

wrecked or intact, have been found during the past century. But to return to the Japanese people. They are generally small in stature, the average height of the men being not much over five feet. This, by many, is believed to be due to the almost purely vegetable diet upon which the people have lived for ages. But, although not of large proportions, the Japanese are not lacking in activity or endurance. A Jinrikisha man will run, with his little carriage and its occupant, thirty miles at the rate of five or six miles an hour, and will often travel nearly, or quite twice that distance in a day.

The Japanese, generally, are intensely loyal and proud of their country, which they call Dai Nippon (Great Japan), courteous, gentle and kind, and possess many other good traits in various degrees. Someone has written "love of truth for its own sake, chastity and temperance are not characteristic virtues." Judged by our Christian standard they cannot be called a moral people, but yet they are not "sinners above all men." They do some things without the least idea of impropriety, which we consider most indecent, but still people have very different ideas about such matters and one does not see a great deal to object seriously to, and it is certain that many of their worst habits are not practised as they once were. The two greatest blots on the moral character of the Japanese nation, at the present time, are concubinage and licensed prostitution. The former has probably been practised from the earliest times but has never prevailed to any great extent, except among the nobility and upper classes, among whom, from the throne downward, it still continues to exert its baneful influence. The latter evil is a modern institution, copied from *civilized nations*, but, as a vigorous crusade has been instituted against it by the women of the country, Christian and heathen alike, in so far as they are able to take part in such a movement, it is to be hoped that its days are numbered.

Caste, as it is known in India, has never existed in Japan, but class distinctions have always been clearly marked. In 1871 all men were declared equal in the eyes of the law and since then a levelling process has been going on, but it will take a long time to undo the work of the past, and every missionary knows that class distinctions still exist, and are a considerable hindrance to the progress of the Gospel.

Before the date mentioned above the people were divided into the following classes. Above all was, of course, the Emperor, called Tenno Sama, son of Heaven. Then there were (1) Kuge, court nobles, 150 families, branches of the Imperial House; (2) Daimio, great feudal chiefs, 268 in number, richer and more powerful than the Kuge; (3) Samurai, the Daimio's retainers, military and literary persons—the sword and the pen being combined in Japan as in no other country; (4) farmers; (5) artisans, and (6)

merchants and shopkeepers, always regarded as the lowest class. Beyond these were persons employed as grave diggers, skimmers, tanners, etc., called Eta, who generally lived in separate villages and, with the beggars, were considered outside the pale of humanity altogether.

The lower classes have risen considerably in the social scale during the last twenty years and this is perhaps particularly true of those engaged in mercantile pursuits.

Woman has never been so degraded in Japan as in India and China, which is almost to be wondered at, seeing that Buddhism, which teaches that she has no hope of salvation unless she should be re-born as a man, has been the prevailing religion for ages. That her position is better than that of her sisters in most Asiatic countries is certainly creditable to the nation. The women of the lower classes go about almost as freely as the men and seem to have always done so; but, until recently, except on rare occasions, the proper place for a lady was considered to be her own house, and even yet, women of the upper classes, as a rule, go out very little. This fact of itself is I think quite sufficient to show that Japan is a good field for women's work. Female education is now making rapid progress, and woman's position is consequently changing and her work and influence extending, but in former times her duty might be summed up in the single word obedience; (1) obedience to her father when a child, (2) obedience to her husband when a wife, and (3) obedience to her eldest son when a widow. But, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of her position, in history and literature woman occupies a place of no little distinction. Nine of the one hundred and twenty three sovereigns who have occupied the throne of Japan, since the time of Jeremiah the prophet, have been women, and it is said that a large part of the best literature of the past age is the product of woman's pen. May we not, therefore, confidently expect that, under the elevating influences of Christianity, which are already beginning to be felt, the women of Japan will soon rise to a position of dignity and usefulness?

Before one has lived for many years among a people who are particularly difficult to become really intimate with, it might seem presumptuous to express an opinion as to what are their most striking characteristics, but I wish to mention just two points in the Japanese character which have struck me very forcibly, perhaps on account of the inconvenience they often cause.

The first is their fickleness, or fondness of change. It is so difficult to find any one who can be depended upon to pursue a definite course for any considerable length of time. This is a most troublesome trait indeed at times, but not more so than their utter disregard of the value of time, which is the second point referred to. As an illustration of this, the following incident, which did not come under my own observation,