

National Theatre, Lett popular plays are presented. These resemble Russian popular plays in their tenderness and naturalness. The people are as hospitable as the Russians, and have thrown their capital open to every other nation. Here, too, the crews and masters of foreign vessels amuse themselves in the harbor cafés after the Reval fashion; but the Letts, instead of going their way apart like the Esthonians, mingle with their stranger-guests and the numerous Russian refugees who have found sanctuary in their capital. The latter

now call the Dvina metropolis 'Little Petrograd.' The government encourages them to spend their money freely, and they welcome the privilege, trying to forget in the revelry of the Lett capital the nightmare from which they have escaped at home. You find them at 8 P.M. in the opera, at 11 P.M. supping in a fashionable restaurant, at 1 A.M. in some fashionable gambling-parlor; then the long procession of taxis starts down Elizabeth and Suvorov streets, where the bright lights of cabarets and dancing-halls burn till dawn.

## UNVISITED JAPAN. I

BY J. W. ROBERTSON SCOTT

From *The Daily Telegraph*, August 1, 6, 8  
(INDEPENDENT CONSERVATIVE)

THE name of Yamaguchi prefecture, which is at the extreme southwest of the mainland, is not so familiar as the name of its port, Shimoneseki. I propose to set down some notes of a journey by ricksha, motor, and afoot, from Yamaguchi along the northern coastline, where there was no railway, to Matsue, forever famous as the home of Lafcadio Hearn.

At our first stopping-place, I saw a photograph showing a Buddhist priest engaged with school girls in tree-planting. Not only schools and young men's associations, but other organizations, acquire merit by helping the good work of reforestation. Floods, due to the denudation of the hills of trees, do an enormous amount of damage. The imagination of the tourist is caught by the fact that there are four earthquakes a day in Japan, and that within a twelve-

month fires may destroy 400 acres or so of buildings; but floods cause much greater loss of life and property. Every year on an average floods drown 600 people and cause a money loss of a million and a quarter yen. These appalling figures do not include the loss of life by typhoons and tidal waves.

I visited an ex-governor in retirement in a hamlet. He was living very comfortably on £150 a year; but that was in the early days of the war. It is almost incredible how cheaply people could live in Japan in the old days. A little more than a quarter of a century ago, the family of a friend of mine, now of high rank, was living in a county town on ten shillings and sixpence a month. There were two adults and three children. Rent was half a crown and the rice bill was nearly four shillings.

I stopped to watch a farmer's wife and daughter threshing in a barn by pulling the rice through a row of steel teeth, the simple form of threshing implement which is seen in slightly different patterns all over Japan. It is the successor of a somewhat similar contrivance of bamboo stakes. The women told me that one of them could thresh fourteen bushels a day. The steel implement cost five shillings from traveling vendors, but only half that from the cooperative store, and, happily, rural Japan is full of cooperative stores. While we talked, the farmer appeared. I remember that I apologized to him for unwittingly stepping on the threshold of the barn, that is, the grooved timber in which the sliding doors run. It is considered to be an insult to the head of the house to tread on the threshold, as in some way 'standing on the householder's head.' But, as I was a young man, he viewed my ill manners lightly. This man had a bamboo plantation, and he told me that the bamboo would shoot up at the rate of more than a foot in twenty-four hours. (Last month I measured the growth of a shoot of a Dorothy Perkins rose, and found that it averaged about a quarter of an inch in twenty-four hours.)

We ate our lunch one day in the headman's room in the village office. Hanging from the ceiling was the sealed envelope, to be opened on receipt of a telegram. Some member of the village staff always slept in that room. The envelope contained instructions to be acted upon if mobilization took place. Among odds and ends of information which the headman gave me was a fact about grave-digging. If there was in the neighborhood no member of a 'special tribe,' to which grave-digging was usually relegated, it was the duty of neighbors to dig graves. A community's displeasure was marked by neighbors refraining from helping to dig an unpop-

ular person's grave. (One might have expected to hear that such a grave would be dug with alacrity.) Families which had run counter to public opinion had to apologize before they could get neighborly help at the burial of their dead.

I was wakened one morning by the voice of a woman earnestly praying. She stood in the yard of the house opposite the inn, and faced first in one direction and then in another. A friend of mine once stayed overnight at an inn on the river at Kyoto. In the morning he saw several men and a considerable number of women praying by the water-side. They were the keepers and inmates of houses of ill fame. The old Shinto idea was that, at other times than festivals, prayers might be made anywhere, for the god was at the shrine at festivals only. Nowadays some old men go to the shrine every morning, just as many old women are seen at the Buddhist temples daily. Half the visitors to a Shinto shrine, an educated man assured me, may pray; but in the case of the other half the 'worship' is 'no more than a motion of respect.'

At a county town I found a library of 4000 volumes. They were largely an inheritance from the feudal régime, and included almost no foreign books. Wherever I went in Japan I could not but note the clusters of readers at the open fronts of bookshops. It is not generally known that the percentage of illiteracy in Japan is lower than that of the United States. This fact is the more striking when it is remembered that the ideographs greatly prolong the educational course. The fact reminds one of Professor Gilbert Murray's remark that English spelling entails a loss of one year in the child's school time. In the Japanese elementary school course no more than 1300 ideographs are used. The newspapers employ about 2000, and are trying to reduce the number,

but many of the types have explanatory characters attached to them.

On one day's journey I had for the first time in Japan a ricksha with wooden wheels, and in the hills I passed a man kneeling in a 'kaga,' the old-fashioned litter. My companion told me that it was a rare thing for a foreigner to pass that way, and that he had difficulty in understanding what people said. I met a company of strolling players, — a man, his wife, and two girls, — all with clever faces. I saw in a tree a doll put there by children who believed that they could secure by so doing a fine day for an outing.

At a shop I made a note of the signs, the usual strips of white wood, about 8 by 3 inches, nailed up perpendicularly with the inscriptions written in black. One sign was the announcement of the name and address of the householder, which must be shown on every Japanese house, a second stated that the place was licensed as a shop; a third that the householder's wife was licensed to keep an inn; a fourth that the householder was a seller of silk-worm cocoons; a fifth that he was a member of the coöperative credit society; a sixth that he belonged to the Red Cross Society; a seventh that his wife was a member of the Patriotic Women's Society; the eighth, ninth, and tenth, that the shopkeeper was an adherent of a certain Shinto shrine, and had visited three shrines and made donations to them. An eleventh proclaimed that he was of the Zen sect of Buddhism. Finally, there was a box, in which were stored the charms from various shrines, charms against fire, to bring home a stray cat, to keep off epidemics, and so forth.

I passed a company of villagers working on the road for the local authorities. The laborers were chiefly old people, and they were taking their task very easily. Farther along the road men and

women were working singly. It seemed that the laborers belonged to families which, instead of paying rates, preferred to do a bit of road mending. The work was done when they had time to spare. As I passed these people I saw a beautiful tree in red blossom. The name given to it is 'monkey slip,' because of the smoothness of the skin, which recalled the name of that very different ornament of suburban gardens, 'monkey puzzle.'

During this journey we recovered something of the conditions of old-time travel. There were chats by the way, and conferences at the inn in the evening and in the morning concerning distances, the kind of vehicles obtainable, the character of their drivers, the charges, the condition of the road, the probable weather, and the places at which satisfactory accommodation might be had. What was different from the old days was that, at every stopping-place but one, we had electric light. Part of our journey was done in motors, driven by young men in blue cotton tights, at too high a speed considering the curliness and narrowness of the road by which we crossed the passes. The roads are kept in good condition, but they were made for hand-cart and ricksha traffic.

We passed an island on which I was told there were a dozen houses. When a death occurs a beacon fire is made, and a priest on the mainland conducts the funeral ceremony. We passed, at one of the fishing hamlets, the wreck of a Russian cruiser which came ashore after the battle of Tsushima. Two boat derricks from the cruiser served as gateposts at the entrance of the school playground.

The use of dogs to help to draw rickshas is forbidden in some prefectures, but in three stages of our journey we had the aid of robust dogs. During this period, however, I saw attached to rickshas we passed three dogs that did not

seem up to their work. Dogs suffer when used for draught purposes, because their chests are not adapted for pulling, and because the pads of their feet get tender. The animals we had were treated well. Each ricksha had a cord with a hook at the end attached to it, and this hook was slipped into a ring on the dog's harness. The dogs were released when we went down-hill, and usually on the level. Several times during each run, when we came to a stream or a pond, or even a ditch, the dogs were released for a bath. They invariably leaped into the water, drank moderately, and next, if the water was too shallow for swimming, sat down in it, and then lay down. Sometimes a dog temporarily at liberty would find on his own account a small waterhole, and it was comical to see him taking a sitz bath in it. When the sun was hot, a dog would sometimes be retained on his cord when not pulling, in order that he might trot along in the shade below the ricksha. The dog of the ricksha following mine usually managed, when pulling, to take advantage of the shade thrown by my vehicle. A ricksha-puller told me that he had given sixteen shillings for his dog. Dogs were sometimes sold for one pound, or even thirty shillings. The difficulty was to get a dog that had good feet and would pull. But further notes of this trip in an unfamiliar part of Japan must be deferred for another article.

In out-of-the-way parts of Japan, like this Shimane and Tottori coast, along which I was passing by ricksha and motor, the carved stones by the roadside are always interesting. In this region I was struck by the number of memorials to men who had introduced the sweet potato into their localities. One stone was cut in the shape of a potato. Now and then a wayside monument was in memory of a famous wrestler. I also saw stones in memory

of steeds which perished in Manchuria. At one spot, where we rested at midday, the innkeeper did not remember any foreigner passing that way since his boyhood. In this part it took nearly four days for a Tokyo newspaper to arrive. I noticed several rice-fields no bigger than a couple of table-napkins. I frequently saw a woman at work in the fields with a child on her back. Near one farmhouse where a bull was tethered, children were playing round it. Why are the Japanese bulls so friendly? I often noticed bulls drawing carts and behaving as sedately as donkeys.

At one village office I looked through the expenditure of the village agricultural association. Five pounds had been spent on a cattle-fair, and ten shillings monthly to provide a series of lectures. A sovereign had been laid out to purchase for members good seed of the giant radish, called *daikon*; it runs to two or three feet long, and is as thick as a man's wrist. On a children's campaign against the insects preying on rice there had been an expenditure of two pounds, ten shillings. It seems the children were paid four *rin* — a *rin* is the tenth of a farthing — for every ten little clusters of eggs. For ten moths the reward was two *rin*. One pound had been invested in helping young people to attend lectures at a distance. All this was for a commune of 3000 people. There had been no police offenses during the year.

Several young men passed us on bicycles. They were wearing the wooden footgear called *geta*, which they found no greater impediment than rural Hollanders' experience when awheel with *klompen* on their feet. It was a market day when we neared railhead, and many folk were walking in their best clothes. Of fourteen umbrellas that I counted used as parasols to keep off the sun, only one was of the Japanese paper sort. All the others were black

silk and steel-ribbed in foreign style, except for a crude embroidery on the silk. It was as much as our ricksha men could do to move through the dense crowd of rustics in front of booths and shops; but once more I was impressed by the imperturbability and natural courtesy of the country people. At the station quite a number of farmers and their families had assembled, not to travel by the train, but to see it start.

Before taking to the train, let me pay my tribute to the ricksha, or, as it is usually called, *kuruma*. On these pneumatic-tired vehicles it seems possible to travel almost an indefinite distance. If the country be hilly, one has a second *kuruma* man, who pushes behind, or acts as brakeman, as required. One has no difficulty whatever in traveling thirty miles a day. I have done so for more than a week on end. Indeed, in my experience country *kuruma*-pullers have always been anxious to trot farther than I was willing to be carried in the twenty-four hours. In hot weather the tall foreigner soon gets tired sitting in a vehicle the back of which is arranged for short Japanese bodies.

The *basha* is a very different vehicle from the trim, graceful, and, in its way, modern-looking *kuruma*. It might be said of the *basha* that it has rather the appearance of a vehicle which was evolved by a Japanese of an economical turn, after hearing a description of a 'bus from a foreigner who spoke very little Japanese, had not been home for forty years, and had seen no illustrated papers in the meantime. As the body of the vehicle is built just high enough and the seats just wide enough for Japanese, the long-legged foreigner continually bumps the roof; and when he is not bumping the roof he has much too narrow a seat to sit on. Sometimes the

*basha* has springs of a sort, and sometimes it has none. But the kind of roads from the rural railway station where most *bashas* meet trains is more than the best springs can cope with. The only tolerable place for Mr. Foreigner in a *basha* is one of the two seats facing one another on the top of the vehicle next the driver. In one of these seats, — because there are only openings, not windows, in a *basha*, — it is possible for the alien passenger to anchor himself by throwing an arm round one of the uprights that support the roof. If, at an unusually hard bump, he should lose his hold, he is saved from being cast on the floor by the bodies of his polite and sympathetic fellow travelers, who are embedded between him and the door.

The story goes that a foreign tourist who was serving his term in a *basha* was perplexed to find that the passengers were charged, some first-, some second-, and some third-class fare, all, of course, for the same accommodation. The problem obsessed the foreigner like the famous 'Punch-in-the-presence-of-the-passengare.' What advantage could he as a first class be getting over the second class, and the second class over the third? At length, when the condition of the road had proved too much for the horses, the vehicle stopped. The driver got down, opened the door, bowed, and announced: 'Honorable first-class passengers will graciously condescend to keep their seats. Second-class passengers will be good enough to favor us by walking. Third-class passengers will kindly come out and push.' And no doubt they did push, kimonos rolled up thighwards, with the good humor, sprightliness, and cheerful grunts with which working-people get so much done in Japan.

# FAMINE IN RUSSIA

BY A. WASSERBAUER

*[The following description of conditions in Russia's famine area is by an eye-witness who left Russia in August.]*

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At the end of June, in the very midst of Russia, I saw the crops literally burned to nothing by the sun. Most people seem to think that the crop-failure extends to most of the country. That is not true. It extends farther than it has in most years when there have been crop-failures. According to the best figures, the exceptional shortage amounts to many million bushels. But that alone would not make the situation hopeless. Before the war acute crop-failures occurred in different parts of Russia. That was particularly true, for instance, in the Government of Samara. Notwithstanding that, Russia continued to export millions of bushels of grain through Odessa. The people merely had to accommodate themselves to that fact, and they managed somehow, though many solved the problem in a happier land beyond. But these were localized famines. To be sure, localized means a very different thing in Russia from what it means in Austria; for some Russian governments are as large as the whole former Hapsburg monarchy.

This time the crop-failure covers a much wider area. It has fallen heaviest upon the Volga Valley, which ordinarily produces the most abundant crops. In previous famines the railways were able to help out some, though most inadequately; cattle were abundant; the people had all the milk and butter and eggs they could use. But at the present time there is only one cow for five

peasants. The rest have been requisitioned, or have vanished in the carnival of disorder. In addition there are government orders, such as one requiring the peasants to appear with their carts and draft animals every third day, for public services, which have lessened the cultivated area. One can well understand what such orders mean, especially in harvest-time. The amount of grain exacted by the government has been enormous. Only enough was left the farmer to provide about a pound of flour a day per capita for his family; all the rest must be handed over to the authorities. A peasant could not slaughter a single head of stock without incurring a heavy penalty. I personally knew a peasant whose house and farm and all his operating capital were confiscated because he secretly killed a single chicken. Where such regulations are in effect, peasants simply will not till the soil, except sufficiently to raise a bare subsistence.

Last year, when the Bolsheviki swept through Siberia, they found very large supplies of flour, grain, and other produce in the hands of the peasants. These peasants, or well-to-do farmers, had not tolerated requisitions. This grain was carried off under promise of payment; but no payment was made. So the resentment against the government continued to increase, and the cultivated area was reduced to a minimum. On top of all that has come the extraordinary drought.