

A Japanese House in Tokyo

The half million or more residences in Tokyo in 1910 were mostly built in Japanese style: leave your shoes on the concrete floor of 6 x 6 ft. entrance and walk in on the tatami-2-inch thick mats of rice straw with a surface of nice matting woven from a special kind of grass that grows in wet places in Japan.

Most of the better new houses in our day were built with an upstairs where most of the bedrooms were located. The one we rented in Ushigorne was such a one.

We had hardly got our limited house hold things in the house when a distinguished visitor from Alabama knocked at our door. "They call me Dr. Cox in Mobile" he said, and I remembered that his initials were W. J. E.—and we gladly welcomed him and enjoyed his conversation. Of course we gave him the double bed we had brought from San Francisco. The bed we spread on the Tatami for ourselves in another room upstairs was comfortable enough for us, but for some reason or none at all we left our sliding doors open the next day and our guest walked along the veranda and saw that his hostess had slept on the floor!

Well the pastor of a big church in Mobile, Alabama did not wear his manners in a conspicuous manner, and toward evening he politely told us good bye and moved on to his hotel. But we have not forgotten his visit nor his good manners.

Among the students who went with us from Fukuoka to Tokyo was Amano San, a man older than I and of much more experience. He was very helpful to us because such a diplomatic task as getting our landlord's permission to make a hole in the roof to put a stove pipe through and

have a coal stove for heat: that would have been too much for us, but Amano San accomplished that and many more things of that sort, both while he was a student, and later, when he was pastor of our first Church in Tokyo.

Meet a U.S. Senator.

The president of our seminary, Dr. W.B. Parshley, was brought up in Florida, but went to Theological School at Newton Centre near Boston, Massachusetts and married the daughter of Dr. Hovey the president of Newton Centre Baptist Seminary. When I knew him, though he was not very old, yet his health was not robust and to keep fit he tried to spend at least an hour each day out of doors, and this he habitually did walking about the city, and since I was one of the few who could spare the time and enjoyed walking with him, we could often be found together at certain hours of fine days, especially in the autumn and spring.

On Saturday afternoons when the weather was fine a bunch of younger Americans could usually be found playing baseball if they could arrange a match with another team. The "grape-vine" would usually bring the word and Dr. Parshley could be depended on to know the place.

One Saturday the word came that our team was to play the Mormon Mission. We two and Uncle John Ballagh were right there to cheer.

There were about nine of the young men of the Mormon Mission. One of them was Elbert Duncan Thomas whose name will be found in "Who's Who in America" 1945-46. He became a U.S. Senator in 1933 and it will not be news to most of my readers that he was one of the ablest and best informed members of that August Body for many years.

He was a missionary in Japan from 1907 to 1912 and lived only a few blocks from us in Ushigome, Tokyo in 1910. Years later I wished I had cultivated his acquaintance.

He is given 33 lines in Who's Who, and not many have that many degrees and that much distinguished service to their credit when they are only sixty-two years of age.

Getting Going in the Big City

Already there were about one hundred missionaries in Tokyo coming mainly from Evangelical Denominations in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and a few other countries. They had a United Service every Sunday afternoon at some central place in the city and it was a good place to meet missionaries of different bodies working in the city, and the number of such missions was increasing toward the fifty that were soon counted there.

Since my wife and I were the only Southern Baptist missionaries working in Tokyo, and since we had a number of young preachers from our field in Southwestern Japan who had come to the Seminary, we didn't want to lose much time in getting ourselves occupied in some part of the great city.

But since any kind of active evangelistic work ought to grow into a church as it succeeds, and as it would be foreseen that permanent churches ought not to be crowded into some parts of the city leaving great spaces where there would be no churches. And as we could not quickly get enough geographical information to be able to make a wise decision as to where we should work, we asked other missionaries, especially those of the Northern Baptist mission, to help us find a suitable unoccupied district of Tokyo.

This method got results as we found that an inter-denominational committee had made a map of the city showing a large district in Koishikawa, east of Ushigome, where there seemed to be no regular Christian work.

Amano San helped us find a house in Koishikawa, and helped us ⁱⁿ satisfying the owner of the present house we would have to vacate. But we first would have to rent a house for Amano San and his family and use part of his house for Sunday School and other meetings and classes until better arrangements could be made.

Meeting The Asiatic Society of Japan

Mr E.W. Clement might be called a unique missionary. He was a Baptist layman, an educator. He had studied at the University of Chicago, I should guess before the days of W.R. Harper and before Mr. John D. Rockefeller had endowed the University. He was under the Northern Baptist Board and was principal of Tokyo Gakⁱⁿsei, a school for boys of the middle school grade (seventh to eleventh grade). It seemed to have been modeled after the New England preparatory schools and kept its enrollment down to a total of about one hundred pupils.

But this experiment seemed to prove that Japan is not like America, at least in some respects. Most of the missions that built schools for boys did not hold down the enrollment so severely. They wanted to find and train leaders and soon learned that they are more apt to find a certain number of leaders among a large student body than in a smaller group. So, after an experience lasting a quarter of a century or so, the Northern Baptist mission, like the majority, changed to a large school.

But Mr. Clement was always busy and was "the life of the company" wherever he was. He was friendly with me and soon found something for me to do.

Many Englishmen who settled in Japan in the early days of Meiji, especially in the diplomatic Corp, were scholarly and wrote as well as studied. They knew what the Asiatic Society of London was doing and soon organized the Asiatic Society of Japan.

A meeting was held each month and usually some member would read a selection of his own translation of some Japanese Classic, a part of what he was offering for publication by the society.

Mr. Clement introduced me to the society and as soon as I had become a member he gave me the job of translating sermons on the Buddhist Ten Commandments, of which, more later.