

I knew but very little Japanese, and among the Japanese officers assembled in the mess house was one only who knew a little English. Therefore, as I was thirsting for knowledge upon military matters, of which the Imperial Interpreter did not know the technical terms, either in English or his own language, a good deal of time elapsed and much merriment took place before we got started to go round the Barracks, the merriment being caused chiefly at my wonderful attempts to express in the language of the Flowery Land the questions I wanted answered. But that was not the only cause of the fun but the fact that the Japanese always seem to see a joke in every thing, and laugh immoderately even at things which would produce quite a contrary effect among us more sober minded Europeans. For instance if you tell a Japanese that your father is seriously ill he will display a brood grin of pleasure, whereas if you inform him that either your father or his own father is just dead the chances are that he will simply roar with laughter. Under these circumstances it can easily be understood that when I hopelessly mixed up such words as "sentai" soldier, "dentai" regiment, and "daitai" battalion I caused much mirth. The officers seemed to imagine that I did it on purpose and laughed like anything at my wit, until I began to feel myself at length quite a wag. Indeed by the time we left the mess house I rather began to think that I had mistaken my vocation in life and that it was getting about time for me to start afresh as a humourist, something in the line of Mark Twain.

In the meantime I had, however, managed to pick up a little useful information concerning the organization of the Japanese army.

I discovered that a regiment consisted of three battalions, of which the strength was 600 men in peace time and 1,000 men in war time. A Division I found to consist of the following units: Four regiments of infantry, a cavalry regiment of 360 men in three squadrons, a battalion of engineers in three companies, a battalion of transport and a Brigade of artillery; this last consisting of nine batteries of six guns each, that is 54 guns in all.

There were, I found, twelve ordinary divisions in Japan and one Imperial Guard division.

The time of service for the men was three years with the colours; four years with the first army reserve and five years with the second army reserve,