

RED TAPE IN JAPAN

They Have as Fine a Brand There as We Have Ourselves.

BUT IT IS NOT VERY COSTLY.

An Experience With the Circumlocution Office That Would Have Been Amusing to the Innocent Victim but For the Dread of the Expense.

There are many curious customs in Japan, and many things are done in that interesting empire according to methods that would be called topsy-turvy when judged by the standards of civilization in western lands. But in one respect the Japanese are fully abreast of any of the occidental countries, and that is in their ability to manipulate official red tape. The following incident, recounted by a correspondent of the Youth's Companion, admirably illustrates the point. He writes:

"Although I have lived long in Japan, I have tried to keep pace with western ideas. A corner in my compound bears witness to the fact that I once tried to make practical application of the modern maxim 'Help the poor to help themselves.' It worked out in a rather surprising way. A beggar asked me for money one morning, and I saw a way to help him without, as the expression goes, 'paperizing' him.

"There was a bad place just inside the compound gate that needed to be filled in with stones, of which there were plenty on the seashore near by. Here was a man who could transfer the stones to the compound for the 30 sen (15 cents) that he had asked of me. The man fell in with the plan cheerfully and set to work.

"The job was about completed to his satisfaction and mine when a policeman, who appeared on the scene, asked my man if he had received permission to remove the stones. The workman referred the officer to me, and I had to confess that I had not thought it necessary. Evidently the officer thought otherwise, for I was politely but firmly told that I might secure a permit by applying at the city hall.

"To the city hall I went, knowing that it is not wise to trifle with the regulations of the police department. From there I was referred to the provincial building. As I was personally known to the governor of the province, I sent my card into him, only to learn that he was absent. The lieutenant governor, however, said he would be glad to receive me. That courteous gentleman was going to pass the whole thing by, but thought it well first to speak of it to the department of public works.

"Now, the department of public works had an efficient head, who believed in letting nothing go at loose ends. He announced that I must fill in a certain form in duplicate, making formal application for the stones. Then two maps would have to be drawn, showing where the stones had been found and the place to which I wished to remove them.

"The board of public works stood ready to make the maps—at my expense. There was nothing to do except to agree to this arrangement, since I had already had the stones moved. I thanked the lieutenant governor for his assistance and withdrew.

"In a day or two a messenger came with the maps and forms requiring my signature. After that they were sent to the city hall. Then another messenger took them to the governor for his signature. One set was filed at the city hall and the other at the office of the executive.

"In due time notification came by special messenger that I was permitted to remove the stones—which every one knew I had done a week before. All that prevented me from thoroughly enjoying the whole affair was the thought of the bill that I should receive from the department of public works.

"After several weeks of suspense I was notified to appear before the treasurer, at city hall, to pay my indebtedness to the municipality. Armed with my bank book, I appeared at city hall. What was my surprise and relief to find that the bill for all this red tape and infinite trouble amounted to 11 sen, equal to about 5½ cents in good American money."

Value of an Inch of Rain.

Every inch of rainfall above four inches in the Dakotas, California, Washington, Kansas and Nebraska in May and June means an increase of \$15,000,000 in the wheat crop. Every inch of rainfall above three inches in July in Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Iowa, Ohio and Nebraska increases the value of the corn crop by \$180,000,000. These figures are compiled by E. J. Cragoe for the Journal of Geography.

Hollow Shafts.

By careful experiments it has been proved that a solid column subject to bending strains is no stronger than a hollow one. Consequently all iron shafts are made hollow, and the steel shafts which drive the screws of steamships have a hole bored down the center so that the weight may be reduced.

Penny Weddings.

Until 1645 marriage feasts, known as "penny weddings," were held in Scotland. Each guest paid a penny or a small sum of money to defray the expenses of the feast. If any money was left over it went toward the furnishing of the new home.—Exchange.

Idleness wastes a fortune in half the time that industry makes it.—Samuel Smiles.

LITERARY HYPOCRITES.

Here's a Writer Who Frankly Admits He's One of the Clan.

How many of us if we were really honest could make a list of great books that we have tried to enjoy and couldn't rise to?

We have for our own part a greater sin than that on our conscience. There are a number of books that we habitually pretend we have read which we have never read at all. They are great books, we suppose. At least we've heard a lot about them and read a lot about them, and people who assume to know say they are great books. Some of them we have tried to read and couldn't read, but we have pretended at one time or another to have read all of them. Here is our list of shame:

"Tom Jones." We have tried to read it four times and could never get five pages into it.

"The Vicar of Wakefield." We have attempted it at least six times and taken the count in the first round every time.

"Dante's Divine Comedy." We have been going against the Cary translation, which we bear as a good one, at least once a year for twenty years, and we can't get interested in it. Yet up to the present moment we have always pretended that we had read all of it and liked it.

"Don Quixote." We have read a little of it, and we know all the usual things that are said about it, and we even wrote some stuff about it one time, saying all the things that are usually said about it, for which we got \$25, but we don't really like it. It puts us to sleep; it seems long drawn out and clumsy to us.

"Boswell's Life of Johnson." We never read any of it. But we have pretended to and have pretended at times to quote incidents from it and have got away with the incidents.

We have always pretended that we were familiar with Walt Whitman's poetry, but as a matter of fact we never read anything through, excepting "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed."—Don Marquis in New York Sun.

THE TREE ON THE ROOF.

An Old Building Custom to Propitiate the Pagan Gods.

Did you ever stop to think why a bit of ornament in the form of conventionalized fruit, grain or flowers is almost invariably added to the gable of a Gothic building and very frequently to the gable of any other type of building? Do you know why the lightning rods of our grandfathers were branched at the ends like little trees and why the old-fashioned Scandinavian, Danish and German contractors contrived to fasten a branch of a tree or an ear of corn to the topmost peak of a house that has progressed so far in the course of construction that the rafters are in place? Usually the contractor laughs sheepishly when he is asked about the matter, giving no other reason than that his father always provided the birds with some grain or offered them a green branch to rest in.

The fact is that the birds have nothing whatever to do with the custom. It is purely religious in its significance and entirely pagan. It had its beginning before Christianity was "inflicted on the barbarians of the north." The gable of a building was exposed to both wind and lightning, so the gods must be propitiated. For Wotan there was a small evergreen tree and for Thor there was a bunch of flowers. If the favor of the god had been invoked while the house was still incomplete, the ceremony must be finished the day the house was done by the burning of the little tree or the withered flowers. Then a bunch of grain was tied to the gable to feed the white horse of the death god, so that he would hasten on his journey without stopping at that particular house.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Homemade Gas.

Spanish peasants living in the cork oak region use homemade gas obtained from cork refuse. As described by one authority, the process consists in filling several large teakettles with the waste bark and placing each in turn over the fire during the evening, burning the volatile gas as it escapes from the spouts. The carbonized residue forms the fine black-brown pigment known to commerce as "Spanish brown."

His Golf Prize.

When the Duke of York was living in Edinburgh in 1681 he was told that a certain shoemaker named Paterson was the best golfer player in Scotland, and him, the duke, later James II., chose as partner in a foursome, winning a huge stake. He promptly turned over the money to Paterson, who forthwith built a house in which the duke placed a stone with a Paterson crest bearing the motto, "Far and Sure."

Always Wrong.

Manager—I'm disgusted with the mistakes that new man makes! He gets everything halled up. Assistant Manager—Oh, well, some of the best ones are that way at the beginning. He may bring home the bacon yet. Manager—He won't unless we send him for ham.—Judge.

His Motive.

Judge—Why did you commit a second theft after you had just been acquitted of the first one? Prisoner—I had to pay my lawyer, your honor.—Boston Transcript.

Their Work.

"What a noisy clatter children do keep up at the table!" "They certainly do put the din to dinner."—Baltimore American.

ART IN BOOKBINDING.

How Miss Lahey Won Mercer, the Master, For Her Tutor.

A woman who spent ten years and all the money she had in the world to become a skilled bookbinder is Marguerite Duprez Lahey. After studying with the most skilled tooler in Paris, says the American Magazine, Miss Lahey went to the world's greatest craftsman, M. Mercier.

M. Mercier was a man of large wealth and broad culture. He tooled for the love of it in his beautiful Paris home. His only pupil was his only son. No one in the Latin quarter had dared to penetrate M. Mercier's atelier. Undaunted, this American girl, armed with the "Life of Fragonard, by Pierre de Nolac," the toll of years and which had earned M. Domont's praise, went to M. Mercier's home.

The master was at his country seat. "Is this your work?" cried his son, when Miss Lahey had disclosed the volume. "Leave it with me. I will show it to father. It will please him to see such strong work."

"And now what do you want of me?" asked the master, when tremulously she called later for the book and Mercer had sent his praise.

"To work with you."

"Good! I take you!" Three times a week for two summers she worked under Mercer's supervision, the master tactfully refusing the pupil's proffered money.

"Perfect!" he said, when she had finished Prosper Merimee's "Chronicle of Charles IX."

Before this triumph her gold tooling on a volume of Frederic Masson's "Napoleon and Women" procured for her the work of the late J. P. Morgan's library. This was in 1908—the turning point of her unique career. Here is the distinction of having designed, tooled and bound the cover of Mr. Morgan's personal copy of the catalogue of his world famous Chinese porcelain collection.

BREAK YOUR MATCH IN TWO.

A Suggestion That Became a Rule in Forest Fire Prevention.

One day late in June a man in a room on the seventh floor of an old fashioned brick building in Washington, holding a sheaf of telegrams in his left hand, was busy with his right tacking red headed pins out of his mouth and sticking them into little irregular blocks of green ink scattered over a large white wall map of the United States.

"The big problem," he said, taking a fresh pin out of his mouth and turning sidewise to his assistant, "is to get at the fellow who knows what conservation is but forgets to apply it when he lights up a cigar in the woods."

The assistant sat at a flat topped oak desk in the middle of the room, struggling through a mass of reports from field men in the endeavor to find suggestions for a set of fire prevention "rules."

"Well, what do you think of this?" he said, holding up a report from the Pacific northwest: "Break your match in two before you throw it away."

The other man stuck the last red pin into the map, reached for his pipe and lighted it.

"Let's see," he said. He snapped the burning match in his fingers. As the pieces dropped to the floor he uttered a sharp exclamation and tenderly licked the index finger of his left hand.

The assistant laughed. "That's the idea!" he said. "You've got to blow it out before you break it or get burned."

So this suggestion became No. 1 of a set of ten rules which the forest service sent to 6,000 newspapers at the beginning of the summer's fire season in the national forests.—Outlook.

Sandwich's Wonderful Drum.

The eccentric Lord Sandwich had, according to his biographer, a strange passion for the thunder of big drums, for the gratification of which passion he had caused the entire side of one large music room in his mansion at Hinchbrook to be covered with parchment, so that when it was struck with a massive stick it gave out a roar sufficient to terrorize any sensitive soul. Many who heard this drum once struck positively declined ever to enter the apartment again lest they should be given a second performance.—St. Louis Republic.

Our Biggest Industry.

Measured by the number of persons employed, what is the country's biggest manufacturing industry? Lumbering, with its 48,000 sawmills, its \$1,000,000,000 investment in these plants and its employment of 605,000 men to operate them. This does not include, says the Nation's Business, the standing timber, which brings up the total investment to \$2,500,000,000.—Wall Street Journal.

Good Start.

"I'm going to start a comedy company on the road in a couple of weeks," said the theatrical manager.

"What play?" asked the critic.

"Oh, I haven't that written yet, but I heard a good joke today that we can use in it."—Exchange.

Beat Him.

"My ancestors came over in the Mayflower," announced the man who prides himself on his blue blood.

"Huh!" snorted the man of red copesules. "Mine sailed in the ark!"—Dallas News.

Not Acquired.

N. Read—How you stutter! Did you ever go to a stammering school? J. Terry—N-n-no, sir. I d-d-d this n-naturally.—Brooklyn Life.

To ease another's heartache is to forget one's own.—Abraham Lincoln.



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