

## With Japs at Target Practice

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**J**APANESE naval men have never been in the habit of inviting foreigners to be present at target practice aboard their warships, but it was the writer's luck to witness by accident a realistic exhibition of Japanese skill at gunnery.

This was shortly after the Spanish-American war. The American troop transport, of which I was then a petty officer, was lying in the naval dry dock at Nagasaki. This kept us there a long time, and our captain had become intimately acquainted with various Annapolis trained officers on the Japanese battleship *Yashima*, also in port.

One morning I was sent aboard the *Yashima* with a message to one of its officers from our captain. When I had delivered it, the Japanese officer said:

"It's impossible for me to send my answer just now. We are going outside the harbor for a couple of hours' target practice. If you have the time to spare, you may stay aboard till we come in again."

The invitation was accepted. The officer left me alone in a chart room on an upper deck, while he hurried off to his duties.

From the big yellow funnels of the battleship huge banks of smoke tumbled up, rolling over the green hills that surround the harbor. The captain and his staff stood on the main bridge. There was a simplicity in their neat blue and white uniforms that made it difficult to distinguish their ranks, nor was there that pompousness of manner in them peculiar to many European naval officers. One little chap came into the chart room for something and bowed very politely. I took him to be a ward room steward until afterward he turned out to be the navigating officer.

A bell clanged faintly somewhere down in the bowels of the ship. They had been weighing anchor, but so noiselessly that I had failed to be aware of it. Shrill whistles came from various parts of the ship, and groups of men moved about the decks with automatic regularity. Sentries with muskets sprang up in unexpected spots as though they were shoved up out of the deck. There was no noise, no hurry, no excitement. But from the small oblique eyes of every man came a gleam of intense professional interest. There was none of the biased indifference of the soldiers at drill.

It was rather a cold day, and the men wore watch caps and jackets. Down in the gun turrets they removed the jackets. About each gun a gun crew formed, each man in his particular place. Small hatches were opened and ammunition hoists appeared as though by no human aid.

A slight quiver told that the big ship was moving. The green-terraced hills on both sides glided back and sank; soon the open sea spread out before. It was a glassy calm day, an ideal day for gun practice.

Another shrill chirp from a bos'n's whistle and the target went overboard—a buoy with huge triangular canvas wings. Land was some distance astern now. Suddenly the land-specked horizon began to swing—the *Yashima's* wake was curving. The target was keeping up abeam. Until now there had been no noise except the steady throb of machinery, the swish of water over the side and the sharp, regular whirr of ammunition hoists.

One of the for'd six-inch guns was to be tried first. Above, on the fore and aft bridges, stood a lieutenant with a pad and pencil to record the hits. Beside him stood an ensign with a watch to time them. It was to be a test of quickness as well as of marksmanship. Below a petty officer stood behind the gun, a wire in each hand. He was stooping, his eye even with the gun sights, his whole attitude one of intense mental concentration.

For the first time I heard a word spoken. The lieutenant gave the word. A brilliant yellow bar of fire shot out from the muzzle of the gun. The atmosphere cracked like new sheet tin. A ball of white smoke flew upwards. A few seconds passed—all eyes were on the white triangle, a mile abeam. It seemed as though the projectile must have gone beyond the horizon line.

Suddenly a white spurt of foam shot up from the indigo water within fifty yards of the target; a long, thin thread of water, that opened at the top like an umbrella and came down in showers.

A clang of the breech block brought my attention to the gun again. The gunner was once more sighting. This time he fired at will—he was trying to make time. Another crackling report, another breathless interval, and the exploding shell sent up its fountain closer to the target. This was repeated five times. At the last shot the target was hidden in the spurt of foam.

The lieutenant rushed aft along the bridge. A gun in one of the after turrets began firing, almost as regularly and as quickly as a pulse beat. Between each shot came the clang of the breech block. Evidently the second gun made better time; her shells certainly came nearer the mark. A smothered cheer came from her crew.

The officer skipped 'midships, the ensign with him. There was no mistaking the repressed excitement of the gun crew. The men had thrown open their thick jackets—the gunner had thrown his off. His arms

were bare; the muscles swelled and shrank as though the brown skin held imprisoned snakes. His lips were parted, exposing his teeth as though he were snarling.

His first shot struck the target full, putting a hole through one of the canvas wings, the shell exploding slightly beyond. Again came an impulsive cheer, or murmur of admiration rather. The small, black mustache of the lieutenant went upward as he jotted down some figures on his pad.

The first shot evidently made the gunner overconfident. The four succeeding shots were comparatively poor. Not a word was spoken, but the gun crew scowled.

There came an interval in the firing. The target swung ahead. Then a small gun up in the fore top began spitting nervously, the reports rolling above us like thunder. All the officers on the bridge were gazing intently at the target through binoculars. A circle of angry white foam appeared about it.

The ship's course was describing a huge figure eight. As the target swung around on the other beam, another six-inch gun on that side opened fire. After each firing the men slipped back the breech block, pulled out the empty brass shell and slipped in a loaded one with the regularity of automatons. There was not a trace of their repressed excitement in their movements. Only their faces showed the keen rivalry between the men who manned the different guns. Sometimes they gave that muffled cheer, or again, their oblique eyebrows became more oblique still, and the corners of their mouths went down.

Again the target swung ahead, and again came the thunderous roar of the smaller quick firing guns. The white wings of the target almost disappeared in a boiling circle of milky foam. Instinctively my hands went up and covered my ears—the atmosphere seemed to crystallize and break up into powdered bits. A big gun in some forward turret interpolated its gigantic roar at regular intervals that set the big ship trembling.

We were coming closer to the target now and the firing increased. Slowly we passed it. Those gun crews not engaged in firing stood stolidly by their guns, staring fixedly at the target. Their excitement had passed—their faces were as expressionless as that of the average Chinaman when he overcharges for the wash.

Suddenly the firing ceased. The engines below were still; we were drifting up toward the target. A boat was lowered and pulled toward it, paying out a line, the end of which was fastened to the buoy. The boat returned, was noiselessly hoisted, then a winch ticked and pulled in the buoy, hoisting it aboard aft. Its white sails were much torn and bedraggled, and the steel buoy seemed not to have escaped either.

Again the engines began throbbing and the green hills about the harbor mouth rose on both bows. In half an hour the *Yashima's* anchor cable was rattling out and it swung around with the tide. A launch with the imperial Japanese flag approached from shore. Again the bos'n's whistles piped the men to quarters. A salute was to be fired.

On the for'd bridge the captain stood on the port side. He gave a barely audible command. A gun in a turret below him fired. Then he turned and walked leisurely across the bridge to the starboard side, as though counting his steps. When he reached the other end of the bridge he barely stopped again, another command, and a gun on the starboard side fired. Thus he paced his bridge, to and fro, and each time he reached the end of a turn, a gun below him belched out a fiery salute to the personage approaching in the launch. Thus, the captain timed the intervals between each shot by the paces he took on the bridge.

I suppose the little chap with the thin gray beard who came aboard, was some rear admiral stationed ashore, but the ceremonial reception given him would have sufficed for the mikado himself. While he marched up one gangway, I crept down another, with the message for my captain in my pocket, addressed in neat Spencerian handwriting and in English.

ALBERT SONNICHSEN.

## Nippon Denji to the Front

(Continued from Page Eight.)

Little bronze images are beginning to take notice in a most western fashion. We are psychologically in what might be called the third period of the war: The first, that of its beginning, with its silence; the second, that of victory, with its awakening from dumb intensity to enthusiasm (both of which I have described); and, finally, that of the real hurrah period. Those first few solemn days stood for the home farewells, the intimate farewells. It was taken for granted that each soldier was going forth to die. The family, the friends, literally buried him in dry-eyed mourning. If he survived, it would be a resurrection with the attendant joy. At dinner a Japanese woman said to an American, "Countess So-and-So has four sons, all in the army. Isn't it splendid

to give so many lives to your country!"

Stoicism having accepted the inevitable, the personal farewells paid, and the movement of troops begun—then the soldiers became the army and their friends the public. So today there is a merry goodby. Japan sends her sons away en masse, as if they were going on a pleasant tour, and they answer back with smiles as if back-breaking marches and suffering were not to be their portion. Arches are erected, flags are flung to the breeze, and the golden baskets of fete days are raised.

## How Armies Are Moved

(Continued from Page Nine.)

Italians in New York and other American cities. These carts were drawn by coolies or by the soldiers themselves, and they were so lightly laden that they interfered little, if at all, with the mobility of the force. The horse and mule carts were of the smallest type, and lightly built. Spare animals were made to carry their own fodder, and that of the other animals as well.

These means were rendered necessary by the smallness and weakness of the Japanese horses, which are about the scrawniest animals of their kind. The Russians, on the contrary, are well supplied with large, strong, well-bred horses. Horse breeding on an immense scale was brought to a high pitch of success in Russia by the late Count Orloff, and the type of horse used in the Russian army of today is mainly that which is known as the "Orloff horse."

The newly broken horses of the steppes are also used to a considerable extent, especially by the Cossacks and the Turkestan contingents.

In the Turcoman campaigns in Central Asia camels were employed, but they are hardly ever used today by Russian troops. Thousands of dogs are pressed into service, however, mainly for transporting soldiers and supplies in sledges across Lake Balkal.

In the present campaign the mikado's fighting man is carrying a great deal more food with him than his Russian adversary. Against the latter's two days' rations, he carries two cooked rations of rice in addition to six emergency rations. These are contained in an aluminum mess pan, and as the rice has been boiled and dried in the sun the entire weight is trifling.

It is commonly supposed that the Japanese soldier lives entirely on rice and dried fish, but such is not the fact. He can live, and fight well, on that spare diet, if necessary; but he is given meat and other sustaining foods whenever practicable, as well as beer or "sake." Several years ago a military commission was appointed by the mikado to inquire why the physique of the Japanese troops was inferior to that of the British, German and other armies. The commission came to the conclusion that beef and beer helped to build up the stalwart frames of Occidental fighting men, and since then beef and beer have been included in the diet scale of the Japanese army.

It would appear, from recent reports, that the food arrangements of the Japanese forces now in the field are excellent. According to one statement, each infantry unit has a cylindrical stove and detachable kettle capable of cooking enough rice to furnish one meal for 100 men. Nine such stoves and kettles are used for cooking for a battalion. Boxes containing half-pound cans of meat are carried by four horses for each battalion. The question of water supply has been carefully considered, doubtless owing to the fact that the sickness among the Japanese troops in the Peking expedition consisted almost entirely of typhoid fever. Each unit carries a quantity of sodium sulphate to purify the drinking water.

CAPTAIN ARCHIBALD M. JAMES.

## Older the Better

"Well, John," said Mrs. Stubb, "I reckon we better buy some new furniture and then rent a house in a modest locality."

"No, Maria," replied her husband, "we'll keep the furniture and rent a house in a swell neighborhood."

"But the furniture is all scratched and broken."

"That matters not. If we are in a swell neighborhood, we can say it is 'colonial.'" —Chicago News.

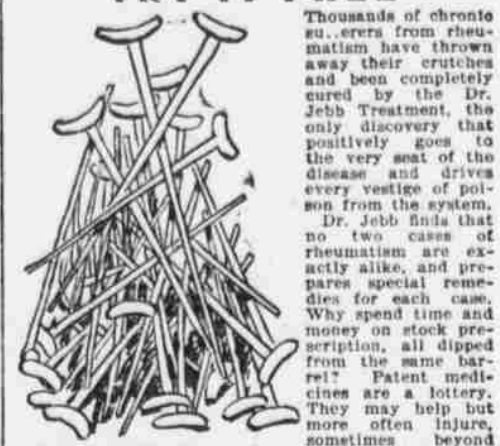
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