

HAPPY DAYS

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CHILDREN IN JAPAN.

The most interesting sights are the games and sports of the children. The girls play battledore and shuttlecock, and the boys fly kites and spin tops. The girls enjoy their game very much, and are usually dressed in their prettiest robes and bright-colored girdles; their faces are powdered with a little rice flour, their lips are tinted crimson, and their hair is done up in a most extraordinary fashion. The boys have wonderful kites, made of tough paper pasted on light bamboo frames, and decorated with dragons, warriors, and storm hobgoblins. Across the top of the kite is stretched a thin ribbon of whalebone, which vibrates in the wind, making a peculiar humming sound. When I first walked the streets of Tokio, I could not imagine what the strange noises meant that seemed to proceed from the sky above me; the sound at times was shrill and sharp, and then low and musical. At last I discovered several kites in the air, and when the breeze freshened, the sounds were

greatly increased. Sometimes the boys put glue on their kite-strings, near the top, and dip the strings in pounded glass. Then they fight with their kites, which

a large paper fish is suspended. This fish is sometimes six feet long, and is hollow. When there is a breeze it fills with wind, and its tail and fins flap in the air, as



JAPANESE LADY AND CHILD.

they place in proper positions, and attempt to saw each other's strings with the rounded glass. When a string is severed, a kite falls, and is claimed by the victor. The boys also have play-fights with their tops.

Sometimes I met boys running a race on leg stilts; at other times they would have wrestling matches in which little six-year-old youngsters would toss and tumble one another to the ground. Their bodies were stout and chubby, and their rosy cheeks showed the signs of health and happiness. They were always good-natured, and never allowed themselves to get angry.

On the fifth day of the fifth month the boys have their "Feast of Flags." They celebrate the day very peaceably, with games and toys. They have sets of figures with flags and processions. Outside the house a bamboo pole is erected by the gate, from the top of which