

## Youth's Department.

### STRETCH A LITTLE.

Trudging along the slippery street,  
Two childish figures with aching feet  
And hands benumbed by the biting cold,  
Were rudely jostled by young and old,  
Hurrying homeward at close of day  
Over the city's broad highway.

"Come under my coat," said little Nell,  
As tears ran down Joe's cheek, and fell  
On her thin fingers stiff and cold;  
"Taint very big, but I guess 'twill hold  
Both you and me, if I only try  
To stretch it a little. So now, don't cry!"

The garment was small and tattered and thin,  
But Joe was lovingly folded in  
Close to the heart of Nell, who knew  
That stretching the coat for the needs of two  
Would double the warmth and halve the pain  
Of the cutting wind and the icy rain.

"Stretch it a little!" O girls and boys,  
In homes o'erflowing with comforts and joys,  
See how far you can make them reach,  
Your helpful deeds and your loving speech,  
Your gifts of service and gifts of gold;  
Let them stretch to households manifold.

—Harper's Young People.

### BEING A GIRL IN JAPAN.

#### A FEW INCIDENTS OF MY CHILDHOOD.

By Chiyo Yamada San, Yokohama, Japan.

My childhood days were full of superstitious ideas. Being brought up mostly by my grandparents who were strict Buddhists, I was frequently taken to the temples and shrines of various gods where I early learned the forms of worship and was made to believe in the existence and the power of innumerable deities.

At home in one of our rooms there was a god-shelf, upon which stood the image of Buddha, the lacquered wooden tablets which gave the names and the dates of the birth and death of the deceased in our family, vases for the flowers, the urn for the incense, dishes for the various offerings of food, and the burners for the lights, all made of brass, a bell and a prayer book. The names on the tablets are not the original names of departed ones, for we believe that a man or woman at the time of death becomes a god of some nature and the priest whom we hire to perform the funeral service usually finds out the new name for us from his prayer book and writes it upon the

two tablets, one of which goes to the temple to be kept and the other remains in the family to be worshipped as a god or a goddess. Grandmother and I every morning dusted this shelf, offered bouquets of flowers, incense, rice and tea, after which we all repeated our prayers in turn by ringing the bell and by clapping of hands. At noon I had to begin my dinner by first eating the rice and drinking the tea which had been standing upon the shelf for half a day, dusty and cold. This had to be done, for my people fully believed that by this act the timidity of my nature would be overcome, and that the spirit of bravery that any man or woman with the blood of nobility must have, would fill my soul.

On July 13th of each year we expected a visit from these departed spirits to this god-shelf; except those who had died during the year, for they had not been away from us long enough to need a visit, but must stay in their respective places to keep watch while the others were away. We make special preparations for this occasion in the way of cleaning and providing various foods, flowers and incense for the offerings. Besides these a horse and a cow are usually provided for the spirits to ride upon in going and coming. Sometimes these animals are made of straw, but very often we just take a cucumber, stick in four pieces of dried hemp for feet, and make it serve for a horse and likewise with egg-plant for a cow. On the evening of the 13th we leave open all the doors from the gate leading up to this shelf for about an hour or more for the spirits to come in. We also burn sticks of hemp without its bark in an unglazed earthen dish (specially bought for this purpose) just at the entrance of the house to light the way. The same thing is repeated on the evening of the 15th when the spirits depart. On the morning of the 16th, all the various offerings are removed from the shelf and after being made into a bundle, we cast them into a river to let them float away anywhere, according to the wishes of the spirits who are supposed to guide their course.

It is not only in connection with these religious ceremonies that superstitious ideas exist, but in everything. At one time I had a sty on my eyelid. Next morning early before any of