine shreds. Right here are the two operations upon which depend the success of powdered tea-making. A novice will spoil it by improperly mixing the water and tea together or through inexperience in stirring. The latter operation requires dexterity and long practice, while the other is nothing more nor less than a piece of legerdemain. When ready the draught of tea in the dipper is served by the hostess or her maid, accompanied by an elaborate bow. In serving, the maid holds the vessel containing the tea high up, even with her head, and after bowing and serving it in a sitting posture, she arises and returns to her place, walking backward.

The Three Symbols

The three symbols of the imperial house of Japan, according to a writer in 'Leslie's Weekly,' are the mirror, the crystal and the sword, and they are carried in front of the Emperor on all State occasions. Each has its significance. 'Look at the mirror and reflect thyself,' or, in other words, 'Know thyself,' is the message of the mirror. 'Be pure and shine' is the crystal injunction, while the sword is a reminder to 'Be sharp.'

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