

"Mr. Champneys! Who would have thought of seeing you here? Where did you drop from?"

"Not from very far," responded Roger. "What! did you not know that I am Colonel Everard's agent?"

"No, indeed I did not, though how it was never mentioned to us I cannot understand. There is Constance; you remember her, don't you?"

"Of course I do. How do you do, Miss Everard? I have been expecting to see you, sooner or later, ever since I have been here."

"Uncle George, why did you not tell me Mr. Champneys was here?" cried Constance, with a vivid smile of pleasure, which did not escape Winifred. She immediately rose and, quietly vacating her chair by her cousin's side, slipped away to make room for Mr. Champneys.

But Roger did not take the tacitly proffered seat; he was standing at the sofa's side, looking down on the pale face, and noting how the child he had known formerly had changed into a very pretty girl. He was joined by Colonel Everard, who came up with a basket full of large ripe peaches, which he deposited in Con's lap.

"There, my dear child!"

"Do you expect me to eat all these?" she asked.

"I am not quite so greedy. Mr. Champneys, you sit down and have one, and then we will talk about old times."

"You speak as though you were fifty, Con," said her uncle; "your old times with Mr. Champneys must be when you were in the nursery."

"The schoolroom, if you please. Our old times are schoolroom teas, are they not, Mr. Champneys? I do not believe you have quite made out yet, Uncle George, that Mr. Champneys was in father's regiment."

"Yes, I have; I knew it all along; but, to tell you the truth, I had quite forgotten it till your father came to a standstill just now, up in the Park, and stood pointing in dumb amazement to Roger, who was walking across. Then there was a good deal of explaining, and apologies on my part for not

having mentioned the fact, both in letters and conversation."

"Then, as you are penitent, you shall have a peach."

Soon the rest of the party had gathered round the sofa; all the details of Roger's old regiment were gone into; the various changes related, its history minutely discussed, till he was finally sent home to fetch his sisters, for all three to come back to dinner. Yet no one seemed to miss Winifred.

She was up in her room, busily at work, sitting just behind the window-curtain, from which point she could see, without being seen, the party on the lawn.

She was thinking of all that had passed just now; of Con's bright smile, and the warm greeting that had passed between her and Roger; of her love for her uncle, and her vehement words in his defence. What a hypocrite he must be, with a heart like a nether millstone, to pass for the kind good uncle to a cripple girl, whilst his own sister had been left to poverty and penury!

She rose and folded up her work, and just opened her door to listen if they were come up-stairs yet to dress for dinner. They were coming now. She could hear Constance's laugh, and then Colonel Everard's rejoinder—

"Let me give you an arm, little one; you ought to have had a room on the ground floor. I will speak to your aunt about it."

Together they were advancing, his strong arm supporting her, stopping on Winny's landing.

"To-morrow we shall have some guests, which will make it more amusing for you," he was saying. "Let me see, dear, how old are you now?"

"Seventeen, Uncle George—growing quite antique."

Winifred shut her door with a sigh. Constance seventeen! She had taken her for about fifteen. Why, she herself was only eighteen, and it seemed to her that there lay a lifetime between them both. But then Constance had not lost both father and mother; she was not utterly alone in the world; she was not—dependent.

END OF CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

## A NEW YEAR'S DAY IN JAPAN.



THE Japanese have more than twenty fanciful names by which they designate their beautiful country, but the *sobriquet* which to a foreigner seems the most fitting is certainly the "Land of Holidays." No excuse is too trivial for a Japanese to make holidays, and when he does not make them himself, the Government politely steps in and makes them for him. Thus, one day in every six,

called *ichi roku*, is a statute holiday; so is the third day in every moon, whilst the list of national festivals commemorative of great men or of great deeds is simply inexhaustible. If a great man dies amongst us, we commemorate him by a monument in Westminster Abbey: if a great man dies in Japan, he is remembered by a holiday; so that what with the mythical great men who are thus remembered, and the historical great men who have died during the past 5,000 years, it is a little difficult to find a day of the Japanese year which has not the name of a celebrity attached to it; just as, in glancing down a Roman Catholic calendar, we find that every day has

its particular saint. But the greatest day of the year, the festival *par excellence* of the people, the festival into which is compressed the essence of the fun and enjoyment and happiness of all the other days put together, is the festival of the New Year. We may be familiar with the celebration of the day in Paris or New York, but the proceedings there are tame and lifeless when compared with the spontaneous outburst of rejoicing which characterises New Year's Day in Japan.

Preparations for it have to be made weeks beforehand, both public and private. The father of a family has to select and purchase the presents which it will be *de rigueur* for him to make, not only to his own family and his intimate friends, but to every one with whom he has been brought into the slightest business contact during the past year; the mother must see that her children's new dresses are ready, and that the domestic arrangements for the great festival are in order; the damsels must decide in what fashion the *obi* or sash is to be worn, or whether beetles or butterflies are to be *en règle* for hair-pins; the servants are already cleaning and sweeping out the house, so that it may present a spotless face to the New Year; the tradesman ascertains that his books are duly balanced, so that he may start afresh with a clean bill of health; and so on, through all grades and classes of society.

In the streets we may notice the effervescence long before the actual day. Coolies stagger along the streets beneath loads of bamboo and green-stuff, whilst carpenters are already hard at work fastening the festoons of leaves and flowers along the fronts of the houses; not in irregular patterns, if you please—there is no such a thing as independence of ideas in Japanese street decoration. Every house must be like its neighbour, so that although different streets may adopt different forms of ornament, each house in each street will be found to resemble its neighbour in the smallest detail. The cake shops and the toy shops and the finery shops are crowded, whilst the shops which deal with the sterner necessities of life are comparatively deserted.

But this effervescence is nothing to the grand burst on the day itself. There is nothing picturesque in an English holiday crowd, simply because of the complete absence of colour. We are a practical people, and we have found out that sombre attire assorts well with sombre skies; but in Japan the eye is simply bewildered by the ever-moving streams of colour which lighten the darkest streets, and as Japanese houses are of an uniform brown colour, a big city may be fairly represented by one great brown smudge. Early in the morning—that is to say, early for the Japanese, who by no means harmonise in their ideas with the name given by them to their country, the Land of the Rising Sun—the streets are thronged by a crowd of men, women, and children, each one of whom has his or her newest garments on, and all of whom are bent upon the one errand of paying visits.

The old "first footing" custom of our "north countree" finds its replica in this fair land, 15,000 miles away. To be the first visitor is considered as

auspicious, as to be late is considered the reverse. And it is strange to observe the orthodox manner of paying a visit. The object of the visit—generally the master of the house, as his family are abroad discharging their social duties—is seated gravely on the mats at the back of the room which opens on the street; a tray with wine and sweets on one hand, and the inevitable charcoal brasier on the other. To him a visitor comes, carefully shaking off his clogs at the door; he prostrates himself upon the extreme edge of the matting, his forehead touching the mats, and his hands placed under his shoulders. Delivering himself of a few guttural sounds, he moves forward a few inches, and indulges in another prostration, and so on until he is within a couple of feet or so of the recipient of his politeness. The latter then addresses him in a language of compliment and self-abasement which is simply untranslatable, but the drift of which is that he is utterly unworthy to be the object of such attention from such an honourable lord, and that in all humility he begs that he will accept a cup of wine. The still prostrate visitor declares himself to be so utterly beneath contempt as not to think of taking such a liberty; but he invariably does so, as a real refusal would give offence, and in a few seconds the pair are engaged in familiar conversation.

Before taking his leave, the visitor drops, as it were by accident, his New Year's gift, neatly tied up in paper by gold thread, and with a renewal of gutturals and prostrations, backs himself out, and proceeds to his next house of call. This goes on in all directions throughout the morning, during which time the number of pipes smoked—each pipe, it should be borne in mind, consisting but of a couple of whiffs—and cups of wine drunk by the visitors are simply incalculable. At mid-day there is a general adjournment for feasting on a sufficiently sumptuous scale, although nothing in comparison with what will follow later in the day.

After the meal the streets are, if possible, more crowded than they were in the morning, for the calls have all been made, and every one is at liberty to go abroad. The temples are now the chief objects of attraction, and for hours their approaches are completely blocked by a chattering, laughing, gesticulating, singing, and shouting crowd. An English mob might learn a salutary lesson from the behaviour of a Japanese crowd. We may spend the entire day in the streets without seeing a single instance of drunkenness or riotous behaviour, or without hearing a single angry or offensive expression. Fun there is plenty, and a little horse-play, but every one is good-humoured and happy, and the positions of the few policemen scattered about are certainly sinecures. The noise about the temples is deafening; above the clatter of the clogs on the stones, above the Babel of voices, the ceaseless sound of cash rattling into the temple coffers, and the ringing of the bells which summon the god to attention, are heard. Service there is none, although the filthy, shaven priests are there to keep an eye upon the offerings of the faithful. Each man or woman advances to the coffer, throws in his or her handful

of copper cash, bows the head for a few seconds in prayer, and the next moment is laughing and joking with the friends below.

In truth, Japan has been rightly called the Paradise of Children. In all directions, upon the day of this festival, we meet them, from the two-year-old slung upon its mother's back, to the knowing little miss of twelve all radiant in new garments, her hair carefully pomatumed and plastered, and garnished with fanciful stuff and pins, her lips tipped with gold, the three lines of brown skin showing through the powder on her neck: her *obi* of the brightest colours, her socks of the whitest, and her clogs shining with brand-new black varnish. Kite-flying and battledore and shuttlecock playing are *de rigueur*: shuttle-cocks darken the air, alight on the noses of passers-by, fly about in all directions, pursued by shrieks of laughter and shouting which it does one's heart good to hear.

And so the mirth and revelry continue until the peerless blue sky grows darker, and the last rays of sunshine have deserted the great red roofs of the temples; the streets are gradually deserted, the house-

shutters are pulled close, and the sounds of jollity issuing from every house proclaim that the great feast of the day is in full swing: a curious feast, according to our ideas; sweets to begin with, probably candied sea-weed and ginger; then slices of raw fish, fried fish, boiled fish, followed by pork or chicken soup, finishing up with cakes and sweetmeats *ad libitum*.

The wine-shops are full of great sturdy fellows waxing merry over measures of "Flower in full bloom," or the "Wine of three Virtues;" the tea-houses are crowded, and the noise therein of twanging guitars and revelry is deafening. A little later and the streets are crowded with folk bound to the theatres, for your Japanese citizen is a blind votary of Thespis, and will sit until the small hours of the morning, absorbed in the adventures of the Forty-seven Rônins, or roaring with laughter at the broad jokes of the "Bewitched Kettle." And with the next day he resumes his ordinary life, conscious of having done his duty to himself, his neighbours, and his country, by a faithful, though in many respects by no means wise or profitable, observance of the New Year's Festival.

## A NEW CITY OF HEALTH.



IT seems that at last the Government of New Zealand is becoming alive to the great importance of the medicinal springs and hot lakes of their North Island, as they have determined to found and establish a species of National Hygeia in that district, where it is hoped the sick of all nations will flock to be cured by the healing waters. The new city is called—

for it is already established on paper—Rotorua, after the celebrated lake upon whose southern shore it is to be built. The site of the city is chosen with singular happiness; not only is it among the most valuable of the springs, but the view of the lake obtained is very beautiful. A large expanse of clear blue water, on which seems to float the island of Mokoia, surrounded with hills densely clothed with the evergreen forest of New Zealand, lies in front of it; on one side is Ohinemutu, the old Maori town, with its countless hot springs and lakelets; and on the other Whakarewarewa, with the magnificent geyser that sometimes throws an enormous volume of boiling water high into the air.

Plans of the town are already drawn, and a good

deal of the land has been sold in lots for building and other purposes, and the erection of houses has doubtless commenced before this, the forests upon the opposite side of the lake affording an almost unlimited supply of most excellent timber for that purpose. The Government has, with wisdom, marked off large reserves for recreation and sanatorium grounds, which, as this is especially designed for a health-resort, will eventually be of the utmost importance. A medical superintendent has been appointed, who will see to the sanitation of the new city, and who will also, doubtless, be of great service in overlooking the erection of suitable baths.

It would seem that the scheme possesses every element of success. Not alone are the waters known to be more efficacious than any others, there is also the exquisite scenery of the whole district, and the wonders of the hot lakes, geysers, and terraces, the wild weirdness of which is unequalled through the world, which will attract, doubtless, many travellers thither. It is only lately that the Government has been enabled to make terms with the Maori possessors who, till quite recently, have considered it their policy to retain a strict seclusion in this district. Of late years, certainly, travellers have been enabled to visit the hot lakes, but the natives have held absolute possession, and have shown a jealousy in the preservation of their rights, and a strong determination to resist the encroachments of the *Pakehah* (the white man), that are somewhat singular when the freedom with which they parted with so much of their land is considered. For a long time they would have nothing on their lakes but the uneasy, if trustworthy, native canoe,