

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Tea Picking and a Tea-Party in Japan.

(By M. B. Stuart, in 'Good Cheer.')

Although the Japanese have cultivated and used tea for six centuries, it is only within the last forty years that they have exported it to other countries. It is said by the trade to be so popular in this country that nearly half of the tea consumed here comes from 'the Land of the Rising Sun,' 44,000,000 pounds being imported last year. This preference for the Japanese teas is due to their peculiar mildness of odor and taste, many Americans disliking the herby flavor of the Indian and Chinese products.

The shrub is like an orange plant; the

plant is like a tiny brown bean, and yields a valuable oil.

Japanese tea gardens are usually on hill slopes, which are terraced to retain the rains and the enriched soil. The plants are set out in rows, each shrub as symmetrical as if just pruned. Three crops a year are taken, the first yielding the finest quality.

It is a pretty sight to see the tea-pickers at work in one of these plantations. As the labor is light, women and children are employed; and the musmees (young girls) in the striped and flowered kimonos, bright head scarfs, and clogs, stripping each her bush with dexterous brown fingers, and showering the precious leaves into the splint basket at her feet, chatter

borate process to produce the tea of commerce.

A tea party in Japan is a very different function from those you are accustomed to. You are conveyed to your destination through strange, bright streets in a two-wheeled vehicle drawn by a two-legged steed—a blue-clad one, with a reed hat and a painted paper lantern, who will feel well paid at ten cents a mile. He draws up with a flourish before a low, open house standing in a wonderful toy garden of dwarfed trees, crags, lakes, and such features of a varied landscape, diminished to fit a half-acre lot. Your hostess greets you from the raised verandah, kneeling with her forehead touching the matting.

'Irrashai!' she says, in her pretty voice. 'Condescend to enter! You are very welcome!'

So you step from the jinriksha, pay the kurumaya, and slip off your shoes according to Japanese etiquette; though, being a stranger, you must make your debut among the company in your 'stocking feet,' the dainty straw sandals offered you requiring the stocking to be divided at the great toe to accommodate the velvet string.

Madame's daughters now appear, flutter to their knees in respectful greeting, and flutter to their feet again as lightly as birds; and the lady of the house leads you by the hand up a ladderlike staircase to a wide, open chamber.

A smiling musmee brings you a round silken cushion to sit on; another offers you, on a lacquered tray, a tiny brass pipe, and a silken bag of delicate Japanese tobacco, and whether male or female, you are expected to fill the bowl no bigger than an acorn cup, and inhale one fragrant whiff at least.

Then comes 'the honorable tea,' in a squat little pot sitting in a wicker nest; the pale yellow beverage is poured into fairy cups of exquisite ware, fanciful, many-colored cakes are served with it, and 'there you are.'

## A Double Thanksgiving.

(M. Louise Ford, in the 'Wellspring.')

'Oh, dear me! I suppose we've got to get ready for that whole tribe of children for Thanksgiving! I'd like to know how 't would seem once to eat somebody else's turkey, and pudding that I didn't have to stone the raisins for.'

Irene was not in a happy frame of mind this morning and attacked the bowlful of raisins before her rather savagely, and her face would not have done her credit had Joe snapped his camera at her just then.

Her mother mildly remonstrated:—

'Christmas turkey and pudding are just as good, my dear, and we have eaten Aunt Clara's many a time. It is no more than fair that we should return the compliment occasionally.'

'Oh, yes, I s'pose so,' replied Irene ungraciously; 'and have cranberry sauce and gravy spilled everywhere, and spend the next day wiping sticky finger marks off of everything. Thanksgiving is a perfect farce; what I shall be thankful for is that it's over.'

'Oh, my daughter, that tongue of yours says many things you do not half mean,



JAPANESE TEA-GATHERERS.

leaves are smooth, leathery, dark green in color, and have finely serrated edges. When chewed, they have no more distinctive flavor of tea than a lilac or rose leaf would have. It is the treatment they are subjected to which brings out the precious qualities so desired by tea drinkers.

The tea blossom is a pure white flower with yellow stamens, resembling in shape and size a single white wild rose. It is so fragrant that it is used to scent the higher grades of teas.

The seed-pod is a little like that of the convolvulus; but there are only three seeds to the pod, and instead of a many angled, hard black seed, that of the tea

and sing in their soft, happy voices as if it was all a merry game.

Thirty pounds of green leaves are considered a good day's picking; and as the greatest of care is exercised to avoid injuring the bushes or wasting the leaves, the pickers must work diligently despite their light-heartedness.

Then the return home at eventide of the long string of bright-garbed women and grave, quaint little children carrying their baskets on their backs, is very picturesque. The fresh leaves are taken to the drying houses, where men replace the women, and subject them to an ela-