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# FROM PORT ARTHUR TO MUKDEN WITH NOGI.

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DURING his tour of service as an attaché with the Japanese Army during the recent war in Manchuria, it was the writer's good fortune to be attached for part of the time to the 3rd Japanese Army, under General Nogi, and to have been present at the fall of Port Arthur and the closing days of the battle of Mukden.

In what follows it is proposed to indulge in some reminiscences and to endeavour to throw some light on the character of the Japanese soldier, whose wonderful and unexpected prowess aroused the attention and interest of the entire civilised world.

It may well be questioned whether any single military achievement in the world's history surpasses the victory of the Japanese at Port Arthur, which has been aptly termed "a monster heroism," by an imaginative writer. From Nanshan on the 26th of May until the capture of Wangtai Fort on New Year's Day, 1905, it was simply a daily affair of hammer and tongs for the Japanese soldier which put his fighting qualities to the severest test. Always on the offensive, hurled back time after time from the grim and frowning parapet and trenches of the famous fortress, he persisted in his work with dogged energy and unflagging zeal, until he triumphed over his stubborn enemy.

At Nanshan, thirty miles from Port Arthur, the Russians believed themselves in an impregnable position, and here they proposed to check any farther advance by the Japanese.

The position is an ideal one for defence and seems to have been intended by nature for the purpose. Located at the narrowest point of the Liatung peninsula, where the width from sea to sea is only about one and one-half miles, Nanshan, meaning South Hill, rises from the sea and from the low ground with bare smooth slopes that can be swept to perfection by rifle-fire. The profile of the Hill is slightly concave, so that there is no dead ground. Successive lines of trenches encircled the slopes, while the summits were crowned by redoubts and batteries armed with siege guns. Wire entanglements and mines had been freely provided, and even searchlights to guard against night attacks.

According to the text-books it should be impossible to carry such a position by frontal-attack, and yet this was accomplished by the Japanese. The fact that the work of the Japanese Artillery was of a very high order and that the attack was further seconded by a fleet

of gun and torpedo boats on the Japanese right flank, does not detract anything from the splendid work of the Japanese infantry, which, lying under a galling fire from early morning, patiently waited for the psychological moment which did not arrive until sunset.

From Dalny westward to the extremity of the Liatung peninsula the country is extremely hilly, I ought almost say mountainous, the hills being irregular, involved and with no well-defined direction. The highest elevations exceed 1,000 feet. After Nanshan the Russians fell back to a new hill position almost 12 miles west from Dalny, their line extending practically across the peninsula from sea to sea. The Gensan heights, nearly 1,000 feet above sea, was the centre and key of the position. On June 26th the Japanese carried these heights in a resolute attack, meeting with little loss. The Russians made desperate efforts to recover the position on July 3rd, 4th, and 5th, but without success. The fighting was very severe and included a night attack with bayonet fighting. The Russians again took up a new position several miles farther west, from which they were dislodged on July 27th. Their final position outside their fortress was the line of heights fronting the fortress, and only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles distant. Here the Japanese surprised them on the night of July 31st, and compelled them to withdraw within their forts, saving only a number of detached hill positions on their right and left flanks.

In all the hill fighting from Nanshan to Port Arthur the Japanese infantry habitually laid aside their knapsacks when going into action, and generally discarded their army shoes, preferring their native straw sandals, which they either made themselves from the matting in which rice is shipped or purchased from the canteens for a few sen. While the regulation number of cartridges carried on the march is 150, the infantrymen usually entered the fight with from 200 to 300 rounds, the extra ammunition being distributed before going into action.

Speaking of canteens, the Japanese vendors of soldiers' delights were quite as enterprising as those of any other nation, and it was difficult to get away from beer, sake and cigarettes. Many of the canteen merchants carried fairly complete stocks of clothing, stationery and knick-knacks, but the first three items were always well in advance, being often carried on donkey-back or by Chinese pack coolies when troops were on the march. Like everything and everybody within the sphere of operations of the army, these canteen merchants were under certain regulations prescribed by the War Department.

At Port Arthur the Japanese soldier was put up against one of the stiffest propositions known to military art, viz., to capture a permanently fortified position by an open assault. Here again most text-books would say impossible, or even worse. While the Japanese failed in their attempt, they came near enough to success to justify their leaders in undertaking the assault and to relieve them from any criticisms for having attempted the impossible. Their leaders knew the temper and quality of their men and the quality of the enemy, and had weighty reasons for their desperate endeavour to overthrow all recognised canons of military art. The famous August assaults must ever stand as among the most desperate affairs that soldiers of any land have been called upon to undertake. From early dawn of the 21st until daybreak of the 24th, the Japanese troops were hurled by companies, battalions, regiments, and brigades against the forts and supporting works on the front of attack in the endeavour to break

through that strong circle of defence. The effort was not wholly in vain, for the two Panlung forts remained in possession of the Japanese, but at what a cost! The Japanese themselves admit a casualty list of 15,000, confined largely to two divisions, which means over 40 per cent. for these two organisations. Many of the attachés present believe, however, that the losses were considerably more, and the numerous stories of companies and battalions practically wiped out of existence, with other contributory evidence, would appear to confirm this belief. Had the Russians possessed any enterprise or energy at this period there is no telling what they might have accomplished by a vigorous offensive against the Japanese after the failure of their terrible assaults. But with characteristic indifference they remained within their fortifications strengthening these and building new ones, and leaving the Japanese to repair their losses and to pursue their plans unopposed.

It will not be possible in the limits of a single brief article to recount the details of the siege which now followed. Regular siege methods on orthodox lines were forced upon the Japanese, who several times attempted to cut short the regulations and rules prescribed as long ago as Vauban, only to realise that, after all, the engineers' art cannot be wholly set aside in modern warfare even with such intrepid troops as the Japanese, who seemingly courted death rather than avoided it. Suffice it to say that before the fortress capitulated to the steady, slow and tedious measures of sapping and mining, the Japanese attempted two more general assaults, one at the end of October and one at the end of November. Although these assaults failed in their main object they were not wholly devoid of results and materially shortened the work of sapping which would otherwise have been necessary.

For the five months during which the siege lasted the fighting was constant, close and deadly. In their advanced position at the Panlung forts, taken in August, the Japanese maintained themselves against the concentrated fire of the Russians coming from only several hundred yards distance in front and flank. At this time the Russian artillery had scarcely been touched, and their heavy artillery destroyed daily the protective works undertaken by the Japanese during the night. It was ten days before the latter succeeded in making their position reasonably secure, and during this period they averaged 100 casualties daily in these two earthen forts. The retention of the Panlung forts under these conditions forcibly illustrates one striking feature of the Japanese soldier's character, viz., his tenacity. Ground once gained was rarely, if ever, yielded voluntarily. The only instance, and this a doubtful one, in which the Japanese were forced back, so far as the writer's knowledge goes, is that of Putiloff Hill during the battle of the Shaho. The Japanese themselves claim that they gave up the hill voluntarily, and were attacked while evacuating the position, but this claim requires further confirmation.

To return to Port Arthur, the Japanese lines were soon pushed up very close to the Russian forts using the flying sap. The real struggle commenced after mining operations had begun. At this period the lines were separated only by the widths of the ditches of the forts and the sniping was constant with daily casualties. But most nerve racking of all were the hand and bomb grenades which were freely used by both sides. Imagine, if you can, the nervous strain under which men must labour not knowing what moment a tin can, old shell or rapid-fire cartridge case, containing from one to five

pounds of high explosive, may drop in their midst, an affair of frequent occurrence. In this grenade warfare the Russians had the advantage, as their lines commanded those of the Japanese. To all this must be added the nightly counter-attacks of the Russians, made by small parties, which would charge the Japanese saps in flank, and after throwing a volley of hand grenades, disappear in the darkness. The nerve or rather lack of nerve of the Japanese soldier is something truly remarkable.

On the 18th of December the north Cockscomb fort was mined and successfully assaulted by the Japanese, being the third time that they had attempted the capture of the work. December 28th and 31st, respectively, the Erhlungshan and Sungushan forts were similarly disposed of, and it was evident that the end was approaching. During the nights of December 31st and January 1st, the Japanese pressed their advantage and captured the Chinese wall and a portion of the inner line of heights, the Russians resisting but feebly. On the evening of the 1st, a Russian parlementaire brought a letter proposing terms of surrender, and it was apparent that the struggle was over. Firing ceased at 10 a.m. the next day, pending the negotiations, and when night came the joyous banzais of the Japanese troops brought the glad tidings that the fearful contest had at last been brought to an end.

The siege of Port Arthur involved a fearful sacrifice of life, a result inevitable, considering the character of the operations. The best attainable figures give 65,000 as total killed and wounded on the Japanese side. As the combatant strength at the end of the siege did not exceed 80,000 men, this means 80 per cent. of the maximum strength of the army at its greatest. The engineer battalions suffered very heavily, as was to be expected, while many infantry units were almost wiped out. That is to say, of the original men coming from Japan nearly all had disappeared from such units. It must be understood, of course, that in the Japanese system of recruiting, reserves and conscripts were continually drafted and the fighting units kept up to approximately full strength at all times.

The Japanese at once commenced preparations for the transfer of the victorious army to the north to strike their decisive blow at Mukden. The burial of their dead, many of whom had lain where they had fallen since the August assaults, first engaged their attention, and soon funeral fires were seen at several points along the front of attack. Monuments were erected at many points in honour of those who had fallen, and the landscape was soon dotted over with these simple and impressive expressions of reverence for departed comrades. These monuments usually took the form of a plain unpainted shaft of pine set up on a pedestal of broken stone, surrounded by shells picked up from the field. On the shaft was placed an inscription commemorative of the organisation and the event.

The first battalions and regiments moved up to join the Shaho armies in the middle of January. The weather, which had remained unusually mild and open, changed soon after, and the last week of the month witnessed a heavy fall of snow, accompanied by zero temperature. The march of the army continued uninterruptedly, and by the middle of February, General Nogi's army had been concentrated about 15 miles to the west of Liao-Yang, behind the Hun River, and to the left rear of the Japanese lines on the Shaho. Many cases of foot soreness developed during the march, the troops being unused to

marching, although they had had plenty of fighting. The Japanese shoe is poorly made and of poor material. Added to this the nation is not accustomed to wearing shoes, and the infantry soldier preferred his native straw sandal at all times when the severity of the winter permitted. Even in the coldest weather many cases of the Chinese rawhide peasant shoes were worn by the troops. These are wide, soft, and comfortable, and when stuffed with straw, as was done, they suited the soldiers better than the unaccustomed leather shoe of Occidental countries.

The famous turning movement of General Nogi's army commenced on the 27th of February, on which day he moved out from his position, moving north between the Liao River and Mukden, feeling for the flank of the Russian position. No serious fighting occurred until the 6th of March, when the army was crossing the Sinmintun highway. Here the Russians made an attack to check the movement but were repulsed. On the 7th of March, General Nogi's army faced east astride the Sinmintun highway, one division being south of the road and two north, and endeavoured to break through the Russian defensive lines in the direction of the North Tombs. The centre division broke through the Russian lines at Ssu-fang-tai, but the right division could not advance owing to the Russian resistance. All attempts to advance on the 8th were also frustrated, the Russians holding desperately. On the 9th a dust storm, such as are common in winter in Manchuria, set in and prevented serious offensive undertaking on the part of the Japanese. During the night of the 9th and 10th, General Nogi's army executed a flank march to the north and on the morning of the 10th faced the railway only some 3,000 yards distant. At this time the Russians were in full retreat, having evacuated their defensive positions on the Shaho the night of March 7th-8th, and their sole concern was to cover their retreating troops and to prevent General Nogi from breaking through. For this purpose the Russians had taken up a strong defensive line along the railway, occupying the villages along the track and the railway embankment itself. This line held desperately and resisted all the attempts of the Japanese to break through. It was a magnificent sight, and a magnificent struggle. All day long the Russians could be seen in full view streaming along the road which lies along the railway track, battalions, batteries, train sections, squadrons, and disorganised stragglers, while the Japanese artillery poured a heavy fire on all points where the retreating troops came into view. But the Russian defensive line held firmly, and the Japanese infantry, after approaching to within 400 to 500 yards of the railway, could advance no farther. With the approach of darkness the retreating columns became more attenuated and soon nothing but stragglers filled the fields east of the railway. Not until then did the brave Russian defenders along the railway leave their positions, retiring by their left (south) flank, one battalion after another in good order. First the skirmishers could be seen to rise and fall back, joining successively the supports and reserves, and the whole forming up on the road and marching to the north. The long battle was over, and once more the Japanese remained victors on a hard fought field. General Nogi's army alone suffered nearly 20,000 casualties.

An inspection of the Russian line of retreat along the railway on the day after the battle terminated, revealed a sorry picture of despair and ruin. More or less panic must have seized the retreating

column, which had abandoned much of the transportation, the fields being filled with provision, ammunition, and pontoon wagons. The road itself was covered with abandoned equipment, the Russian soldiers having thrown away articles of winter clothing, haversacks, rifles, belts, and all kind of accoutrement in order to lighten themselves. Many of the Chinese villages along the front of battle had been set on fire, either by artillery or the carelessness of soldiers who had built large fires in the compounds to warm themselves at night, and the poor natives were seen returning to their ruined homes for which they may never hope to receive any compensation.

After Mukden, General Nogi's army, which continued to hold the extreme left of the Japanese line, made two advances, finally crossing to the west bank of the Liao River and taking up a front through Kang-ping and Chinchiatun, some 70 miles north of Mukden. Here it occupied a fortified line and remained in position until the conclusion of the peace negotiations, with no other excitement than the occasional clashing of hostile patrols operating between the fronts of the opposing armies. In the middle of May General Mitchenko made a raid around the Japanese left flank, marching well to the rear of the Japanese front but doing little harm.

In the weary months following Mukden the Japanese soldier took life very quietly. Billeted in the miserable Chinese villages, whose wretched inhabitants were crowded out to make room, the soldiers made themselves comfortable, cleaning up their filthy surroundings and passing the time away in beautifying the dirty compounds or enclosures by ditching and drainage, building walks, and constructing miniature Japanese gardens. What an object lesson it must have been to the Chinese, and it is hoped that the Japanese occupation will not be without some lasting benefit to the hygienic conditions of Manchuria. To still further occupy the soldier's mind, and no doubt as a safeguard against nostalgia, many fêtes and sports were organised. Every available national holiday or event of the war was seized upon to organise some form of entertainment. The national sport of wrestling was encouraged and scarcely a village occupied by troops that did not have its wrestling-ring, where the Japanese soldier daily practised his favourite sport, stripped bare save for the loin cloth. Regimental, divisional, and army fêtes to commemorate anniversaries in the history of the war also occurred, and some of these were of truly gigantic proportions and challenged the admiration of the foreigners, who never ceased wondering how such elaborate preparations were possible in far away Manchuria. One of the most notable of these events was the extensive fête given by the 9th Division at Chinchiatun, close to and within sound of the outpost firing line. This affair was to commemorate the anniversary of the capture of the Paulung forts, in which this division lost most heavily. The fête lasted two days, so as to enable the entire division to attend, and took the form of a Japanese fair, with a huge wrestling-ring, theatre, and many booths for the dispensating of food and drink, such as delight the Japanese palate. Soldiers dressed as geishas, dancers, pedlars, in fact all the good-natured and happy throng. At the wrestling-ring all the crack wrestlers, many of them professionals, competed for prizes, which were usually inexpensive packages of stationery, soap, cigarettes, towels, or handkerchiefs.

In his personal habits the Japanese soldier is distinguished from those of other lands by a number of noteworthy characteristics. He

is naturally of a very quiet and orderly disposition, and not given to roaming about when off duty as is the American. It was frequently remarked that from all outward evidences there were very few soldiers about; yet we knew in fact that the quiet villages held many thousands. When not on duty the Japanese soldier prefers to remain indoors sleeping, reading, or writing letters, of which latter they seem particularly fond. Sobriety is another most striking characteristic of the Japanese soldier, and although beer and sake followed closely behind the troops on the march, and the canteen was manifest everywhere, drunkenness was almost unknown. I can honestly say that while I have on several occasions seen a man slightly under the influence, I never saw a single case of a real drunk.

Cleanliness is another ingrained virtue of the soldier, and his efforts to obtain his daily bath, or rather wash, were both amusing and pathetic. Whenever the army halted bath tubs would be improvised from every available object, the large Chinese stone jars used for domestic purposes and empty sake casks being favourite forms. Water would be heated in their camp kettles or kerosene tins, and daily at evening, even in cold weather, with the thermometer below freezing, naked soldiers could be seen in and about their billets engaged in taking their baths. At headquarters and étape stations quite elaborate bathing facilities were fitted up according to the Japanese plan, and Chinese coolies engaged to carry water to fill the tubs or tanks.

In summer the soldier rises at 5.30, breakfasts at 6, and repairs to the place of assembly at 7 a.m. for some hours' drill or field exercises. While each company of infantry has buglers, no calls are sounded for assemblies, the men making their way individually to the place of assembly. This absence of music is one of the noteworthy features of the Japanese army, which seems quite strange to the foreigner. Dinner is at 12, after which all proficient soldiers had the day to themselves. The less proficient received two hours' drill or instruction from 3 to 5 p.m., supper is at 6, and at 9 the soldier retires to his kang to sleep.

He is an inveterate cigarette smoker and bibbler of tea. The cigarettes are mild and the tea is weak, and neither seem to affect the nerves, if indeed the Japanese can be said to have any.

On the march the Japanese soldier is a good weight carrier and capable of much endurance, but his gait is rather awkward. His body is rather long for his legs, which, with the short steps induced by wearing wooden clogs at home, combine to develop knee rather than hip action. The soldier marches with a perceptible drag as if he were perpetually tired, but in the language of the day, "he gets there just the same."

Considering the qualities which are deemed desirable in the soldier of the day the Japanese certainly seem to come as near to possessing these as any nation on earth. Intelligent and patriotic, calm and phlegmatic, brave and tenacious, they make ideal material for soldiers, and their achievements during the recent war need cause no wonder.