

that wind swept plateau where the sharp bamboo spikes are driven into your face like rain of steel, and where you tread anxiously and carefully for miles over a plain studded with

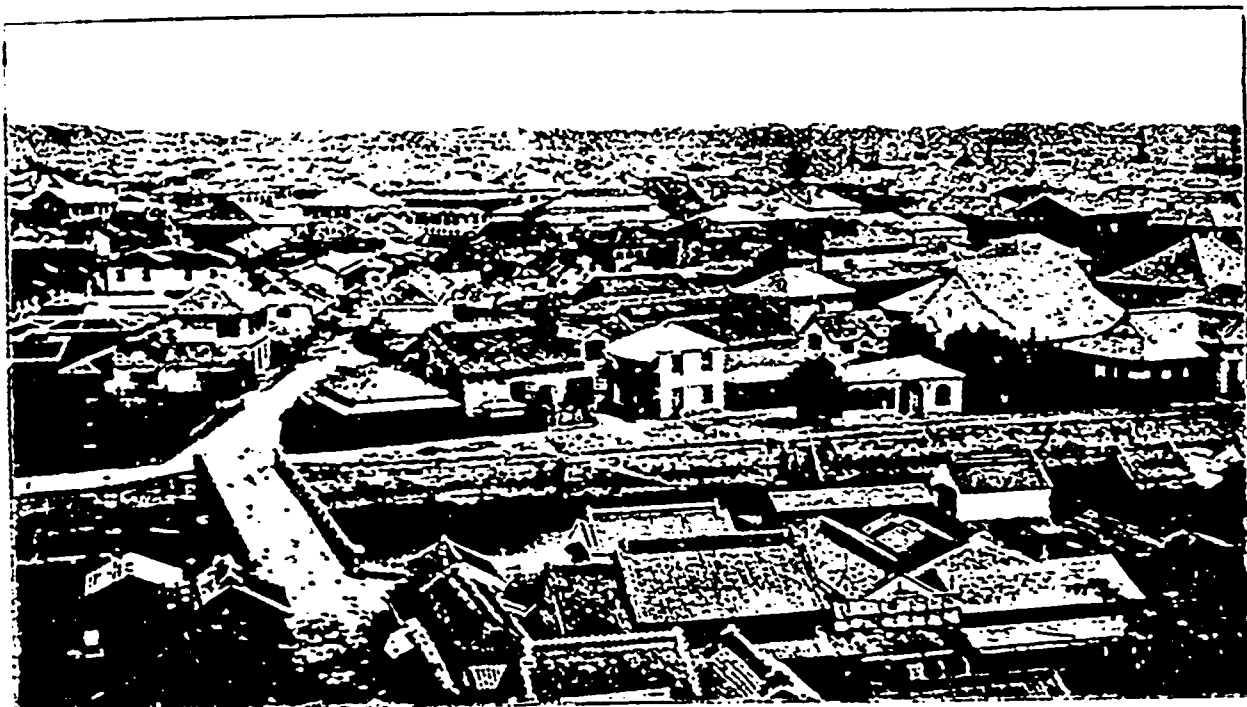


quills as erect as on the back of the "fretful porcupine." We pass Hakone and its lovely lake looking like a green palm leaf fallen from the forest and sparkling in the winter sun. Once more the Japanese girls beckon us to rest, and bow low to our "honorable" selves. We tiffin at the doorway of a mountain hotel, and the girls are as happy as children when my companion shows them some harmless conjuring tricks with a bit of string. We gaze at the Mikado's summer palace, erected at an enormous expense, on a fair green

promontory, but which he has never visited and probably never will, and then gradually we ascend to the finest mountain view in all Japan, the view of the ten provinces, a landscape of sea, mountain, valley and promontory which Switzerland itself can scarcely rival even at Lucerne or the Engadine. On the other side of the mountain, we come to a welcome

lilies under a protecting rock. The towers on that memorable morning sprang up in their full glory and abundance. At last, after weary search and waiting, my eyes beheld in full sunshine a Japanese orchard of pink and white bloom, with tiny daffodils in cozy corners, and the bluest of blue skies, without a cloud. At last I heard a rivulet rushing down the mountain side, but amidst acres of parched yellow grass. But, alas! in this Eastern semblance of spring, no perfect perfume of blossoms, no blue bells in the forest ways, and, though I listened till my ears ached, no song of birds.

As I wander in silence wondering at this imitation—for it is an imitation of an English spring—that poem by Browning keeps ringing in my ears, "Oh, to be in England now, that April's there." I ask myself repeatedly, Is this so much better than England after all? Is this much vaunted Japan to override old England where nature is concerned? Has the East a privilege of blossom? Why, I have seen more exquisite blossoms at Niagara than in countless miles of Japan. Is there one flower in the lap of Nature here that we could not find, scarcely in such stately profusion, but with a sweeter, purer, homelier, scent in the dear old fields and woods and memory gardens at the other end of the world? I recall the exquisite stillness, the everlasting sweetness, the daffodils and hawthorn



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF YOKOHAMA, JAPAN.

change. All the snow has disappeared. The cruel cutting wind has been barred out by the hills, and we find ourselves in a climate as warm and as genial as at Scilly in springtime when the golden daffodils are in bloom. It is infinitely delightful for it is so like home, but home with a difference. I can never get reconciled to the dingy black and grey cottages of Japan after the red roofs and golden thatch of old England. If we could only transport here to this dingy and untidy looking Japan our simple villages, our sweet smell of lavender and old world gardens, our stocks and early minuet!

Atami is like an Eastern version of the bays and gorges and blossoming nooks of Dorsetshire, Devonshire, and Cornwall. On many a morning I have wandered for hours in a glorious garden of white plum blossom, a miniature paradise of Japan scattered about with the everlastings tea houses, decorated alas! by the withered salaam tree with her blackened teeth and the grinning deer chak of a girl. Here with delight I found the first violet of the year, pecked a branch of Easter palm or willow, and discovered a warm bed of Lent

bloom, and apple blossom of the Holy Vale in Scilly. I see in imagination a cherry orchard in bloom that any traveller by the railway may see between Strood and Faversham. I miss, for the first time for many a year, my pilgrimage from Gravesend to Gad's Hill, from Gad's Hill to Cobham, when the hawthorn is in bloom on every tree and bush and hedge in the loveliest of English parks. I shall not see this year a certain wood in a corner of the Kentish paradise where the blue bells look indeed like "the heaven up-breaking through the earth" and the sky blue undergrowth conquers the everlasting green of the fields. I am in Japan, the land of flowers, under the blossoms, in the sunshine, and in full view of the sea. I know that though I have come all these thousands of miles to see the flower fields of Mikado Land, I would rather see the first spring-day in England, with the scents that are full of exquisite old memories, and the songs of birds that here are hushed or stifled. I am in Japan, not in England. It is springtime without perfume and a land of flowers destitute of song!



A Christmas Song.

"Born this day" was the midnight song,
That fell on the shepherds' ears:
"Born this day" in yon silent town
On which the clear eyed stars looked down:
And the pean of endless years
Floats on the wintry air along.
As it bursts from the lips of the angel throng
A calm to their needless fears.
"Born this day"—oh, the wondrous word!
"Born this day"—Jesus Christ, the Lord!

"Born a King"—such the wise men's word
That fell on the ear of power.
"Born a King"—and we follow the star
That gleamed for us in the orient far
And hath led us to this good hour.
We seek him with longing that will not cease
Till we find him, and hail him, Prince of Peace.
Hail him Wonderful, Counsellor.
"Born a King"—oh, the wondrous word!
"Born a King"—Jesus Christ, the Lord!

"Born this day"—let us swell the strain
Which came on the midnight clear.
"Born a King"—let us own the sign,—
The gleaming star of the Child divine,
Our Redeemer from sin and fear.
Let us hail him Saviour, in glad refrain,
Let us hail him born as our King to reign
And worship with heart sincere.
"Born this day"—oh, the wondrous Word
"Born a King"—Jesus Christ, the Lord.

The Interior