

I

FIRST GLIMPSES OF JAPAN

We left the United States from Seattle for Shanghai, China, sailing by the northern route, at one P. M. February second, reaching Yokohama February 19th and Shanghai, March 1st. It was our aim throughout the journey to keep in close contact with the field and crop problems and to converse personally, through interpreters or otherwise, with the farmers, gardeners and fruit growers themselves; and we have taken pains in many cases to visit the same fields or the same region two, three or more times at different intervals during the season in order to observe different phases of the same cultural or fertilization methods as these changed or varied with the season.

Our first near view of Japan came in the early morning of February 19th when passing some three miles off the point where the Pacific passenger steamer Dakota was beached and wrecked in broad daylight without loss of life two years ago. The high rounded hills were clothed neither in the dense dark forest green of Washington and Vancouver, left sixteen days before, nor yet in the brilliant emerald such as Ireland's hills in June fling in unparalleled greeting to passengers surfeited with the dull grey of the rolling ocean. This lack of strong forest growth and even of shrubs and heavy herbage on hills covered with deep soil, neither cultivated nor suffering from serious erosion, yet surrounded by favorable climatic conditions, was our first great surprise.

To the southward around the point, after turning northward into the deep bay, similar conditions prevailed, and at ten o'clock we stood off Uraga where Commodore Perry anchored on July 8th, 1853, bearing to the Shogun President Fillmore's letter which opened the doors of Japan to the commerce of the world and, it is to be hoped brought to her people, with their habits of frugality and industry so indelibly fixed by centuries of inheritance, better opportunities for development along those higher lines destined to make life still more worth living¹.

As the *Tosa Maru* drew alongside the pier at Yokohama it was raining hard and this had attired an army after the manner of Robinson Crusoe, dressed as seen in Fig. 1, ready to carry you and yours to the Customs house and beyond for one, two, three or five cents. Strong was the contrast when the journey was reversed and we descended the gang plank at Seattle, where no one sought the opportunity of moving baggage.

Through the kindness of Captain Harrison of the *Tosa Maru* in calling an interpreter by wireless to meet the steamer, it was possible to utilize the entire interval of stop in Yokohama to the best advantage in the fields and gardens spread over the eighteen miles of plain



Fig. 1. — Rainy weather costume, as worn in Japan and typical of those used under similar conditions in both Korea and China. The picture shows a group of Japanese rice field laborers with their most common tools.

extending to Tokyo, traversed by both electric tram and railway lines, each running many trains making frequent stops; so that this wonderfully fertile and highly tilled district could be readily and easily reached at almost any point.

We had left home in a memorable storm of snow, sleet and rain which cut out of service telegraph and telephone lines over a large part of the United States; we had sighted the Aleutian Islands, seeing and feeling nothing on the way which could suggest a warm soil and green fields, hence our surprise was great to find the jinricksha men with bare feet and legs naked to the thighs, and greater still when we found, before we were outside the city limits, that the electric tram was running between fields and gardens green with wheat, barley, onions, carrots, cabbage and other vegetables. We were rushing through the Orient with everything outside the car so strange and different from home that the shock came like a bolt of lightning out of a clear sky.

In the car every man except myself and one other was smoking tobacco and that other was inhaling camphor through an ivory mouthpiece resembling a cigar holder closed at the end. Several women, tiring of sitting foreign style, slipped off—I cannot say out of—their shoes and sat facing the windows, with toes crossed behind them on the seat. The streets were muddy from the rain and everybody Japanese was on rainy-day wooden shoes, the soles carried three to four inches above the ground by two cross blocks, in the manner seen in Fig. 2. A mother, with baby on her back and a daughter of sixteen years came into the car. Notwithstanding her high shoes the mother had dipped one toe into the mud. Seated, she slipped her foot off. Without evident instructions the pretty black-eyed, glossy-haired, red-lipped lass, with cheeks made rosy, picked up the shoe, withdrew a piece of white tissue paper from the great pocket in her sleeve, deftly cleaned the otherwise spotless white cloth sock and then the shoe, threw the paper on the floor, looked to see that her fingers were not soiled, then set the shoe at her mother's foot, which found its place without effort or glance.

Everything here was strange and the scenes shifted with the speed of the wildest dream. Now it was driving piles for the foundation of a bridge. A tripod of poles was erected above the pile and from it hung a pulley. Over the pulley passed a rope from the driving weight and from



Fig. 2. — Girl on rainy-day wooden shoes, carrying and entertaining child in the way most common in Japan.

its end at the pulley ten cords extended to the ground. In a circle at the foot of the tripod stood ten agile Japanese women. They were the hoisting engine. They chanted in perfect rhythm, hauled and stepped, dropped the weight and hoisted again, making up for heavier hammer and higher drop by more blows per minute. When we reached Shanghai we saw the pile driver being worked from above. Fourteen Chinese men stood upon a raised staging, each with a separate cord passing direct from the hand to the weight below. A concerted, half-musical chant, modulated to relieve monotony, kept all hands together. What did the operation of this machine cost? Thirteen cents, gold, per man per day, which covered fuel and lubricant, both automatically served. Two additional men managed the piles, two directed the hammer, eighteen manned the outfit. Two dollars and thirty-four cents per day covered fuel, superintendence and repairs. There was almost no capital invested in machinery. Men were

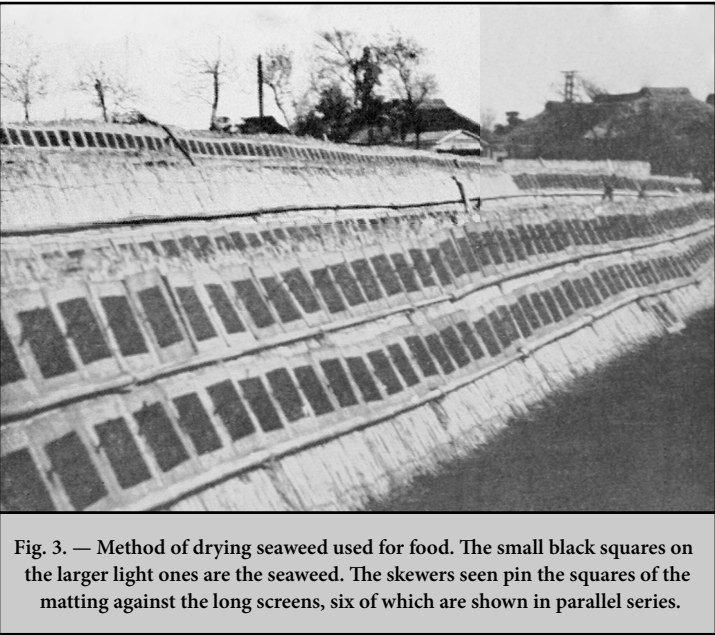


Fig. 3. — Method of drying seaweed used for food. The small black squares on the larger light ones are the seaweed. The skewers seen pin the squares of the matting against the long screens, six of which are shown in parallel series.

plenty and to spare. Rice was the fuel, cooked without salt, boiled stiff, reinforced with a hit of pork or fish, appetized with salted cabbage or turnip and perhaps two or three of forty and more other vegetable relishes. And are these men strong and happy? They certainly were strong. They are steadily increasing their millions, and as one stood and watched them at their work their faces were often wreathed in smiles and wore what seemed a look of satisfaction and

contentment.

Among the most common sights on our rides from Yokohama to Tokyo, both within the city and along the roads leading to the fields, starting early in the morning, were the loads of night soil carried on the shoulders of men and on the backs of animals, but most commonly on strong carts drawn by men, bearing six to ten tightly covered wooden containers holding forty, sixty or more pounds each. Strange as it may seem, there are not today and apparently never have been, even in the largest and oldest cities of Japan, China or Korea, anything corresponding to the hydraulic systems of sewage disposal used now by western nations. Provision is made for the removal of storm waters but when I asked my interpreter if it was not the custom of the city during the winter months to discharge its night soil into the sea, as a quicker and cheaper mode of disposal, his reply came quick and sharp, "No, that would be waste. We throw nothing away. It is worth too much money." In such public places as rail way stations provision is made for saving, not for wasting, and even along the country roads

screens invite the traveler to stop, primarily for profit to the owner more than for personal convenience.

Between Yokohama and Tokyo along the electric car line and not far distant from the seashore, there were to be seen in February very many long, fence-high screens extending east and west, strongly inclined to the north, and built out of rice straw, closely tied together and supported

on bamboo poles carried upon posts of wood set in the ground. These screens, set in parallel series of five to ten or more in number and several hundred feet long, were used for the purpose of drying varieties of delicate seaweed, these being spread out in the manner shown in Fig. 3.

The seaweed is first spread upon separate ten by twelve inch straw mats, forming a thin layer seven by eight inches. These mats are held by means of wooden skewers forced through the body of the screen, exposing the seaweed to the direct sunshine. After becoming dry the

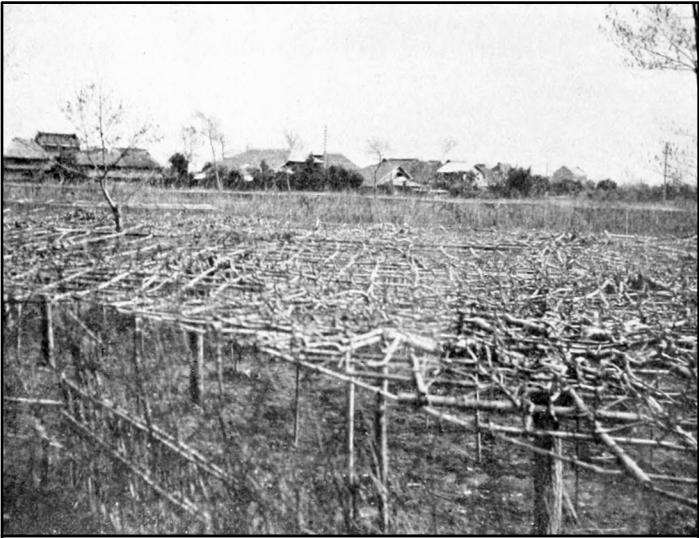


Fig. 5. — Looking down on an extensive pear orchard whose limbs are trained horizontally, forming an arbor completely shading the ground when in leaf, and placing all the fruit within reach of the hand from beneath.

rectangles of seaweed are piled in bundles an inch thick, cut once in two, forming packages four by seven inches, which are neatly tied and thus exposed for sale as soup stock and for other purposes. To obtain this seaweed from the ocean small shrubs and the limbs of trees are set up in the bottom of shallow water, as seen in Fig. 4. To these limbs the seaweeds become attached, grow to maturity and are then gathered by hand. By this method of culture large amounts of

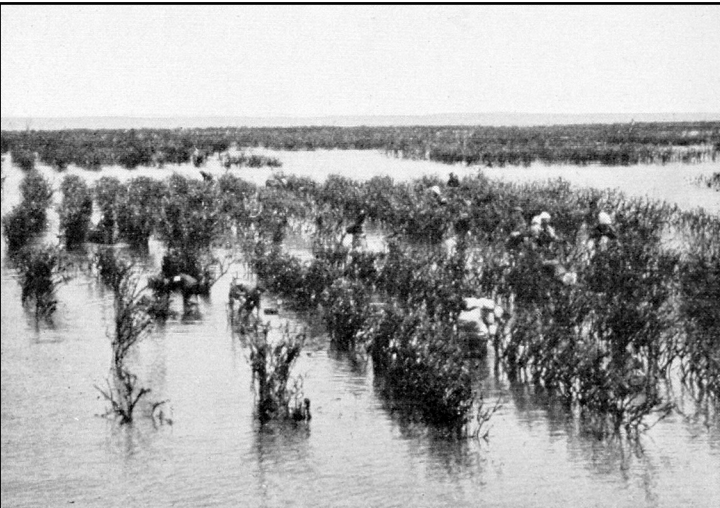


Fig. 4. — Section of shallow sea bottom planted to brushwood on which the edible seaweeds attach themselves and grow.

important food stuff are grown for the support of the people on areas otherwise wholly unproductive.

Another rural feature, best shown by photograph taken in February, is the method of training pear orchards in Japan, with their limbs tied down upon horizontal over-head trellises at a height under which a man can readily walk erect and easily reach the fruit with the hand while standing upon the ground. Pear orchards thus form arbors of greater or less size, the trees being set in quincunx order about twelve feet apart in and between the rows. Bamboo poles are used overhead and these carried on posts of the same material 1.5 to 2.5 inches in diameter, to which they are tied. Such a pear orchard is shown in Fig. 5.

The limbs of the pear trees are trained strictly in one plane, tying them down and pruning out those not desired. As a result the ground beneath is completely shaded and every pear is within reach, which is a great convenience when it becomes desirable to protect the fruit from insects, by tying paper bags over every pear as seen in Figs. 6 and 7. The orchard ground is kept free from weeds and not infrequently is covered with a layer of rice or other straw,



Fig. 7. — Low branching pear orchard with pears protected by paper bags, at Akashi Experiment Station, Japan

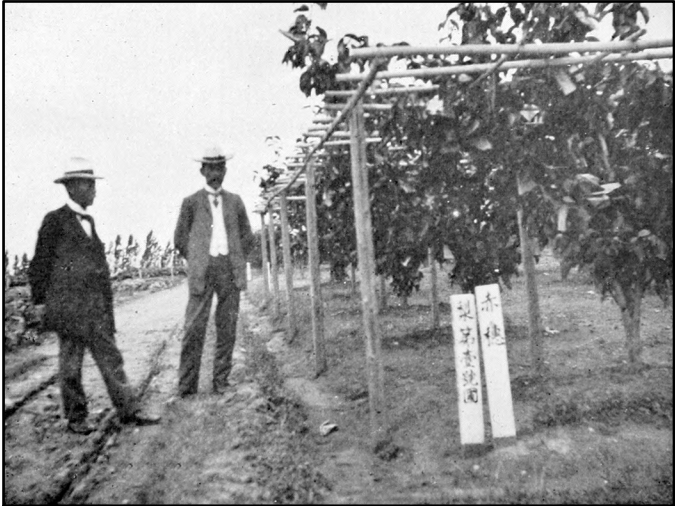


Fig. 6. — Pear trees at Akashi Experiment Station, Japan. Pears protected by paper bags. Special form of pruning advised by Prof. Ono, standing on the left, with Prof. Tokito. The trees branch below rather than at the level of the trellis.

extensively used in Japan as a ground cover with various crops and when so used is carefully laid in handfuls from bundles, the straws being kept parallel as when harvested.

To one from a country of 160-acre farms, with roads four rods² wide; of cities with broad streets and residences with green lawns and ample back yards; and where the cemeteries are large and beautiful parks, the first days of travel in these old countries force the over-crowding upon the attention as nothing else

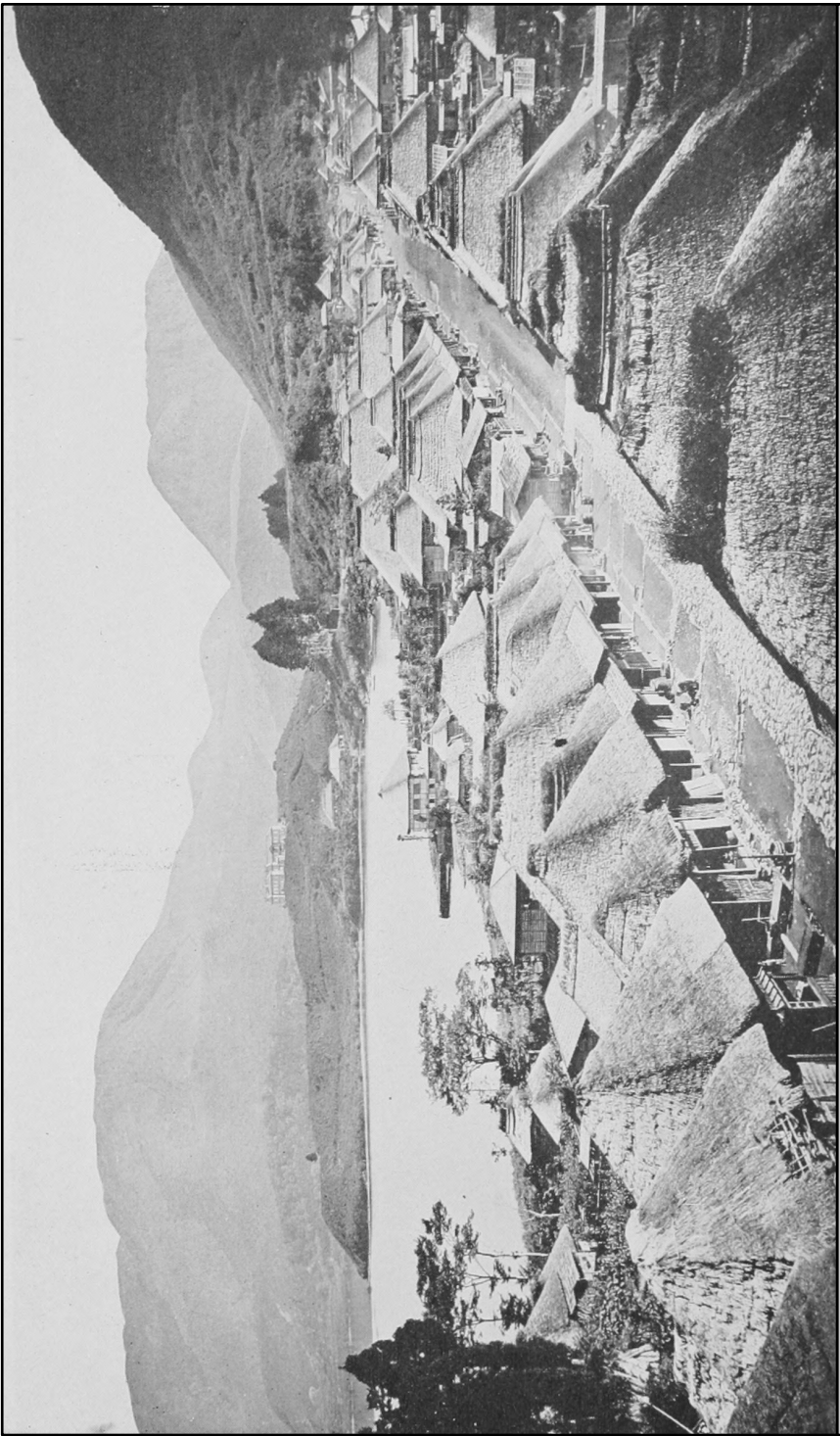


Fig. 8. — Street in a Hakone country village. The general absence of old forest growth on the hills recently cut over is characteristic of much of Japan.

can. One feels that the cities are greatly over-crowded with houses and shops, and these with people and wares; that the country is over-crowded with fields and the fields with crops; and that in Japan the over-crowding is greatest of all in the cemeteries, gravestones almost touching and markers for families literally in bundles at a grave, while round about there may be no free country whatever, dwellings, gardens or rice paddies contesting the tiny allotted areas too closely to leave even foot-paths between.

Unless recently modified through foreign influence the streets of villages and cities are narrow, as seen in Fig. 8, where however the street is unusually broad. This is a village in the Hakone district on a beautiful lake of the same name, where stands an Imperial summer palace, seen near the center of the view on a hill across the lake. The roofs of the houses here are typical of the neat, careful thatching with rice straw, very generally adopted in place of tile for the country villages throughout much of Japan. The shops and stores, open full width directly upon the street, are filled to overflowing, as seen in Fig. 9 and in Fig. 22.

In the canalized regions of China the country villages crowd both banks of a canal, as is the case in Fig. 10. Here, too, often is a single street and it very narrow, very crowded and very busy. Stone steps lead from the houses down into the water where clothing, vegetables, rice and what not are conveniently washed. In this particular village two rows of houses stand on one side of the canal separated by a very narrow street, and a single row on the other.



Fig. 9. — Small store full to overflowing; entire front opening flush with the street.

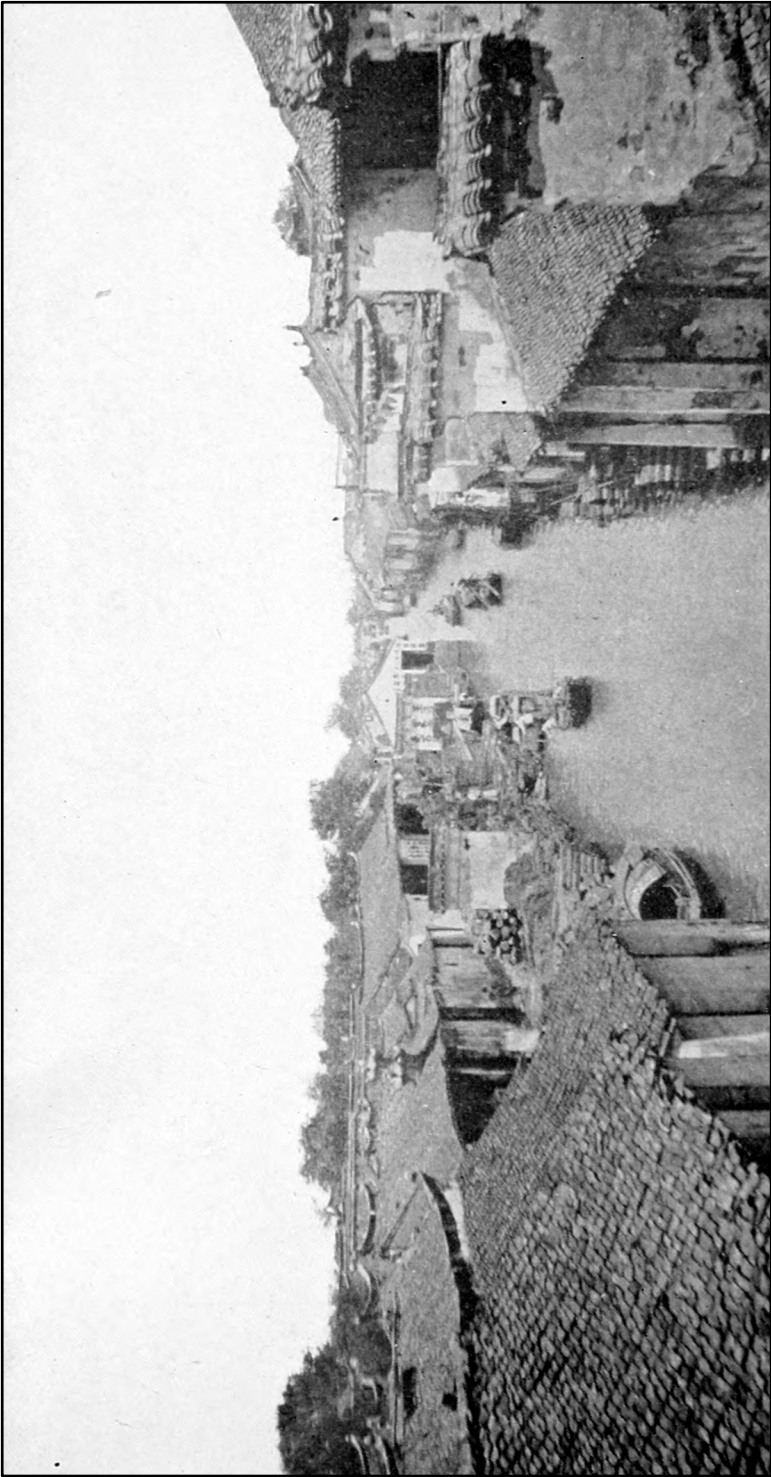


Fig. 10. — Chinese country village lining both sides of a canal. Section one-third of a mile long between two bridges, where in three rows of houses live 240 families.