

a life. Two of the three lives lost on the evening of February 10th were due to men remaining too long to plaster the godown doors and windows more securely. And yet, notwithstanding all these precautions, several godowns are burned in every large fire, and many more become so heated that their contents are seriously warped or discoloured.

No wilder sight can be imagined than when standing on a hill in Tokyo and looking down at a lake of fire in the valley beneath. People rush frantically hither and thither carrying armfuls of household articles. It is not enough to remove these to the street, even were it out of the way in which the fire is coming. The crowd who gather to view a Tokyo fire seem to look on everything saved as belonging to themselves. So to save the goods from being stolen, they must be removed to some friendly enclosure. As the houses burn so rapidly, a second load except to the godown, is seldom carried from the same house by the same person. At such a time human nature, which often means selfishness, reigns supreme. Even postmen are sent from the neighbouring post office to carry away the letter box placed in the ground at the street corner. When this is done they are indifferent as to the welfare of others. The load first taken is that, naturally, which is prized the most; and when Horace sang about the householder rushing from his home, bearing in his bosom his dirty children and his household gods, he pictured a common sight at a Tokyo fire. Yes, these miserable little brass gods, before whose shrine lights are burned in almost every house and store, and who are worshipped, as far as one can judge, only because it is hoped that they will in return shield the house and its inmates from evil, cannot even save themselves, not to mention helping the poor creatures who have trusted in them.

The fire, a week ago last Tuesday night, to which reference has already been made several times, occurred in the midst of a district in which we have an important mission. On the one side is Bishop Bickersteth's residence, and adjoining this St. Andrew's Church and St. Andrew's School (Theological). On the other side of the fire is the house of Archdeacon Shaw. About a block away—as distance is measured in America—is St. Hilda's Hospital. One of our native clergy, Rev. Mr. Shimada, lives close to Archdeacon Shaw. Is it not more than a coincidence that all these Christian houses containing Gospel agencies, were saved, while the houses of the heathen were swept away by the dozen? So surely does God watch over His own! From the Church, or the Bishop's on the one side across to the Archdeacon's on the other, a straight line could be drawn on the morning after the fire and not touch a house between. Rev. Mr. Shimada's was perhaps the

greatest miracle of all. His house is a little wood and paper structure, looking the frailest of the frail. Houses on every side of it were burned—-one of them only four feet away—and yet his was uninjured. How it could have escaped is the puzzle which all who see it try to solve. The church, which is the only brick building in the district, did, indeed, catch fire. But this was due to some one ignorantly or maliciously removing some of the tile from the roof, so that the showers of sparks fell on the dry boards beneath. But some buckets of water immediately applied extinguished the flames before they had gained much headway, and little damage was done. Surely some of these poor people will see that "their gods are no gods!" And if they, or any of them, come to recognize this, the fire will not have been altogether a loss. The wonderful escape of the Christians has been remarked by several of them. When on the day after the fire, I asked my teacher, a Buddhist, if he did not think those little brass gods were somewhat ungrateful in allowing their worshipper's houses to be destroyed, while the houses of the Christians, who paid no attention to such deities, were allowed to go unhurt, he became embarrassed, and at last told me it was very strange, and he could offer no explanation. It surely cannot be long before the folly of such superstitions—for it seems to be more a superstition than a religion—will pass away from this people who are making such rapid advances in all other respects. But at present these old beliefs are fondly clung to. Even the firemen erect a fire-god on one of the houses, in the hope that he will stay the progress of the advancing flames. Almost as often the poor fire-god himself catches fire, and then his worshippers make a gallant rush to his rescue. Sometimes they do not succeed in saving him—a terrible disaster! And sometimes when he is saved it is only at the sacrifice of some of their own lives.

Desolate is the track left by every great fire, but especially so in Japan. Nothing is left but some broken and discoloured tile in a small heap of dust. You look down on what was a few hours ago a business thoroughfare, stores in which many kinds of goods, both foreign and native, were exposed for sale. Now nothing meets the eye but a few lonely and gloomy "go downs," here and there. After a disastrous fire in Canada the papers often refer to the "charred and blackened ruins," but after a fire in Japan there are no ruins, everything has disappeared.

Before closing this description of a Japanese fire, some curious customs among the Japanese on the occasion of a fire might be mentioned. Why they do such things, they themselves perhaps don't know, except that it is the fashion, and that their forefathers did the same things before them. One of these customs is to tear