

## THE GIRLS' BIRTHDAY FESTIVAL IN JAPAN.

BY AUNT EVA.

In this picturesque land, where so much pains is taken to make everything pleasant to look at, the girls and boys get a full share of the pleasure that comes from owning and seeing pretty things. The Japanese, unlike the Chinese, love and care tenderly for their little daughters; so when, a long while ago, one of the old Daimios, or Feudal Chiefs, set the fashion of celebrating his little daughter's birthday, other parents followed the fashion, politely celebrating the same day as did their chief, the third day of the third month of the year.

Friends were invited to games and feasts. Each brought presents of dolls or other toys, in gold, lacquer, copper, wood or china. In the families of the rich, these gifts, made of the finer materials, were placed in the "Go-down." This is a fire-proof store-room, very necessary in the native light houses, where the stove is a movable charcoal fire-box. The gifts were placed on exhibition each recurring festival day.

In time, a curious and beautiful collection was made, and handed down from daughter to daughter. I will give you an account of how my little neighbour, Neko, as we call her, spent the day.

Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Suda, are well-to-do people of the middle class. They live in a dirt house, one of the several kinds of native houses. Mud is plastered on a framework of bamboo until a wall about a foot thick is formed. This dries very hard, and is painted white. A roof, verandas, and floor of polished wood are added.

The inside walls are papered, and the different rooms are formed by sliding paper screens. The windows are of oiled paper, easily broken and quickly mended. Miss Suda's bedroom is furnished with thick white matting, and a chest of drawers. A thick cotton mattress, laid on the floor, and a wadded silk quilt, compose the sleeping arrangements.

When Miss Suda awoke that morning, the servant maid, who looks as if she had stepped into life off a Japanese fan, brought in the bath in a long wooden tub, in the end of which a small charcoal stove is fastened, to heat the water. It looks like a piece of zinc stove-pipe.

The Japanese are very fond of hot baths, and Neko, unlike her namesake, the kitten, enjoys being in hot water so much that the maid laughs at her long delay, and chides her. It is a curious Japanese habit to laugh when angry or distressed, and Miss Suda knows that the maid is all out of patience when she begins to laugh. She slipped on a blue silk wadded robe, faced up with red, and *ca* down to breakfast.

Boiled rice and fish unsalted, served on a tray which stands upon legs, was the bill of fare. Chopsticks and a few lacquer and china dishes compose the table service. Mr. and Mrs. Suda had taken their breakfast, each at a low tea-table, some time before.

In addition to the rice and fish, they had tea and saki, a sort of liquor, and bean jelly. I do not believe my nephews and nieces would enjoy the unsocial fashion of sitting alone at meals on the floor, but I am sure the girls would think it great fun to "do up the dishes"—no ugly black pots and pans, only polished lacquer ware and dainty, lovely china.

After breakfast, the long black hair of the little girl was elaborately dressed, and decorated with fancy pins and bits of bright crape. Miss Suda's holiday dresses are all pretty, but that morning, in honour of the girls' birthday, she blossomed out like a tropical butterfly. Pink crape, embroidered in colors over a white silk skirt, also rich in embroidery interwoven with silver and gold

threads, with facings of bright silk in contrasting colors, made her as gay in appearance as she was in heart.

You would think her clothes made in queer fashion loose skirts, a long, loose sacque with flowing sleeves, and a big sash. No underclothing is worn, nor anything on the head. Short hose, wooden or straw sandals and an oiled paper umbrella completed her street outfit.

A "jinrikisha," a two-wheeled cab, with two shafts, drawn by a coolie, was called, and mamma and daughter set out to visit the shops. On the third of March the shops overflow with dolls and toys; dainty lacquer work and confectionery boxes; doll mirrors of polished steel; tea sets in charming variety and profusion, in wood, silver and china, gold and copper thimbles, which are worn on the second finger like a broad ring; all sorts of Japanese utensils modelled in doll-size, of all sorts of materials.

Crowds of people were out buying and sight-seeing. They visited one of the great temples situated in the midst of beautiful grounds. Mamma Suda dropped some money in a box to help buy food for the sacred doves that live in great flocks in the temple grounds. Booths and bazaars abounded, where shows could be seen, and Japanese "goodies" of all sorts were on sale.

Neko bought fresh popped beans from the beanpopper man. She had a bowl of mushroom soup, sweet little rice cakes, preserved grapes, candies and other dainties for refreshments. They visited Ayeno Park, one of Tokio's many beautiful out-door resorts. Its wide, densely-shaded avenues, lakes, bridges, grottos and flowering shrubs, are but a part of its attractions. The groves of cherry and plumtrees, now in full bloom, make it a fairy land. The blossoms are white, pink and red, and often double.

The various museums and the "Zoo" garden received their share of attention, and when Miss Suda reached home, laden with sweets and toys, she was met by a company of young friends. The rest of the day was spent in games and feasting. In the evening fire works were set off, and when my little friend retired to her mattress, even the frolicsome Neko was ready to rest.

But I am sure she fell asleep satisfied that it "pays to be a girl" in Japan—at least on the third of March.

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## THE CORRECT FOCUS.

It will never do to exaggerate one truth at the expense of another, and a truth may be turned into a falsehood very, very easily, by simply being either too much enlarged or too much diminished. I once heard of some blind men who were taken to see a menagerie. They had gone around the animals, and four of them were allowed to touch an elephant as they passed by. They were discussing afterwards what kind of creature the elephant was. One man, who had touched his tail, said the elephant was like a rope. Another of the blind men, who had touched his hind limb, said—"No such thing; the elephant is like the trunk of a tree." Another, who had felt its sides, said—"That is all rubbish; an elephant is a thing like a wall." And the fourth, who had felt the animal's ears, said that an elephant was like none of those things; it was like a leather bag. Men look at truth, at different bits of it. They see different things. They are apt to imagine that the thing which they have seen is the whole affair.—*Prof. Henry Drummond.*

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When a man finds himself in thee rong plase hee shoood hustle too get owt of itt, for itt belongs too sun-won elce, and hiz plase iz empty.