

CORRESPONDENTS ARE LOOSE

Japan Lets Writers Get Chance at Scene of Hostilities.

MEN CHAFED AT THE DELAY AT TOKIO

From Laughing at Native Wit They Become Disgusted and Talk Plain to Officers of the Army.

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STEAMSHIP NAGATO MARU, somewhere in the inland sea, Monday, April 4, 1904.—(Special Correspondence to the New York Herald—Special to The Bee.)—It hardly seems credible, but we are actually off to the front. After nine of the wearisome weeks of waiting that were ever put in by anybody the Japanese military authorities have finally given the word.

"It is too early," said General Fukushima, when he was communicating to the committee of correspondents the joyous fact, "but—"

That "but" marked the turning point. The worm had performed his famous act. The distinguished gentlemen who control the destinies of the Japanese army men, and any others who happen to come under their jurisdiction, as we had to do, had been playing a wretched game of "pass the buck" with us. They were always extremely polite. There could be absolutely no fault with their demeanor toward us, and we had driven to reciprocate. If any man showed occasionally a slight disposition to be anxious about the time when he was to go to the front there would be a gentle homily on the extraordinary virtue of patience, which usually curbed his feelings. After a time the game became interesting for itself. There arose a natural curiosity to see how many times the buck could go round before the pot would be opened.

Thirteen or fourteen stages preceded the eruption that finally brought action. First was the struggle to get regulations issued governing the permission to correspondents to go to the front. That took two weeks. Immediately upon their issuance the applications of the men who were waiting poured in upon the natives. Another week or two weeks brought the greatly desired passes, but attached to each was a slip which advised the holder that it would be necessary for him to apply to the general staff for the designation of the column which he was to accompany. The Japanese are not going to do us any harm, and let the newspaper men go where they liked when they pleased. We are assigned to particular places, and there we must stay.

While we were waiting for the designation of the column there were plenty of things to occupy attention. To begin with, General Fukushima, who has charge of the arrangements for foreign correspondents and military attaches, allotted arbitrarily the number of newspaper men who would be permitted to accompany the first army. There were to be five Americans and eight Britons with one German and one Frenchman, this being proportionate to the numbers of each nationality who had made their applications. When he had determined the number that were to go, he asked the men of the British and American contingents to determine the personnel among themselves. As there were only five Americans that in slight it was not difficult for them to agree, and long experience in the matter of precedence enabled the Britishers to fix their list quickly. So the delay afforded by this expedient was not great, and we were all promptly requesting Sanbo Hombu, as the Japanese call their general staff, to inform us when we would be permitted to go forward.

The matter of the canteen had almost exhausted itself by this time, but there appeared a new opportunity for showing the buck along in the unwillingness of two or three of the correspondents to agree to the contract. Various objections were raised by them, but the war office indicated very clearly, after some discussion, that it desired the contract signed, and that cause of delay was removed. Meanwhile there was constant pressure for definite information, but none was forthcoming.

Towards of Patience. One of the aids of Baron Kodama, assistant chief of staff, was dining one evening at the hotel with a party of newspaper men, and one of them said he had intended to make a trip through Morocco in this coming May. Another remarked that the first better be in a hurry or he would not be in time. Thereupon the first turned to the aid and asked if he thought

the war would be ended by May. Without a smile the aid replied: "I will ask Baron Kodama."

This officer did subsequently, however, express an opinion of his own on the matter, and with every body concerned with us was replying to a strong letter of protest which had been sent to his chief. When he had finished with the formalities involved he added, off his own bat:

"I think men of great patience will be crowned with an invaluable reward and unathomable blessings by heaven." His office was going to do for us. A day or two afterward the emperor opened the session of the Diet, and we all had tickets. Next day the recipient of this advice as to patience called at the war office and was received by the officer who gave it.

"Did you see the emperor yesterday?" asked the officer.

"Yes," was the reply.

"I think that was one reward," said the officer. Then he added that it would be a wonderful cherry blossoms of Japan.

During all this time the only response there was to the multiplied questions as to when we could go was the stereotyped "very soon." More than a month ago General Sahimoto, the vice minister of war, summoned the correspondents to a conference and addressed them upon their opportunities, duties and the regulations for their government while with the Japanese army. At the same time he cheered their drooping spirits by saying:

"The day of your departure is very near."

This "very soon," however, developed a broad indefiniteness. It really did seem, though, that there would be action of some sort soon, when the contractor was notified to send forward the horses and heavy baggage of the men assigned to the first column. There was a scurrying around the hotel that day, which created quite an appearance of the real thing. The horses were sent away with the grooms, and most of the men prepared to follow them the next day. But still the passes had not been designated, and General Fukushima said we should have two or three days' notice. To questions as to whether we should be safe in making a little side excursion to Nikko or Myanohita, however, it was always intimated that we had better remain in Tokio.

Finally one glad day a notice appeared on the bulletin board at the hotel advising that passes of men assigned to the first army should be handed in at the war office by noon of the next day for designation. Thereupon the men flew at their kits for a last inspection and overhaul and began to pack up to go. But when the passes came back the next day there had merely been inserted the words "very soon," to which we had all known for weeks that we were assigned. Still there was no indication of the date of departure. We were told that that would be given a little later, but "very soon." But a little later the word we got was that we could take a four days' holiday.

As an illustration. Then it was that we began to recall what it was that we had done. It was the greatest example of patience ever recorded, and how a plague of boils was the least of Job's troubles. The volcanic fires that had been smoldering for some time began to evince signs of increasing energy, and it did not require much imagination to see that an eruption was impending. There was no longer an effort to smile and look cheerful when talking to the Japanese officials, and the little joke about "very soon" fell upon unappreciative ears. Mild mannered men began to plot rudeness and those full of stratagems and schemes gathered in knots and discussed conspiracies. The day long the men of the British and American contingents were talking to the Japanese officials, and the little joke about "very soon" fell upon unappreciative ears. Mild mannered men began to plot rudeness and those full of stratagems and schemes gathered in knots and discussed conspiracies.

It was an Englishman who started the eruption. Everybody's patience gave way apparently at the same time and with no attempt at concert, but the Englishman happened to be the first one to call at the war office after the breakdown. What he said to the aid of the assistant chief of staff may one day be written in a book, for it is worthy to be embalmed, but just now it is not politic to reveal the truths thus thrust upon those unwilling ears. The astonished aid had so more than enough to do as it was, and he was a trifle under another came along. That evening the aid attended a large reception given by one of the diplomatic corps, and there he met in turn nearly every one of the men assigned to the first army, and several others who were not. No man missed the chance to announce that he had turned insurgent. The honoree words of peaceful and hopeful days were forgotten or left behind. Vocabulary that evening consisted only of strong words descriptive of strong feelings. It was all summed up in the remark of one man, who is not going to the front at all. He said:

"When these men came out here every one of them was your friend, but you have alienated every one of them, and now when they go home they will never see a Japanese head without punching it." So it went throughout the evening. The Japanese heard the situation accurately described. And lest there may be some who think they were entirely right and just in thus keeping back those whom they had promised to permit to go to the front let me say briefly what that situation was.

Exasperating Delay. They had landed an army of more than 40,000 men, and were in contact with the enemy all along their front. Every day word came back of the appearance here and there of the Russian scouts. There was no news of pretenses that the Russians were not aware of their position and of what they were doing. But there was a pretense that the Russians might derive information as to the Japanese movements from the correspondents of the American and British newspapers. It was absurd to think that if any man should obtain information that should properly be kept secret and should attempt to betray it he could succeed, for every means of communication is in the hands of the Japanese, and everything written from the front, even our personal correspondence, must be submitted to censorship before it can be sent down.

And even if by some untoward chance some man should find opportunity now unforeseen and should be willing to use it to obtain valuable information to the enemy, it would be valuable to the enemy in the slightest, for the situation will be changing so rapidly that by the time this month old information could be printed the circumstances would surely have changed too over, when this talk was had the Japanese had permitted the correspondents of their own newspapers to go forward, and they had repeatedly promised the foreigners that we should go at the same time as the Japanese.

But be that as it may, the talk that evening, the evidence that the eruption had come, had its effect "very soon." It was not yet 10 o'clock the next morning when one of the British military attaches met an English correspondent in the hotel and said: "You chaps must have been raising a dust yesterday. They are going to let you go."

It was quite true. Word was sent down from Bambo Hombu asking one Englishman and one American to come up at 3 o'clock. The British attaché spoke to these two that General Fukushima spoke to these two that it was too early to let us go, but we were to be allowed to go on either by the ship, that we had chartered for our

own transportation, when it was determined that the army could not transport us, or the men themselves, with no baggage and without their interpreters, could go on a government transport. With one exception, however, those the government transport, and the use of this ship is merely to take us to the place where the transport lies, designated in all Japanese reports as a "certain place."

So here we are doing seven knots or less through inland sea, in a driving rain, with the horses in the hold and the bettas smoking cigarettes amid the forage, with fifteen interpreters bunking on the deck in the afterhold and the servants sprawled over the baggage any place they can find. We are stowed all together in a cabin where there is only room for one man to stand, sit down or dress at a time, and you have to fight for something to eat, and never get anything to drink.

But nobody cares. We are going to the front at last. They cannot push the buck much further, for we transfer to a government transport tomorrow afternoon, and they must send that ship somewhere in order to get rid of the soldiers aboard of it.

An Englishman with a Will. Life is not altogether joyless on this packet. I have seen some transport experience on the little Spanish tubs that pilled about the Philippines, and this quite brings that to me, but there are things here which are not there. This morning I saw a demonstration of the exercise of the force that has made Britain great. It was the play of an uncompromising will that stands always for its moral principles. One of them is to take a bath every morning and another is to shave as soon as he has a chance. The Nagato Maru apparently never bathed. He was an exponent, probably, although before his time, of the new theory that it is to bathing that most of the ills to which human flesh is heir come from washing the dirt off the skin and keeping the pores open.

This Englishman would have fought him if he had appeared and given the opportunity. He is a mild mannered Englishman, with a twinkling blue eye and a lot of fun in him, but a Briton of the real old sort, the kind good natured American love at sight because he is so British, and that all natured Americans hate vigorously forever, for the same reason. The cabin was crowded last night because the cabin was crowded and stuffy, and he objected, naturally, because late wanderers about the deck, seeing him completely enveloped in a sleeping bag with the sheepskin inside, felt of him to see what he was "just as if he were," as he put it, "after a good" a cold, raw wind blew across the ship this morning when he turned out and the first thing he called for was his big fur overcoat. He got that and then he demanded a bucket of water. By and by that was secured. Then he wanted a tub. That was entirely too much for the resources of this packet, so long as we were in the open sea.

But the Englishman was prepared. He had a tub of his own, made of water proof canvas, which he carried in his bedding roll. Forthwith it was produced and spread open on the deck by the after rail. Off came the fur overcoat and the flannel pajamas, and stripped to the buff, the Englishman stepped on the tub and commanded his servant to climb up on the rail and pour that bucket of ice water over him. Thus was the first demonstration completed.

Next was the shave. There was no glass, but the Englishman, standing up for his moral principles, did not mind the water by the biting wind, he rasped down one side, across the chin and up the other as merrily as if he were about to have the most luxurious shave ever recorded in history, and, then hopping about the deck to keep his blood in circulation, as even as it was by the biting wind, he rasped down one side, across the chin and up the other as merrily as if he were about to have the most luxurious shave ever recorded in history, and, then hopping about the deck to keep his blood in circulation, as even as it was by the biting wind, he rasped down one side, across the chin and up the other as merrily as if he were about to have the most luxurious shave ever recorded in history, and, then hopping about the deck to keep his blood in circulation, as even as it was by the biting wind, he rasped down one side, across the chin and up the other as merrily as if he were about to have the most luxurious 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