

reduced to one-half its height, the M. A. degree was obtained by a scholar of the city who received the congratulations of the rejoicing literati.

"Disrespect shown to written characters, or the wilful misuse of printed or written paper is a great crime in the eyes of the literati; and societies are formed for the collection of such paper; and paper 'Treasures' are built in every city, where such paper is carefully burned by the agents of the societies who collect it. My first teacher, a proud Confucianist, used to tell of cases, known to himself, of men who had gone blind, and others who had come to want, through neglect to reverence written characters. In my innocence I ventured to ask what would happen to rats who dared to gnaw the Sacred Books? His prompt reply was: 'They will lose their teeth.' This same teacher also informed me that the essays of the scholars, who entered for the Triennial Exams were burned in a 'clean place,' and the ashes sent by the officials to the manager of the provincial mint, who used these ashes to form moulds for the brass coins in common use. 'That is the reason,' said he, 'that the characters on the coins are so distinct!' The literary class are not noted for being over religious, but when they are about to enter the examination halls they are in great fear of demons and they often give alms, burn incense, distribute moral literature, pick up bits of written paper, etc., etc., in order to get merit and counteract the influence of these demons who are seeking to destroy their chances of success. When a district is fortunate enough to produce a poet Laureate, the wife of this man is requested by the people of the district, to visit all the city gates and scatter before each a handful of rice, that the whole population may share in the good luck of her household."

How like some of these, which the author calls "old wives," superstitions are to many still current in Canada.

Rats Crossing
the Street

"It is considered very unlucky for rats to cross the streets at night. It is commonly believed that it betokens fire in the house they have left.