

# Northern Messenger

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## How the Children Keep New Year's Day in Japan.

(By Lizzie D. Armond, in 'Good Cheer.')

Before the New Year's festival comes there is a delightful rush and bustle, for though the Japanese are a very clean people the house must all be put in apple-pie order.

There is no Christmas in Japan, so this New Year's festival goes on for three days. The Mochi-man is the national Santa Claus; he always appears very mysterious-

ly some time the day before the first of January. As there are no chimneys in Japanese houses, he is obliged to slip through the door, and right where the almond-shaped eyes of the little ones can watch him. He boils, mixes and makes the delightful mochi that is formed into sticky cakes, after being worked about with a bamboo rod in a wooden bowl until as glossy as strained honey.

Night comes at last, and the children gladly scramble off to bed, though many of them do not sleep a wink. At mid-

night some of the grown folks make it a point to throw a handful of beans and rice in the face of the sleeping children; then begins the frolic. The beans and rice fly about in lively fashion, because in this way the thrower is supposed to wish that through the coming year good health, luck and happiness may follow the receiver and that Satan may not trouble him.

On New Year's Day the tiny maidens have new dresses, just as fine and bright-colored as their parents can afford. The girls play battledore and shuttlecock through the streets, and so wild does the excitement rage that one has to dodge balls flying on every side, and be careful not to tumble headlong over the children, who are skipping about like so many grasshoppers.

The boys, dressed in their best, fly gaudily-decorated kites; the fathers and mothers get up on the house roofs and send their long big kites skimming through the air.

The young folks are taken around to different houses to make friendly visits. You might really call this the children's festival, for any games that suit their fancy are immediately arranged and played, the parents entering into the fun quite heartily.

It is really a wonder that the children are not sick after three days of continual stuffing, as the shops are filled with curious looking and tasting candies, and fathers and mothers are only too ready to buy these sweets.

## The Fate of the Christmas Tree.

(By Mrs. Ida Woodbury Seymour.)

What becomes of all the Christmas trees? 'Why, they are put in the ash barrel, and carted away, of course,' is the answer that most people would give, and think it a foolish question to ask. This statement is true, in the main, and while it does describe the way in which a large proportion of the trees are gotten rid of, it by no means disposes of the whole of them, nor of the question: What is the fate of the gaily decked Christmas tree after the holiday season is over?

Before Christmas the evergreen tree, hemlock, balsam, fir, or spruce, was an object of universal interest. It was in evidence everywhere. It extended its green arms toward you as you walked along the street. Its spicy fragrance greeted you at the grocery, or the butcher's shop. Women with baskets and with babies, and women in rich furs or in cheap imitations, inspected the different varieties critically, and bargained with the snop-keeper for the particular tree which suited their fancy and purse.

Then what an air of mystery surrounded its entrance into the home. How it was smuggled into the house while the children were at school or under cover of darkness after they were in bed, and then secreted in the cellar or convenient closet until the time arrived for its adorning. How big it looked when set in place; even a little one gained in dignity and apparent size by being put upon a table or on a box upended