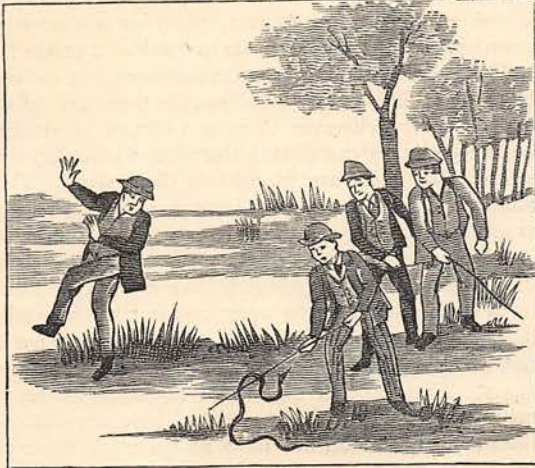


## RECENT PROGRESS IN JAPAN.



(From an original Japanese Drawing.)

SOME years ago, when Japan was first thrown open to commerce and intercourse with the outside world, the intelligence of the Mikado, the ingenuity of his subjects, and the measures taken to engraft European on native civilisation were in everybody's mouth. Japanese youths were sent to London and Paris for education, Japanese ambassadors were to be seen at our courts, Japanese goods flooded our *boutiques de luxe*, and a certain tide of emigration and enterprise flowed forth towards the land which offered the latest and the least familiar inducements to those who wished to try their fortunes in the newest sphere.

Japan, in fact, has been going "ahead," as Brother Jonathan would say, and making such changes that a person who was well acquainted with Yeddo in 1868 would hardly recognise it if he were landed there to-day. Its very name is altered to Tokio, which, however, will take some years yet before it is naturalised, either in business or geography. Such a one would be surprised to see dotted about among the Oriental edifices and exotic trees, tall factory chimneys, railway stations, displays of Manchester goods, and works of all sorts, presenting an extraordinary medley of European machinery and Japanese aims and ends. He would behold with astonishment foreign residents and *employés* admitted to the royal presence to offer new year salutations, and introduced by a chamberlain in a frock coat decorated with gold lace. Still more surprised would he be to see old men in overcoats and top-boots, walking about girt with two swords, and armed with the inevitable umbrella of the country. On all sides he would hear new names and see new institutions, and yet he would speedily discover old functions surviving under fresh titles, the same hearts beating beneath the strange garments, and the people virtually pretty much as they were when he left them.

First and foremost in national importance come the army and navy of a country, and the latter of these

commanded the first attention of the Mikado, as was natural from his insular position. The naval arsenal of Iokofska was founded in 1867, under the direction of M. Verny, a French engineer, who remained at its head till the end of 1875; and it employs 1,200 work-people, who are superintended by between eighty and a hundred officers. Thirty of these until quite recently were Frenchmen, but they have been dispensed with, and everything is now in native hands. The construction of this arsenal cost 1,400,000 piastres, and its annual expenses amount to about 300,000, but whether the receipts have yet counter-balanced this outlay is rather questionable. Its dry docks are capable of receiving the largest men-of-war, and are of incalculable value both to the national fleet and foreign navigation. The Mikado has been present several times at the launching of the great vessels built in its workshops, and has founded a branch establishment at Yokohama, the yearly cost of which reaches a total of 30,000 piastres.

The military arsenal of Yeddo only dates back as far as 1872, and is built on the site of an ancient palace belonging to Prince Mito, whose name it bears. Although not yet finished, carriages, harness, and everything requisite for field artillery are made there, with the exception of the bronze cannon themselves, which are cast at the foundry of Osaka, in the metalliferous and coal-producing "Black Country" of Japan. A manufactory of small arms and a central school of pyrotechny also stand in Mito's park, and the number of workpeople employed altogether varies from one to four thousand. Both here and at Iokofska pupils are received and trained to be foremen and engineers.

At a distance of three leagues from the capital, on the banks of a little river, a powder-mill has been erected, which makes use of four hydraulic wheels, occupies 150 men, and produces nearly half a ton of gunpowder daily. A vast system of fortification has been projected, which, if carried out, will embrace all the coast-line of Japan, and concentrate its strength on the side nearest to Asia.

Yeddo and Yokohama have been connected by a railway ever since 1872, and a costly line it was to make; but however agreeable it may be to the inhabitants of either city to be able to reach the other in less than an hour, there is not sufficient traffic to make it a commercial success. Another line is open between Kobé and Osaka, and one is being rapidly pushed on between the latter place (which we must remember is in the centre of the mining district) and Yeddo. Unhappily, however, the iron roads do not go by routes which enable them to bring the common produce of the country districts into the towns, and this to a great extent diminishes their use and value.

Telegraphic communication preceded that by rail by several years; one exclusively Japanese set of wires runs from Nagasaki to Hakodata, and as far as Satsporo, in the island of Yéso, while the Great Northern and Reuter lines link Yokohama with Europe by way of India and Siberia respectively.

The postal system is regulated with the utmost exactitude; stamps and even post-cards are in use, and the tariff exceedingly moderate, while the speed



DISCOVERY (from an original Japanese Drawing).

is about the same as can be expected in any English district which is off the lines of rail, and has to depend on a mail cart. The latter vehicle, however, is replaced in Japan by relays of mounted couriers, on account of the roads being both few and bad.

Traffic by water from point to point of the coast is carried on by junks, whose movements are as delightfully irregular as the winds that propel them, and also by small third-rate steamers, which were long ago discarded by some European company, and are finishing a rickety career by carrying goods and passengers from one Japanese port to another. A native company, called the Mitsu-Bishi, entered into rivalry with the American line between Yokohama and Shanghai, and by means of ruinously low charges contested it so successfully for a time, that the Yankees were beaten out of the field, and both sold their boats and transferred their officers to the local

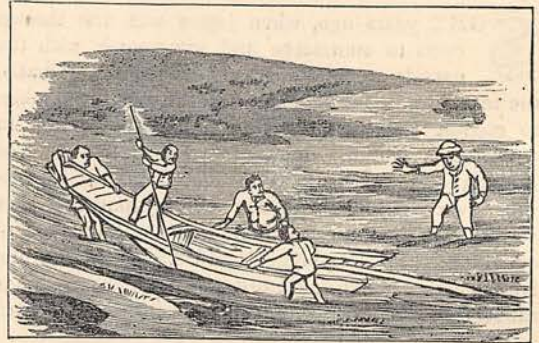


SURVEYING FOR A NEW RAILWAY (from an original Japanese Drawing)

directors, who are now proud of conveying the mails, and being the recognised *vade mecum* of intercourse between China and Japan.

Agriculture has offered irresistible fascinations to the Government bent on trying its prentice hand on everything, and a sort of fancy farm has been established at Yeddo, which is a model of cleanliness, if not of good management, provides a means of experimentalising, and costs far more than it brings in.

The forest wealth of Japan is immense, but cannot be made available for want of roads; trees are felled without mercy wherever there is a torrent or stream down which they can float to the place where they are wanted, but none are planted in their stead. The mineral riches of the country have probably been over-rated, though there certainly are extensive deposits of coal, silver, and copper. But the Japanese work their coal only by means of galleries, have no idea of sinking a shaft, and when the water comes into the workings, do not pump it out with any apparatus but a bamboo pump, the tubes of which are merely hollow canes. They bore or dig a little way down wherever metal crops up, or where they think there are indications of its presence, but have no scientific mode of procedure, and call every small excavation a mine.



NAVIGATION (from an original Japanese Drawing).

Since 1873, however, a change has come over the spirit of Japanese progress, and it dates from the return of Iwakura, the Prime Minister, from making a tour of the principal European Courts, which received him perhaps with less warmth than was his due. Since then Japan has nearly, or quite, left off polishing the outside of her cup and platter with the varnish of civilisation and show, and bent all her energies to the education of her children and the economisation of her resources. Elementary teaching appears never to have been lacking, for all children have been sent to schools where they learned to read and write the native character, and there has always been a secondary course of instruction for the higher classes, which is now thrown open to all who wish to avail themselves of it. Its principal feature was and is the acquisition of the Chinese language and writing, which unfortunately absorbs far too many years of school life, and it is to be hoped that a day will come when the latter will be abandoned and replaced by the study of the Roman character, which must necessarily be acquired when the pupils begin to learn English and French, for which, as well as for German, every facility is offered both in private and public schools. The chief of the

latter is at Yeddo, and is divided into upper and lower, pretty much after the fashion of a French Lycée. Its staff consists of thirty-nine professors, twenty-five of whom are Europeans, and there are about 350 resident students, who are provided with a species of uniform and all necessary books, while a good library and laboratories of different kinds are open for their use. The higher mathematics and the intricacies of English law are studied by dusky youths who would certainly astonish, and perhaps distance, their white-skinned rivals at any of our competitive examinations. By a recent enactment instruction in science is only given in English; those who wish to study German must enter the schools of medicine, and those whose tastes lead them to prefer French must devote themselves either to jurisprudence or the military profession. This regulation seems at first sight extremely arbitrary, but may perhaps have the good effect of making young Japan concentrate his efforts and ideas, instead of becoming Jack-of-all-trades and master of none.

The young Empress interests herself very much in the education of girls, and after contributing largely from her private purse towards the building of a normal school, presided in person at the opening of its first term, and made a little speech to the assembled pupils. The ladies at the head of this, and of most other girls' schools in Japan, are Americans, and they teach not only languages, especially English, but how to cut out clothes and do needlework of various species. Similar establishments to those we have described are springing up daily throughout the country, and the present attitude of Japan is that of a nation biding its time, and toiling incessantly at self-culture, so as to place



A FISH DINNER (from an original Japanese Drawing).

itself on an equal footing with Western races before competing with them in the same arena. It is worth noticing that the great feature of the native mind is the excellence of its memory; the reasoning powers are not largely developed, but this will probably come with time, after a few generations of culture and contact with the outer world.

All the necessities, and many of the luxuries, of life are obtainable in the Mikado's dominions in the greatest plenty and at the lowest possible price. Flocks and herds, it is true, are not abundant, but poultry is



AT SCHOOL (from an original Japanese Drawing).

plentiful, and the fisheries so productive as to form the preponderating element in the national diet. Rice, tea, and tobacco grow as if by magic in the rich volcanic soil; a kind of edible seaweed, much esteemed both there and in China, abounds on the coasts; honey is obtained in large quantities; and hemp of the finest quality, vegetable wax, and camphor form valuable articles of commerce.

The Japanese peasant, whether artisan or agricultural labourer, is usually an intelligent and ingenious individual, of gentle and genial manners, and decidedly superior to the generality of his class in other countries. He is more active than industrious, and patient rather than energetic; and though he fulfils without grumbling his appointed task, or does as much as will provide him with the day's food, at that point his efforts cease. He neither seeks to save money nor to improve his condition, and if he have a few coins to spare, spends them in amusement. Give him an order, and he asks for double the time necessary for its accomplishment, and will rather see you withdraw your custom than undertake the fatigue of quickening his pace. Enter a workshop, and you will see its occupants smoking, chatting, and relieving the monotony of these pursuits by an occasional stroke of the hammer or handling of a stone; then comes a discussion as to the best method of doing the work, it is recommenced, and time flies; the hour strikes, the day's "darg" is finished, and the premises are closed.

There are always excuses for idleness—heat, cold, rain, or above all, fêtes—and what wonder is it when the cost of living and bringing up a family is so small? Even in the towns an adult can have three meals a day, consisting of tea, rice, fish, and vegetables, at the rate of twelve shillings a month, and in the country can enjoy the same fare at an expenditure of less than £5 a year. A rude cottage, furnished with a few mats, earthen jars, and cooking utensils, a change or two of

cotton or silk garments, which he likes to keep neat and clean, are all he needs, and when these are attained he loves to doze or sit idle and watch the smoke of his fire curling about among the rafters of his roof. He seldom has a large family, and as childless persons almost always adopt other people's olive-branches, he never seems to have more than a couple or three children to provide for. At about fifty years of age he generally ceases to work, stays at home, and becomes the charge of his eldest son, who feeds and cherishes him as a pious duty till death removes him from his accustomed place at board and bed. Such an existence is by no means to be pitied; plenty of food, fresh air, and sunshine are his portion, and his lot is a far

more enviable one than that of the mill-hand who toils for daily bread in Leeds or Manchester, or struggles to keep the wolf from the door in the fever-haunted dens and alleys of Bethnal Green or White-chapel. Yet the toilers in our cities would hardly change if they had the chance, and if they could but put it into words, would tell you that they prefer living among

"Men their brothers, men the workers, ever seeking something new,  
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do,"

to a life of *dolce far niente*, in which there is no excitement for the restless brain, nor competition for the busy hands.



### THE "WORKMEN'S PET."



BY-THE-BY, you haven't seen our new coffee room yet," says my English host, as we turn our faces homeward after a long afternoon's sight-seeing among the Birkenhead dockyards.

"Well, suppose we go there now. It's early yet, and a cup of coffee will be no bad thing

after all this tramping about in the dust."

No sooner said than done. We mount the steep slope that borders the Mersey, trudge through Hamilton Square, with its little railed-in plot of green turf, pass along the front of the market, whose great round clock seems to stare after us like the eye of a Cyclops, and, turning a corner, halt in front of a large, substantial building, announcing itself in broad black letters as a "Coffee and Cocoa Room."

Our entrance through the swinging door at this early hour of the evening, when most of the regular customers have not yet "knocked off work," puts the "helps" behind the counter on the alert at once. There are four of them, two lads and two girls, all neatly dressed, and with a brisk, business-like air about them, which augurs well for the prosperity of the establishment. Our order of "two breads and two coffees" is promptly obeyed; and, seating ourselves in a corner near the door, we begin to look about us.

A long and tolerably high room, with white-washed walls and plank floor, both scrupulously clean; three or four gas-burners, throwing a bright hearty glow over the whole scene, that looks like a protest against the cheerless dimness outside; a row of long tables and benches, giving quite a school-room look to the interior; a narrow space for passage between them and the counter, on which stand ranged a tempting show of meat-pies, buns, rolls, tea-cakes, and what not, sentinelled by the huge shining urns, which, looming through clouds of steam, might pass for some new and improved variety of engine-boiler.

But the one thing that strikes us at the first glance is the orderly behaviour of the company. One and all are in their working clothes, and many ragged enough; but there is no sign of the boisterous swagger which the same men would instinctively assume in the bar of a tavern. Not an oath is to be heard, and the talk, though broken now and then by a hearty burst of laughter that it does one good to hear, seldom rises above the ordinary pitch. In this neat, well-kept room, they evidently feel themselves to be "on their good behaviour;" and very well they behave, as an intelligent workman will always do, when not persuaded by mischievous agitators that the exaggeration of his natural independence of manner into noisy roughness is the best way of showing that he is a free man.

By degrees the room fills, little groups of three and four dropping in, in quick succession, many with newspapers in their hands. The intrusive presence of our black broadcloth at first seems to throw a slight chill over our immediate neighbours, for no one is quicker to resent any fancied condescension than the man who is working his own way; but my friend's genial manner, and his readiness in making way for them, and helping them to arrange their cups and plates, soon puts all to rights, and before long we are all chatting away sociably enough.

"Tell 'ee what, master," says a stalwart ship carpenter on my right, "we ain't sitch fools as they thinks us, we ain't. Folks calls us beasts and brutes, and sitch-like, but there's a many on us never had a chance to be owt else. Says a gen'lman to me t'other day, 'My man, why don't you stay at home and save your money, instead of going and making a beast of yourself?' Says I to him, 'Well, master, if *you* was to come home some cold winter night, tired out w' yer day's work, and find the fire out, and the children cryin', and the wife washin' up, and the house all in a mess, and nowt for you to eat, mayhap you'd be glad of a snug place by the tavern fire, and a drop o' some'at hot, jist the same as me.'"