

## DEPARTMENT STORES

### THE MITSUKOSHI DEPARTMENT STORE

Forty years have now elapsed since Japan was opened to foreign intercourse. In the mean time, Japan has imported, assimilated, digested, and applied foreign civilization; as a result, the new provisions made in all departments of the national life are something wonderful. In the centre of this capital, a Department Store has

been opened by the Mitsui family which, owing to the efforts of the far-sighted business organizer and manager, Mr. Ōsuke Hibi, is extensive in its scope, varied and inexhaustible in its outfit. The Mitsukoshi Dry Goods Store which is another name for the Department is the first and greatest department store which has been organized in this country. The Mitsuis are rulers in financial circles of Japan, and the Mitsukoshi is the largest departmental store in the Empire.

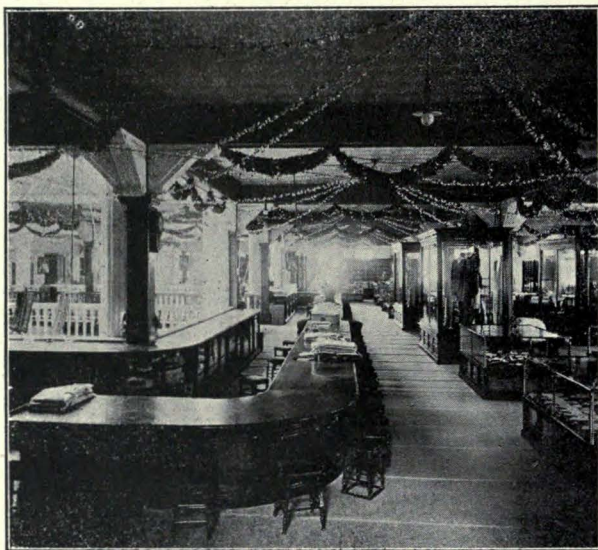


MITSUKOSHI DRY GOODS STORE

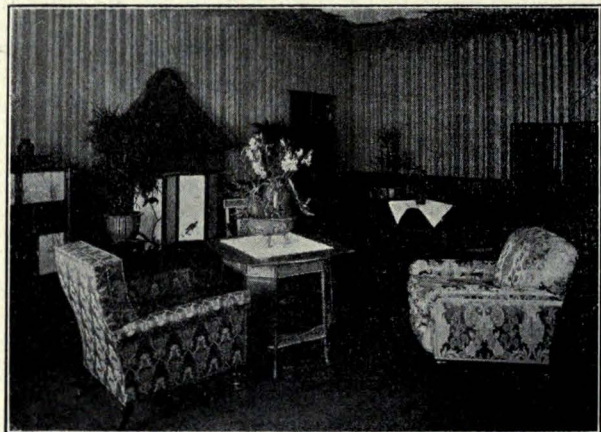
The history of the Mitsukoshi runs back 300 years. When the seat of the Shogunate Government was laid in Tokyo (then called Yedo), the Mitsukoshi was already one of the largest stores in Japan. There are many interesting facts connected with the Mitsukoshi store which are closely related to the literature and fine arts of Yedo. Just at the moment when Japan, with her old usages and historical connections plunged herself into the vortex of the world's competition at the end of the 19th century, the Mitsukoshi Dry Goods Store, with new facilities and efforts afforded by the new civilization, introduced the new elements in the shape of a Department Store. The department stores abroad seem to be mainly intended for making supplies for the needs of the middle and lower classes of society, but in the case of the Mitsukoshi Department Store, owing to its past historical connections, it is patronized by all classes of people. The Mitsukoshi Department Store supplies articles to the Imperial Household and the nobility, as well as to the ordinary subjects of the Mikado. The store has large orders from people living in Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto as well as from farmers and fishermen in the remotest districts of the country. It has branches in Seoul in Korea, and Talien in Manchuria. The articles supplied by the Store are cheap and good, which has greatly enhanced its reputation. There are various other characteristics which are but rarely seen in connection with the Department Stores of foreign countries. The Mitsukoshi Department Store occupies an imposing three-storied building possessing numbers of complete show rooms, where are found nearly everything that is necessary to our existence, as the mention of different sections will prove:—sections are found for hats, dry goods, children's toys, umbrellas, toilet articles, shoes, trunk, shawls, tobacco, piece goods, stationery, ready made clothes, jewels, knitted work, furniture, pictures, sculptures, and photographs. There is a balcony, where every day good musicians are invited to come and play on

the piano and violins as well as on Japanese instruments. All these make up the attraction of this gigantic store. There are provided three saloons; one upstairs is furnished in foreign style. The Takeno-ma is provided with bamboo furniture and decoration. The "Mitsukoshi Time" is a publication edited by artists and men of letters employed by the Store. The director's rooms may be said to constitute a club for scholars, educators and journalists, so much are they frequented of these men. As adviser to the study of children's articles, there are several learned men employed, two among them being noblemen. Under their advice, the Mitsukoshi supplies various useful articles for the education of children, in fact, once a year they hold an exhibition for children. This is another feature seldom found in the department stores of foreign countries. There is a society called "The Ryuko-kwai" or "The Fashions Society" at which may be seen men of learning, novelists, artists and critics, all of whom either by their experience or knowledge set the ball of fashion going. There is a department for furnishing clothes for actors, and where prominent actors of Japan obtain their clothes. Among the advisers to this department, we may find many critics and artists who have studied western performances. Thus it will be seen that the work of the Mitsukoshi is a result of earnest investigation and free discussion.

Not far from this place, there is a tea room got up purely in Japanese style, where the best Japanese taste is exhibited both in the service of tea and in the furnishing of the room. Visitors here will be treated to a cup of tea by a lady expert. There is also a dining room with a beautiful table decorated with fragrant flowers. In this place, Japanese as well as foreign meals are provided



ONE OF THE COUNTERS IN THE MITSUKOSHI DEPARTMENT STORE



"TAKENO-MA" OR BAMBOO ROOM

together with green tea, black tea, coffee, cocoa, and foreign cakes. It is customary for foreign guests to Japan to visit the Mitsukoshi store once or twice during their stay.

The system adopted by the Mitsukoshi is more advanced than that of any other stores in Japan. For the purpose of delivering purchased articles to customers there are 3 automobiles, 50 bicycles, and 5 wagons. Boys employed for the purpose are something like messenger boys in England. In fact, the Mitsukoshi department store is a public house where articles of daily use are supplied, and it is also a studio where the fine arts and crafts of Japan are studied.

The Mitsukoshi Department Store is managed by a stock company. Mr. Ōsuke Hibi is the chief director. Mr. Hibi was educated under Mr. Fukuzawa, who was the foremost educator of modern Japan. Mr. Kihichi Fujimura, the managing director, is his right hand man. There are as many as 300 employees among whom there are some who have received the highest education. For about 1,500 apprentices, there are boarding houses and schools. The Mitsukoshi store employs a large number of girls as saleswomen.