

MISCELLANEOUS.

Written for this Paper.

CHEAP LIVING IN JAPAN.

(Copyrighted by Frank G. Carpenter, 1894.)

Tokio, Japan, February 10, 1894.



JAPAN is doing all she can to keep silver in the air. She has to pay for the goods she imports from America in gold, and the silver question is a far more important one here than it has ever been in the United States. The

country is now on a silver basis, and there is sure to be a general rise in the prices of everything. At the present writing the exchange is going up every day and a gold dollar in Tokio looks as big as the cover of a Japanese umbrella. Such foreigners as are here who get their incomes from America are rich through the fall of silver, and they now get two dollars for every one that is sent out to them from home. I made out a draft of one hundred dollars on my New York letter of credit at the bank this morning and got two hundred and eight dollars for it and the money I have brought with me has doubled in value. This makes traveling comparatively cheap, and though I have been paying four dollars a day at the Grand Hotel at Yokohama it really costs me only two. Clothing here is wonderfully cheap, and all English goods can be bought for the same prices they bring in London. The treaties with Japan prohibit her from charging more than five per cent duty, and labor is worth so little that one could come across the Pacific and save the expenses of the trip by laying in a stock of clothing for himself and his family. The tailors are Chinese, but they give you good cuts and you do not need to pay if the clothes do not fit you. You can get a good business suit of English goods made to order for about ten American dollars. Patent leather shoes made to order cost two dollars and a half, and a fur-lined over-coat with beaver collar and cuffs can be bought for about thirty dollars in gold. You could not buy the cloth, to say nothing of the fur linings, for that amount in America. Ladies' dresses are equally cheap and you get wonderfully embroidered gowns of silk crepe for less than the ordinary street dress costs you in the United States.

This reduction in silver makes a wonderful profit for our missionaries and diplomats. A missionary who is getting a thousand dollars a year has now two thousand dollars to spend. The American minister to Japan, who receives, if my memory serves me, twelve thousand

dollars annually, gets at least twenty-four thousand dollars' worth of value out of it, and the salaries of all our consuls are practically doubled by the change. An American family living on a fixed income at home could now come to Japan and have twice the comforts for half the money, and I am surprised at the wonderful cheapness of all sorts of eatables from cabbage to champagne. I took an interpreter with me to the market this morning and spent some hours in finding out the prices of the necessities of life. I found the articles sold fully as good and in most cases superior to those you find in America, and the prices were from one-twentieth to one-half those we pay. I have reduced them from the silver to the gold basis and give you a few of them. First take the meats. These are very high, as the Japanese do not use them, and they are chiefly demanded by foreigners. I found that find rib roasts of beef cost eight cents a pound, and was shown veal and bacon at ten cents. Chickens are worth from seven to twenty cents apiece. You buy teal ducks for eight cents each, and eggs are worth from six to ten cents a dozen. Quail cost from six to seven cents. Reed birds, sixteen cents a dozen, and snipe five cents each. Think of it! A good snipe for a nickel. There are no better vegetables in the world than those you find here and the fish of Japan are far superior to those of America. All fish are sold when they are alive or still kicking. Lobsters run from half a cent to five cents apiece. Fine fresh mackerel bring from one to four cents, and sole from two to ten. You can get perch as low as two cents each, and tai fish, the best fish in Japan, at from five cents to fifty cents, according to size. Oysters are worth twelve cents a gallon, and eels bring ten cents a pound. As to vegetables, they are sold in most cases by the pound, ranging from half a cent upwards. Cabbages bring from one to three cents each. Lettuce about a quarter of a cent a bunch, and radishes about the same. You get a fine cauliflower for from eight to ten cents, and fresh mushrooms cost five cents a pound. Soft coal costs three dollars a ton, and firewood sold in little bundles about as large as a bundle of kindling from one to three cents each. These figures, as well as those following this, are on the gold and not the silver basis.

All sorts of luxuries are cheap. You can buy Mum's extra dry champagne for less than a dollar and a half a quart, and good Manilla cigars cost from one to three cents each. Cigarettes, which are now being imported by the million from the United States, and which are being introduced in large quantities among both the men and women of Japan, are far cheaper than at home, and what we pay five and ten cents a package for sell here for from one to three cents a package. Servants are very cheap and very good. The foreign housewife has nothing to do and she lives like a queen. The Japanese cooks are far better than ours, and twenty dollars a month will pay the board and salaries of the help of an eight room house. I have a friend who lives as

well here as many a millionaire does in the United States, and he does not expend more than this amount. He pays his cook five dollars a month. His butler gets two dollars and a half, and his gardener and second girl get about the same. These servants all board themselves and the cook does the marketing. His rent costs him less than twenty dollars a month, though he lives in one of the best parts of Japan, and he could have a coachman at five dollars more. He has no trouble about getting good servants, and he tells me they watch after his interests and see that he is not cheated by anyone else but themselves. It is far easier to live well here than in America, and I predict that the time will come when many American families with fixed but comparatively limited incomes will come to Japan, instead of going to Europe as they are now doing. As to the table, they can nowhere find better eating. In some cases the cooks take contracts to do all the marketing, cook the meals and supply the table at a fixed price per day. A well-to-do family of Kobe lives in this way, and for three yen, or about \$1.50 per day, they have their meals furnished by the cook. Remember, they pay nothing more than this, and there are six in the family. Their ordinary every day bills of fare are as follows: The breakfast, served when they rise, consists of fruit, porridge, fish, a fry, or grill of mutton or beef, and warm bread or cakes. At noon they have a lunch or "tiffin," which is served in courses, and embraces soup, fish, a warm entree, cold meats, a salad, sweets and coffee. Then there is a tea served at 4 p. m., and at 7 o'clock there is a dinner, the menu of which consists of a soup, a fish, a roast, some game, potatoes and two vegetables, with a dessert, coffee, cheese and nuts.

As to the living of the Japanese, they pay still less and these forty millions of people could exist well on what America wastes. Only a few of the middle classes have more than one servant, and among the poorer classes the wife does the cooking and the entire work of the household. Some families have a woman to cook and do general housework, and such women are paid from one to two dollars a month and are lodged and fed. They generally receive a present of a dress from their mistress at New Year and in midsummer, each costing from a dollar and a half to two dollars, and they expect to get a cent two or three times a week for bath money. Every Japanese takes a hot bath from two to twelve times a week, and where the family is too poor to own a bath room they go to the public bath houses. The richer people have more servants, and a well-to-do family will generally have a man in addition to the women. They pay their men twice as much as the women. Nurses are very cheap in Japan, and the common people keep the smaller children and the old men of the family busy in taking care of the babies. A child of six often has her baby brother tied to her back, and children from nine to sixteen go about with babies so fastened upon them taking care of them. Such girls, when employed outside of their own families, get their board and clothing and a present now and then. They are often poor relatives of the family, and a woman who works in a tea factory will