

ill-fitting *shoji*. They are generally raised from one to two feet off the ground, and the wind blows through the floor, lifting the straw matting. So much so that on two windy nights we had to place weights upon the light chairs to keep them from being overturned. The *shoji* just mentioned take the place of doors and windows in a foreign built house. They are wooden frames, much like a window sash, but instead of glass in the sash it is covered with white paper. As this allows only a dull light to enter, they must occupy much more space in the walls than do the American doors and windows. All the common Japanese houses have also a square hole in the roof to allow the smoke to escape. The winters in Japan are not very severe, and the people trust to warm clothes rather than to warm houses to ward off the cold. There is, indeed, one solid article in the composition of some Japanese houses—the heavy tiling on the roof. But no house in the country or small towns has brick tiling, and, even in cities, only about one house in three.

Again, the fronts of the shops are open in all kinds of weather. A small charcoal fire is made in a little square box having some ashes in the bottom. Around this, when not actively engaged, the shop keeper and his assistants huddle. In the dwelling houses the charcoal fire is generally in a square hole in the floor. The sides of the hole are of wood and it is in the centre of the room. A wickerwork cap is placed over the hole, and in winter the family sleep around this, the *futons*, or thick cotton wool quilts, covering both fire and sleepers. When you have learned this and know also that the floors are covered with straw mats, that men, women and children all alike smoke pipes, the bowls of which are less than half the size of a common thimble; that the people seem to be most reckless in the way they handle candles or lamps, you will begin to understand how easy it would be for a house to catch fire. A gust of wind blowing in the front of the store, or through the open *shoji*, will sometimes blow sparks from the charcoal in all directions over the straw mats. Or the wooden basket work covering the hole in the floor, or the sides of the hole itself, take fire while the family are asleep or not watching. And when once a house has caught fire its destruction is very rapid. It might almost merit the name of an explosion, so rapidly is it consumed.

Not only do the houses thus seemingly invite a fire, but the means of stopping a conflagration are very primitive. As neither Tokyo nor any other Japanese city has a water works system, there cannot be a water power. There are some fire engines in the most important business sections, but they do not attend a fire in any other part of the city. Indeed, if they did the only supply of water for them would be the wells, or the large drains, or open sewers which run along

some of the streets and into which the small ditches from all the other streets are drained. So with a good wind at its back the fire has things pretty much its own way.

Speaking about fire engines reminds one of an incident some years ago, which illustrates one of the difficulties to be encountered when introducing new ideas among eastern nations. It is the story of the Ephesian silversmiths in another garb. An English firm desiring to advertise their fire engines in Japan, offered to send one from England to Tokyo, free of charge, with an agent to show the Japanese how to use it, provided the Tokyo officials would, on their part, agree to give it a trial. The offer was accepted, and in due time man and engine arrived. At the first fire, convenient to a large drain, the engine was brought out and the fire extinguished with comparatively small loss. The next day the house where the agent was staying was surrounded by a mob of enraged carpenters who threatened that if the engine was not taken out of Japan before the next fire he should pay for it with his life. They declared their trade would be ruined should fire engines be allowed to assist in putting out a *kwaji*, as one of these large conflagrations is called.

The carpenters are often blamed for the large fires. It is said that when their business is dull they take this means of reviving it. If one is to judge by the host of carpenters at work the next day at the scene of a large fire, no more effectual means of reviving the trade could be found. But the mass of the people do not take kindly to this "reviving" process, for, until last year, incendiarism was punished by death.

Such as it is, however, there is some fire protection. The wells and drains supply water for the buckets. The regular firemen certainly are brave fellows and as one watches them, apart from the general calamity, the wish comes repeatedly that they might have modern assistance worthy of their bravery.

(Concluded next month.)

In Turkey, in 1839, at the crisis of Missions, the Sultan Mahmoud said: "There shall not a representative of the Christian religion remain in the Empire." And Dr. Hamlin came into the house of Dr. Goodell and said, "Doctor, it is all over with us—we have to leave; the American Consul and the British Ambassador both say that it is no use to meet with antagonism this violent and vindictive monarch." The good Doctor, after quietly looking up to heaven for a while said, "The Sultan of the Universe, in answer to prayer, can change that decree." They then gave themselves to prayer and the next day the Sultan Mahmoud was a corpse, and the decree has never since been mentioned except as a matter of history.—*Missionary Review*.