

JAPANESE BOYS AND GIRLS.

A little girl in Japan looks forward to the third day of the third month, with as much eagerness and delight as does a little girl in America look forward to the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month.

While there are many festivals of a general character in Japan which the children enjoy equally with their parents, the third day of March is a special holiday for the girls alone—a holiday as widely celebrated throughout Japan as Christmas is with us. On this day occurs the Festival of Dolls, or *Hina-no-sekku* as it is called. On this day the little girls wear their finest dresses and brightest sashes. Their black hair is faultlessly arranged and for its decoration the prettiest hairpins and crape are selected.

The parents arrange on one side of the best room a few shelves rising from the floor like steps. These are covered with cloth to make them more attractive, and on these shelves are placed the dolls. The principal dolls are really diminutive models of an Emperor and Empress, resplendent with gold brocade and tinsel, guarded on each side by a fierce-looking Daijin, or chief officer, armed with a bow and quiver of arrows; and, when the set is complete, five other models, representing court musicians, are also displayed. Other dolls of less official dignity may enter this august assembly, but the ones above mentioned are the important characters in this curious parade, and these are preserved in the family from year to year; many of them, indeed, are heirlooms, and may be of considerable age.

Other festivals besides this one of the dolls were wholly or partly given up after Japan's recent disturbing contact with foreigners. The more sensible among the Japanese have seen the folly of this national suicide in abandoning so many native customs and games and these festivals are gradually being revived.

The Festival of Dolls is of ancient origin and was supposed to have been originally celebrated by all the people as a day when special honor should be paid to the Emperor and Empress. It finally became an inheritance for the girls alone and though special respect and honor are paid to their chief rulers through these little effigies, or models, it is no longer observed with that special importance and strictness that formerly attended the celebration, as other dolls are brought in and paraded with those of the higher dignitaries. The dolls are not played with, but are arranged in great state on the shelves. Food made of rice and beans as well as little square cakes made of rice-flour are placed before them, in little dishes, while on the floor in front sits the little girl in rapt delight contemplating her treasures, and inviting her girl friends to share the delight with her; and the parents live over again the festivals of their childhood in watching the happiness of their little ones.

At the age of fifteen or sixteen the girl outgrows the festival; but the models, which are the common property of the family, are preserved for the younger members, and for the coming generation.

The boys take no part in this festival. But they look forward with the same eagerness to the fifth day of the fifth month when the *Nobori-no-Sekku* or Festival of Flags takes place; this is as exclusively for the boys as is the Festival of Dolls for their sisters. On this day the boy displays his models of warriors, standards, and toy swords, and indulges in war-like sports. In every home in which a boy has been born the previous year a flag, in the form of a huge fish made either of paper or cloth, and

painted in bright colors, with fins and everything complete, is suspended from the end of a long bamboo pole which is secured to the side of the house, or planted in the ground. This fish is made bag-like, with the mouth distended by a hoop, and from this hoop strings run which hold it to the pole. The wind inflates the fish and as it sways back and forth it bears a striking resemblance to a large fish struggling against the current. An extraordinary sight is presented on this day as one looks across a great city like Tokio and sees hundreds of these fishes of all sizes, some of them thirty or forty feet in length, and all swaying and struggling in the same direction. The fish represents the carp in its attempts to ascend

are never forgotten but, on the contrary, are to be seen everywhere with their parents during days of festivities.

The remarkable character of Japanese children, so utterly unlike ours as regards manners and gentleness, has often been commented upon by writers. In our country the ordinary life of a child is often one of repression and correction, and the traveller is amazed to find in Japan not only the absence of all this repression and discipline, but that the children are allowed the utmost freedom. They are treated as equals. "Perfect Freedom for the Child everywhere," might be the motto; and this freedom is never abused.

The girls' sports and games are always

with the baby of its family; and one of the prettiest yet drollest sights is the appearance of a large group of children actively engaged in bouncing ball, flying kites, or playing battledore and shuttlecock utterly unmindful of the little babies fastened securely yet loosely to their backs.

The infant having passed a year or two of its life in this way, in which it has had more healthful shakings up and down and more fresh air and sunshine than usually falls to the lot of our children in a decade of years, takes its turn at carrying some younger member of the family, and thus is added a new form of physical exercise and an experience in mental discipline in having lashed to its back this baby incubus for an hour or two with no escape from its uneasy struggles. It is a comical sight to see children tending their dolls in this way by tying them to their backs, and even the cat and dog may be carried in this way in play.

The infinite variety of toys and games for the Japanese child always excites the wonder and delight of foreigners. Toys of the most exquisite kind, and of endless character, are made. It would seem as if every object used by the Japanese is reproduced in miniature for the children's playthings. For the boys, swords, spears, fire-engines, and the standards of favorite companies; kites of every size and color; bows and arrows; tops and games of all kinds. For the girls models of houses and separate rooms; the kitchen with all its objects perfectly reproduced, cooking-ranges, the daintiest of tea-sets, dolls of endless variety from little caricatures in paper to the most elaborate baby with jointed limbs—and everywhere about the city the children are seen at play. In the open lots the boys are flying kites; in the gardens under the cherry blossoms brightly dressed children may be seen playing battledore and shuttlecock. In front of the poorer houses the frugal parents have spread a large straw mat upon the ground and upon this a number of children are having a tea-party. There is no place too sacred for the child. The broad flight of steps leading to the grand old temples, which are always open, have their pretty groups of children making mud pies or, with their toys spread out on the steps, playing various games.

With all this play and fun going on, the reader must not get the idea that the Japanese children spend all their time in play, for as far as I have observed the child is more industrious in Japan than in this country. The girls are seen in the morning dusting the rooms, and with wet cloths wiping the wood-work in the front of the house; late in the afternoon they are seen engaged in sweeping the street, just in front of the shop at home. Little boys are seen struggling along with packages and bundles, and doing errands of various kinds, assuming responsibilities in shops, measuring and weighing groceries, making change, and at night packing up the goods in compact bundles in readiness for the ever-dreaded conflagrations. In the country everybody is engaged in farm work—men, women and children. In the day time, as one rides through the villages, most of them seem absolutely deserted, so many of the people are absent in the rice fields at work.

NOTE.—I find in the *Analec*s of Confucius that when Confucius' eldest son was born the Duke of Loo sent the philosopher a present of a carp, and this may possibly indicate the origin and antiquity of the custom observed on the Festival of Flags.

—Wile Awake.



PREPARING FOR THE FESTIVAL OF DOLLS—"THE FAVORITE."

a river and is used as a symbol to illustrate the efforts a boy must make in his struggles for a higher position in life. The subject of a carp ascending a waterfall forms a favorite theme for the artist and may often be seen in Japanese picture books.

The Japanese child is taught above all things to be obedient and to be polite, and there is an indescribable charm in watching them at their games, not only because they are so gentle and amiable, but because they are so courteous to one another. The most confidential understanding seems to exist between parent and child, and in all the festivals of children the parents take the greatest interest and pleasure, and in the festivals of the older people the children

feminine as the boys' sports are masculine; the intermingling of the sexes in games is not customary, though among the lower classes one may often see upon the street boys and girls or even young men and women of the immediate neighborhood playing battledore and shuttlecock. Among the Samurai class boys are never permitted to play girls' games.

As an infant the little girl instead of being immured in a hot stuffy cradle, is secured upon the back of an older brother or sister, and is brought out into the air and sunshine for hours together. The little child that acts as the horse is by no means curbed in its movements, but freely joins in the sports with other children each equally burdened