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Sufferings of the Japanese

*Soldiers of the Reserves Do Field Drilling of a Strenuous Character,
And All the While Tortured by Sore Feet*

SUNAN, March 13—The French medical authorities estimate, upon mobilization of the French army, that after the first two weeks of marching fully 100,000 men will be in the hospitals—this being due to sore feet and breakdown from exhaustion and exclusive of those disabled by wounds. So, even before the actual fighting begins an unusually fair share of suffering is the soldier's lot. The softer the men and the greener, the greater the suffering.

Napoleon in his last days complained of his last conscripts drawn from exhausted France: "They block my roads with their carcasses." In fact, the modern warrior is a different creature from the warrior of old time—as different as modern warfare is different from the warfare of old time. There is nothing today to compare with the running regiments of the Zulus, which carried no baggage and killed their own wounded; with the Mongols, mounted on shaggy ponies, their great toes thrust into looped straps for stirrups, their baggage the clothes and arms on their backs; nor with our own Viking forebears, who went out to ravage fair coasts with little more than a few casks of water in their narrow, sharp-beaked galleys.

Life was simple in those days, and war was simple. There were no preliminaries. The first intimation was the cry of the watchers on the towers or the flare of signal fires along the coast. The fighting immediately followed. But today, owing to the changed conditions of society and warfare, it takes a very long time to get a war officially started, and an equally long time to get the combatants together. This last is due, not to the vastness of modern armies, but to the enormous outfits which must be carried with them.

Granted that an army can live off the country, it dare not cut loose from its base because it would soon have no powder or shell or cannon balls. In ancient warfare the energy which drove home death was generated in a man's body directly from the food he had eaten. He cut his bow from the nearest wood and strung it from the tail of the horse he rode or from the hide of the bullock he killed for his last meal. Did it become necessary to besiege a city, he built his battering rams and catapults on the spot and for ammunition gathered stones from an adjacent hillside. But to-day the energy which drives home death is generated by the chemists in large factories and must be carted about by the soldiers who are to use it, while shrapnel and shell are not to be gathered from hillside until after the battle is over. Here, in Korea, six weeks have passed since the landing of the Japanese soldiers and one scout has been killed; nor is it likely that another six weeks will see any considerable bodies of Russian and Japanese soldiers locked in combat. Yet the men on both sides will be as busy as nailers getting ready to make preparations to fight.

And as the conditions of warfare have changed, so have the conditions changed which make the soldiers. The conscript of the Twentieth Century is a totally different man from the

man-at-arms of the middle ages whose business was fighting and who engaged in wars that lasted sometimes beyond his life time. The conscript of to-day lives a peaceable, industrious life, and has never heard war's alarms until the moment he is jerked from out his little pigeon-hole and hurled onto the field of battle. He is practically unused to hardship, and is certainly untrained to long marching with a heavy knapsack on his back. And further, his nervous and moral fiber, so far as endurance and bloodshed are concerned, is soft and flabby when compared with the professional soldier.

It is because of these things that the French hospitals would be filled with 100,000 exhausted and crippled men within two weeks after the mobilization of the army; and it was with this in mind that I selected as most opportune for a visit the surgeon's busy day. Sunan was occupied by several hundred men of the Twelfth Division. Their function was to guard the line of communication and to be broken in to the work of soldiers. Several hours of each morning and afternoon they spent in rough field drilling. They sought shelter on their stomachs, bellied forward through muck and mire, charged imaginary Russians on distant hilltops, retreated in precipitate order, raced across the rice fields, leaped ditches or floundered through, and scaled the most inaccessible places in sight. It brought the sweat out on them and caused them to breathe heavily. In short, it was pretty severe work for they were mainly reserves, with a sprinkling of regulars, and throughout the drill they carried their knapsacks on their backs.

When the afternoon's work was over they were permitted to call on the surgeon. I called at the same time, and found him, with his assistant and a clerk, squatting on the floor of a room which measured seven by eight. The men waited outside until their names were called by the clerk. The large majority were regular cases, for they were in the book and they held tickets for admittance. For two hours I squatted at the surgeon's shoulder and watched. There was little stomach trouble, and that little caused by cold alone, and dysentery. A few had colds and were given powders, of which a heap, paper-wrapped, lay on the floor. The surgeon, in reply to my query as to what per cent had gone into hospitals since the landing at Chemulpo, said: "About nothing per cent."

But the sore feet! Fully 90 per cent of the cases were of that nature. And such sore feet! There were open sores, on which the burdened men had walked day after day. Such sores, anywhere from the size of a ten-cent piece to a half dollar, were open with hard edges and filled with proud flesh. Here, on the side of the heel, a square inch or so of skin was off. There, on the sole of the foot, would be a great callous place of the nature of a hundred corns massed into one. And the next man would exhibit a little toe, quite deformed and shapeless, or a hole in a toe into which another toe had worked nearly to the bone. At least half the men had both feet sore, and some had as many as six or eight separate sores.

Throughout it all the doctor kept up a running fire of advice and witticism. To one, whose request to be relieved from duty was denied, he said: "Before you were merely a reserve, now you are a soldier. Your feet hurt because you are unused to walking. Walk skillfully hereafter and they will cease to hurt." To another, upon whom a decidedly painful operation was performed and who had to be held by his comrades: "Why do you cry? A soldier does not cry. You are going to fight the Russians." The man ceased squirming and composed his face. To another: "Why do you come to war if you make trouble over a little thing like this?"

These men, used to the straw sandal all their lives, had been summoned to join their colors and to incase their feet in the harsh leather boot of the West. Not only this, for many of the fits were bad, or rather, there were many misfits. And yet again, the whole leg and foot action of a man who has worn sandals is different from that which comes of wearing boots. And even if

the boots had fitted the feet, the very action of the feet and the legs alone would have chafed and lacerated.

It was obvious that the poor "sore feet" in the first march of 200 miles must have yearned for the pliant sandals to which they had been accustomed. But it was a vain yearning for sandals were prohibited under severe penalties. A man would, however, after his feet had been knocked up by the boots, receive permission from the surgeon to relapse into sandals.

Of course the fact that the men were reserves argues that they were unskilled in taking care of their feet; and the taking care of feet is a little science by itself which is not learned in a day. The Japanese had tramped solidly on day after day on their festering feet, making no effort to relieve the chafes and pressures, and not even washing the dirt from the sores. As the surgeon complained, accustomed as they were at home to frequent baths, they had neglected their bodies from the time they began marching.

In this connection a number may be instanced with bad sores on their bodies. These, the surgeon explained, had been caused by the chafe of belts and knapsacks and the lack of washing; and in the matter of bathing his advice to the men was continuous. He informed me that he had also advised the higher army officers that it would be expedient to arrange baths for the men wherever it was possible.

If my feet were half as bad as those of the soldiers I saw I am sure that I should elect to remain on my back for a day or so to give the misused tissues a chance to renew themselves. But next morning I beheld the "sore feet" charging across the paddy fields and up to the crest of mountains bearing what to many of them must have been excruciating pain. So one pays the penalty of being a twentieth century soldier, of being unpracticed in the science of footgear and of being compelled to carry his destroying energy in heavy cartridge boxes slung outside his body instead of inside in the arm and shoulder muscles.

And in the afternoon, after torturing their feet for additional hours, they returned to the surgeon for fresh patching up. And with adhesive plasters, wads of cotton and simple medicines he patches. A pleasing operation, this patching, and one that recommends itself to the intelligence. And yet—how shall I say?—there seems another side to it. Here is man, a rational creature, a creator of wonder and of beauty, and of marvels. He has enslaved the blind elements and forced them to do his work for him, weighed the sun as a grocer might weigh sugar and measured the distances between the stars more correctly than the Korean measures between villages, while in the matter of ethics he has achieved equally remarkable results and determined with keenness and precision what is right and what is wrong in the social relations of men.

Having done these things, he devotes his intelligence to the manufacture of machines of destruction, to systems of government and taxation which will enable him to equip himself with many of these machines and to use them. Also, he takes a man and instructs him in the humanities of medicine and surgery. This man becomes skilled in the alleviating of pain and the mending of injuries. And this man, with a lot of other men and with many machines of destruction, are dispatched to Korea to travel up the Peking Road to Manchuria. His business is to see that the other men undergo the minimum of pain consequent upon such a journey. The object of this is to enable them to reach Manchuria, with their machines of destruction, in condition to inflict the maximum of pain upon some Russians they expect to find there. In brief, he mends the men that they may mar other men. The Russian surgeons, on the other hand, are doing precisely the same thing. The most striking difference between men and dogs is that of nationality. The difference between war and a dog fight seems to be one of machines to kill and surgeons to make well. The ends are the same, to kill, to kill swiftly and to kill to the uttermost.