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Japanese Army's Equipment Excites Great Admiration

Troops in Korea Highly Praised

***General Allen, U.S. Attache, Regards Arrangements to
Ensure Soldiers' Welfare as Unsurpassed***

PING YANG (Korea), March 5. —The Japanese soldiery and equipment seem to command universal admiration. Not one dissenting voice is to be heard among the European and American residents in Korea. On the contrary, favorable comparison is made with our own troops and the troops of Europe.

Dr. Wunsch, a German resident of Seoul and a man of military experience, was unmeasured in his praise of the "little brown men," the "dwarfs," as the Koreans have called them from old time. What Dr. Wunsch especially remarked was the lack of noise in the issuing of orders on the part of the officers. As he put it, there were practically no sounds at all. The Japanese soldiers executed maneuvers apparently without command. At least there were none of the bellowing of commands such as he had been accustomed to in his own experience.

American and British army officers, pleased though they are with the conduct of the men, are especially concerned with the equipment and commissariat. Confessing that their own soldiers would not be so quiet and orderly, they go on to enlarge upon the equipment of the men, and upon the whole system of transporting them, provisioning them and getting them to the front.

In the first place, food, luggage and everything in the way of baggage which must be carried with an army are done up in packages which can easily be handled by individuals unaided, and which, if needs be, can be carried on the backs of men. So there are no army wagons nor army mules. Pack horses and coolies do the work; and, though many Korean bullock carts have been put into service, there is no necessity for them.

The rice, which is the staple food, is done up in sixty-pound sacks. One coolie can carry a sack all day over the most rugged country. Two sacks go to make the load of a Korean pony, and from three to four sacks the load of a Japanese pony. Meat is put in one-half pound tins, eighty of which tins are incased in a box. One horse under three of these boxes carries one meat ration for a company. Four horses carry a meat ration for a battalion.

A sheet-iron cylinder, carried in sections, constitutes a camp stove. This stove is twenty-seven inches high and thirty inches in diameter. In this the fire is built and into it is fitted a sheet-iron kettle. Into this, in turn, is fitted a perforated kettle in which the rice is cooked—and cooked without scorching. One kettle will cook rice for one hundred men. Eight or nine such kettles will suffice for a battalion.

Sodium sulphate in tins is part of the soldier's outfit. It is to be doubted, in a country so fearfully unsanitary as Korea, if a drop of healthy drinking water can be found. So the sodium sulphate, in little flannel sacks, is placed in boiling water to precipitate the impurities, and the "little brown man" is thus given a larger opportunity of dying on the battle field and of killing Russians ere he dies. Certainly, so far as Japan is concerned, it is more economical for its soldiers to be filled with lead than with fever germs.

In small cotton bags, weighing little and occupying less space, are emergency rations. This ration is made of rice, boiled and then dried in the sun till each grain has shrunk to the size of a pinhead. Each soldier carries six of these rations in his knapsack. On a pinch they would suffice him for days; and always it must be remembered that rice is to the Japanese what bread is to us, and butter and meat to boot.

The soldier's kit is light and complete. Including 120 rounds of ammunition, it weighs 42-1/2 pounds. The kit of the American soldier weighs 55 pounds. I may quote General Allen as saying that the Japanese infantry is as well equipped as any in the world.

The soldier's mess pan is after the German pattern—aluminum and blackened on the outside. It will hold two rice rations, which, cooked in the morning, he may carry with him for the day. The water bottle, likewise of aluminum, holds a full pint.

There are two methods of carrying the kit. First, is the European knapsack on the back; second, and probably the better, is the American banderole—the blankets rolled and twisted over the shoulder and about the body.

In connection with this is a sort of narrow bag, open at both ends, six inches wide and four feet long, made of blue cotton drill, which likewise crosses the shoulder and winds about the body.

In Seoul was to be observed a rather curious thing—a revival of the old navy grog. Twenty gallons of saki (the Japanese wine made from rice) were distributed each day to a battalion. But I learned that only in Seoul was this grog-ration to be distributed. Once on the field the soldiers would have to content themselves with their boiled water purified by sodium sulphate.

A battalion varies in strength between eight and nine hundred men. Each battalion has a pack train of 180 ponies. This constitutes its camp transport and immediate provisions for a few days.

In addition to this, there is the regimental train, variable in size and composed of coolies, bulls, ponies, carts and anything that can move and carry weight.

Behind all this is the etappe service, or relay stations, the function of which is to keep food and munitions moving in a constant stream to the front from the base of supplies. This service is of the most vital importance. When it fails the soldiers at the front must break ground and fall back.

Everything depends on the firing line, but the firing line depends on the etappe service.

The Japanese army rifle is a trifle less than thirty caliber. One thousand four hundred and forty rounds of ammunition weigh 110 pounds; and in such quantities are packed into ammunition boxes. Two of these boxes compose a load for a pack pony. Chains at each end of the box loop on corresponding hooks on the pack saddle, so the loading and unloading of the ponies is simple and expeditious.

These ponies supply the firing line when the soldiers are fighting. Eighteen ponies will give each man of a battalion seventy additional rounds.

Returning to the opening paragraph, a slight emendation must be made. The praise for the conduct of the Japanese soldiers is not quite universal. The Koreans are beginning to grumble—that is, the people—and they have reason to grumble, though through no fault of the Japanese. The Koreans complain that goods are taken from them by the soldiers, for which they receive no pay.

The true inwardness of the situation is this: The Japanese military authorities requisition so much food and forage for which they pay a fair price. But the deal goes through the hands of the Korean officials. Now, the Korean official can give the Occident cards and spades when it comes to misappropriation of funds. The Oriental term for this is "squeeze." Centuries of practice have reduced it to a science, and in Korea there are but two classes—the squeezers and the squeezees. The common people, of course, as all the world over, are the "squeezees."

When the Japanese military authorities want food for the soldiers the Korean officials demand and receive from each family, say, two measures of rice. The Japanese soldier eats the rice, the Korean people furnish the rice, the Japanese Government pays for the rice and the Korean officials pocket the money.

The Koreans make another complaint. The soldiers take their chickens and eggs and do not pay for the same. The Koreans are a poor people, and this is really a severe hardship upon them; but, on the other hand, what soldier under the sun has ever done otherwise? Ever since war began and man domesticated the fowl, chickens and eggs have been considered lawful loot, and so long as man shall be irrational enough to fight wars, that long will the stomach and the ethics of the soldier remain unchanged.