

## BOYS AND GIRLS



### Among The Cherry Blossoms.

[Children all over the world love to hear about the little ones in other lands; so as you read about the Japanese children, do not forget that the little children in the kindergartens in Japan ask eager questions about their little brothers and sisters away over the big ocean. You may be sure that as they play their games under the cherry trees, laden with their beautiful pink blossoms, they talk over all they have heard of the 'queer little foreigners,' for that is what they think you are, you know.—Ed.]

Babies are welcomed with much rejoicing in Japan. The news is sent to all the family friends, and then visitors begin to arrive and gifts to pour in; with these there must always be dried fish or eggs, for good luck. When baby is a week old it is named, its head shaved, and the family eat red rice in honor of the day. When baby is thirty days old it is dressed in its best clothes of gay-colored silk or crape, and all the family go with it to some temple. There offerings are made to one of the gods, who is asked to watch over the child, and afterwards there is a great feast at baby's home; all the presents it has

received must be acknowledged on this day by sending cakes or red rice. Baby's clothes are shaped just like his mother's, and are put on all at once and fastened by a soft belt; they are long enough to cover his little bare feet and the sleeves come over his hands. Then unless his parents are rich enough to hire a servant to hold him all the time, baby is tied to his mother's back, or to his older sister's, and there he rides all day—sometimes asleep, sometimes watching what is going on. When the baby is seated on the floor, his knees are always bent back, so that he easily learns to sit in Japanese fashion, and when he begins to walk, the soft mats and the lack of furniture save him many bumps.

On the fifth of May, if we could look down on a Japanese city we could see, floating in the air over every house where a boy lives, a great fish of cloth or paper; the fish they represent is said to be strong enough to swim upstream, even over a waterfall, and so they express what the parents wish for their son, that he may be strong and brave enough to go against the current. A great many flags are flying on this boys' festival, and they bear

either the name or the portrait of a brave Japanese general who lived about six centuries ago. Inside the houses we should find more fishes and flags, and also dolls representing the heroes of history, whose stories are told the children even before they can understand them. In early spring the boys fly wonderful kites made to represent children or men or various animals; sometimes they make these fight in the air. They have other games like those American boys play.

On the third of March the baby girl is given a pair of dolls representing the Emperor and Empress, and these she keeps all her life; she carries them with her to her husband's house and adds them to the collection his mother and grandmothers have made. Every third of March all these dolls are brought out and arranged on shelves; before each Emperor and Empress is placed a table with food, and around them stand dolls representing the nobles and their servants. The little girls are not allowed to play with these, but have others for everyday use. In early spring they play battledore and shuttlecock in the streets, while their brothers fly kites.

There are innumerable toy shops