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SPECIAL FEATURE: International Cooperation

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Japanese and Egyptian engineers
inspecting bogie at Cairo Metro's
Tura Workshop (T. Konno)

Editorial

Old Lessons

Edmund Morel was a British civil engineer who arrived in Yokohama in March 1870 to build the first railway in Japan. He died of tuberculosis in September 1871 (aged 29) before seeing the 24-km track between Tokyo and Yokohama open in the following year. But during his short stay, he left many lessons for Japan, which had just started modernization.

Before Morel's arrival, the Japanese government had signed a contract with a British merchant to import all materials from Britain, including steel sleepers. Morel found that Japan had rich forests, and strongly recommended making sleepers from pine trees in order to save precious foreign currency.

The Japanese government was hiring many European and American experts to build a new industrial country, but Morel emphasized the importance of training young Japanese engineers. Following his suggestion, the government founded an engineering college which developed into the Engineering Faculty of Tokyo University and played a major role in providing leading talent to both government and industry.

Thanks to Morel, Japan learned the importance of independence and self-help, and his achievements have never been forgotten. His grave in Yokohama is preserved as a historic monument to Japanese railways. Today, a number of railway experts from Europe, America and Japan work in developing countries, but can they always be as fair and far-sighted as Edmund Morel was?

T. SUGA

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