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PREFACE.

IN no country in the world do flowers play so important a role, enter more thoroughly into the life and heart of the people, or are more aesthetically appreciated than in Japan. With the equable climate of these sea-girt isles, there is a constant succession of adorous blooms in every month in the year: beginning with the scent-laden narcissus or jonquil (most poetically termed *Suisen*, or "hermit of the waters") in January, and ending with hardy chrysanthemums and adventurous plums in December. Moreover it seems that the Japanese have more thoroughly learned to appreciate the harmonies of floral colour and the grace of form than any other people on the face of the globe. Like the Pre-Raphaelites, they find rare beauty in the petals, corolla and calyx of one flower rather than in a heterogeneous and unartistic floral mélange. A bouquet in foreign style is barbarous rather than beautiful in Japanese eyes.

Flower-gardening and floriculture in general have been carried to perfection in Japan; so much so that it really seems as if the floriculturist were able to make his obedient blooms take shape and colour at will. Sometimes flowers of no special name in foreign lands, are made to participate in artistic triumphs here. The morning-glory, for instance, is made to assume all sorts of shapes, sizes, and colours. Indeed, some persons of elegant tastes spend all their leisure moments in the cultivation and ennobling of one flower—one genus, one species, or even one variety. The cherry and plum are not, as with us, cultivated for their fruit, but for their flowers; and ages of this sort of care have created floral marvels in double, treble, seven and even eight-fold blossoms, of perfect hue and most intoxicatingly sweet fragrance. In a word, one cannot understand the real beauty or artistic significance of flowers without coming to "Floral Japan."

This little book is intended to convey to the world at large a sense of what Japan has achieved in floriculture; to show how splendidly beautiful are her floral creations; and to appeal to that sixth sense: the love of all that is good and true and beautiful.

FLORAL

JAPAN

BY

MISS

FLORA

SWEET.



THE PLUM.

(UMÉ.)

FROM the latter part of January on through the cold month of February, the plum-trees present scenes of unequalled beauty. As already stated, the plum is not cultivated so much for its fruit as for its blooms; and thus it comes that Japanese floriculturists have been able to produce miracles of beauty: tiny, dwarf-trees, with a short, gnarled trunk and only half-a-dozen, it may be, drooping branches—yet in the season covered with hundreds or thousands of sweet-scented buds, whose tender beauty ravishes the senses as it exalts the mind.

In the great cities and towns there is no house, however humble, without its tiny potted plum-tree in February, glorifying with its regal beauty even the lowliest cottage. Some parts of Japan are celebrated for their plums, particularly *Kameido* and *Kinogawa* in the suburbs of *Tokyo*; *Sugita*, near *Yokohama*; the village of *Okamoto*, not far from *Kobe*; and *Tsukigase* in *Yamato*. There are however, a score of other famous places. In *Kameido*, there are trees of curious shape, many centuries old, believed to have been grown from slips of the original favourite tree of the died *Sugawara-no-Michizane*, *Tenjin-sama* or patron of literature. From their peculiar contorted form they are known as the *ga-ryo-bai* or "Sleeping Dragon Plums."



THE CHERRY.

(SAKURA.)

*S*ITO *wa bushi, hana wa sakura*, says the old proverb, "the man of men is the warrior, the flower of flowers is the cherry." Odes by the thousand, tales and romances by the hundreds and innumerable pictures have been indited, composed or limned in honour of this flower, which is preëminently the darling of the Japanese. "When we speak of flowers without further specification," the writer was once told by a fair Japanese, "we always mean the cherry." And so the five-petaled flower is met everywhere: on the caps of school-boys, on the crests of lordly families, carved into the wooden lintels and panels, painted on screens, fans and hanging-scrolls, reproduced in gold, silver, copper, bronze, iron or faiënce—in fact, whenever we turn the flower greets us in some form or other, so deep a hold has it taken on the hearts of the Japanese. The fruit is dwarfed and inedible, but scientific dendriculture has succeeded in producing wonderful and perfect flowers, varying in all shades from a faint pink to a deep rose-hue, which is indescribably lovely. The cherry is at its best from March to April, when it may be seen everywhere, and everywhere claims its meed of admiring praise. In or near *Tōkyō*, the most famous cherry-trees are found at *Muko-jima*, *Ueno Park*, and *Koganei*; but celebrated the Empire over are the trees of *Yoshino* in *Yamato*, and *Arashiyama*, near *Kyōto*. The latter in particular is without a parallel.



THE PEONY AND DAHLIA.

(*BOTAN* and *SHAKUYAKU*.)

JUNE, our foreign "month of roses," is not particularly favoured in that direction in Japan, though some varieties of this Queen of Flowers have of late years, become very popular. In Japan June is preëminently the month of the peony and dahlia. Both flowers are gaudy, rain-bow-hued, and have been made to assume giant proportions by skilful nursing and grafting. But the Peony and Dahlia are very popular in spite of their great gaudiness. Some blooms of unusual size and remarkable colouring often command surprisingly high prices. In the gardens of the wealthy one always find a patch or two devoted to the cultivation of the peony, whose opening is celebrated by the inviting of admiring guests and the composing of odes in the flower's honour. For it is one of the most idyllic observances of the Japanese that they write short poems in praise of the blossoms they most admire, and fasten these little lyrics to some bough, branch or twig of the parent tree or plant. In *Mukojima* when the plums and cherries blossom nearly every tree of note is laden with complimentary verselets, often of a high degree of poetic excellence. There is a kind of peony called the *Tenjiku-botan* or "Thibetan peony" which is also a great favourite and of prodigious size. This is, perhaps, the most beautiful of all the varieties.



THE WISTARIA.

(FUJI.)

BEAUTIFUL as are the many other favoured flowers of this Sunland, probably that which excites the greatest admiration among foreigners is the wistaria, which grows in Japan to far greater perfection than it is ever seen in any other country. The great white, blue or purple bunches, three, four, and sometimes even six feet in length, resembling and even smelling like our adorous old friend the sweet-pea, are, during the golden month of May, the "murmurous haunts of bees" and myriads of other winged insects, all drinking deep draughts from the chanced nectar within the perfect blooms. The only drawback to the wistaria is that it droops and fades so quickly when torn from its parent stem. It seems incapable of living without its bath of sunshine and its assiduous suite of bees.

The wistaria, although a climbing plant, often attains great age, the stem gradually growing thicker until at last it looks not unlike the oak. One solitary plant, carefully trained over trellises, sometimes covers a surprisingly large space of ground. This vine, the leaves of which remind one of the acacia, is of surprisingly rapid growth and great endurance. From a pot-flower it will, when placed in the open, run in a few months over the sides of a house or form a complete and most attractive bower. Very cold winters, however, stunt its growth. It is seen at its best in the central provinces of the Empire.



THE IRIS AND SWEET FLAG.

(*AYAME* and *SHÖBU*.)

SO the rearing of the Iris and Sweet-flag—both plants that are better known wild in the Occident than as garden favourites—the Japanese have always given loving heed. In consequence of this, they have succeeded in producing very striking flowers, of strange and wondrous colouring, the life of which is not elsewhere to be seen.

As one feature of every garden of any pretension to size is a tiny pond with quaint bridges thrown across it here and there, it is a very easy matter to provide the damp and marshy soil beloved of these two flowers. In former times the iris-garden or pond of the Shoguns is said to have been of marvellous beauty; at present—in so far as *Tokyo* is concerned—the best place for the iris is *Horikiri*, to which garden tens of thousands of people yearly make pilgrimages in order to surfeit their eyes with colour and floral beauty. The season is a short one and the people are prompt to take advantage of it; for it is only for a fortnight or so in the hot July month that the flowers are at their finest. All sorts of fanciful names are given to the many varieties, some of which are—like most Japanese appellations of the kind—indicative of a most delicate and poetic imagination.

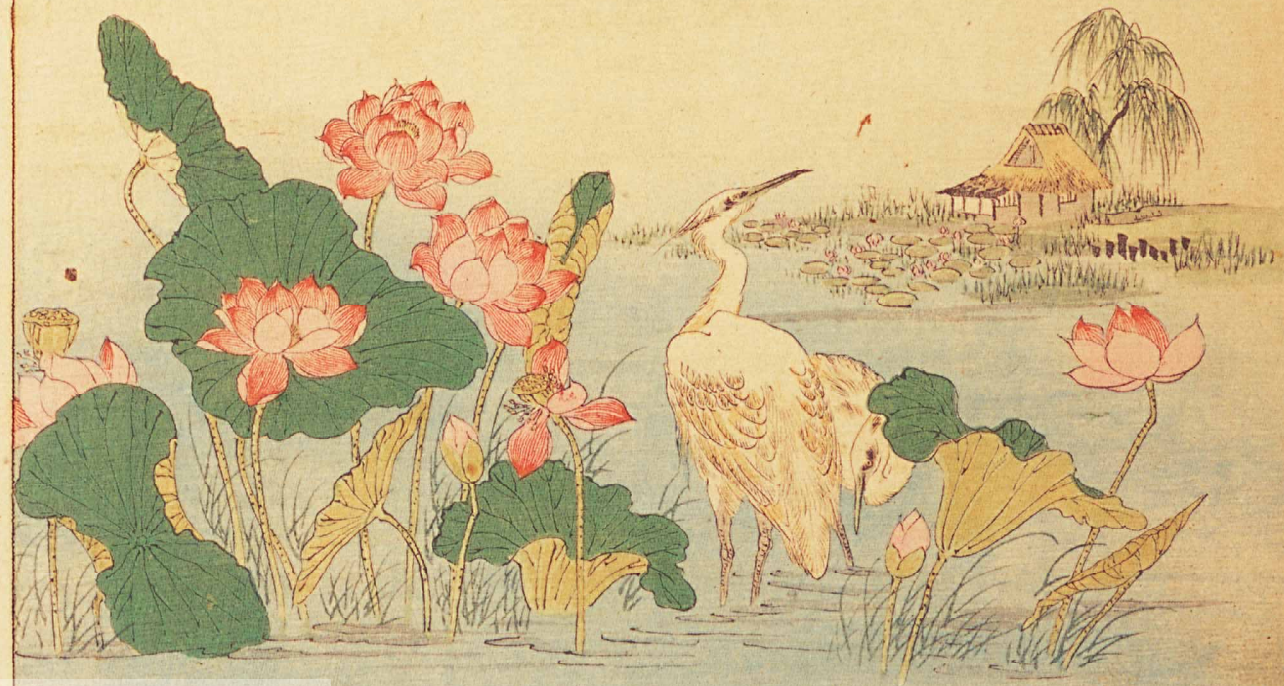


THE LOTUS.

(HASU.)

REGAL among blooms of more than royal magnificence, the lotus—the gorgeous guest of August—is connected all the way from India to Japan with religious ideas: that, especially, of spotless purity amidst the evils of this world.

There are two kinds of lotus: one of a perfect, resplendent white, the other of a delicate pink. The former is more frequent, though they are often seen growing side by side. Lake *Shinobazu*, near *Ueno Park, Tokyo*, is famous for its lotus-flowers, as are many other places. In temple-grounds there is, almost without exception, one pond or two devoted to the cultivation of this flower. In the fine arts, every part of the lotus is utilized, and many painters have been adepts in portraying its varied beauties. There are tea-pots and tea-cups in imitation of the flower and leaf; carved stands representing the stem and fruit, and hundreds of other favourite delineations. And the flower is surely worthy of all this meed of loving praise, for never was anything lovelier dreamed by poet or painter. Spotless and of virgin hue though imbedded in mud and slime, the lotus seems far above and uncontaminated by the sordid cares of life. The lilies of the field! Solomon in all his glory was not arranged like unto one of these.



AUTUMN FLOWERS.

NEVER was a country so blessed in the possession of autumnally resplendent trees and plants than Japan. And it is for this reason, perhaps, that poets and artists of all time have declared their preference for the fall of the year, with that gentle love of the sadly beautiful which is so characteristic of the sensitive Oriental. The spring is gorgeous, radiant in hue, fresh with the perfumed breath of the adolescent year, clad in the rainbow and crown with perennial youth; but the Autumn appeals more deeply to that sentiment of soft melancholy, half-pleasant regret, to which the heart always responds so readily.

Most brilliant, a veritable conurbation of every shade of red are the maples in autumn, particularly in October, when the hillsides are often seen as if enveloped in flames. Most famous are the maples of *Nikkō*, and those of *Minomo-yama*, not far from *Osaka*. The latter in particular beggar all laudatory description, one is ravished with the ineffable beauty of Nature in her tenderest mood.

Among autumn-flowers, or those peculiar to the ninth and tenth months of the year, may be noted the lespedeza (*hagi*), a most delicately beautiful plant. Space forbids more than a passing reference to the blue-and-white flowerets of *Karukaya*, the perfumed *Sazanka* (a kind of camellia), the yellow-and-white blooms of the *Ominashi*; and the early *Tsubaki* (camellia Japonica). But enough has been said to prove the beauty of the autumn scenery of Fair Japan.



THE CHRYSANTHEMUM.

(KIKU.)

ONE needs not sing the praises of the chrysanthemum to foreigners now-a-days, for the flower has come to be known and be loved the wide world over. Yet no matter how Occidental florists may have succeeded in producing strange and beautiful varieties, Japan still retains her preëminence.

The *Kiku* is the Imperial crest, and the sixteen-lobed or petaled flower is used as a heraldic sign by the Imperial family alone. Others may have the same flower on their coats, but with a less number of petals. The Japanese delight in its perfume, and one of their most aesthetic dishes is a dainty salad made of the petals of a special variety. In November, many gardens are filled with wonderful specimens of the floriculturist's art, which in this particular branch, has achieved true floral miracles. There are chrysanthemums of every hue, from a deep gold to the faintest shade of pink, and from Imperial purple to a vivid crimson. Their petals and corolla are of every conceivable shape; sometimes spatulate, at other like fairy filaments, or again resembling the plumes of the ostrich. Each year sees new and beautiful varieties produced, so that their name is legend.

If the cherry be the flower *par excellence* of Japan, the chrysanthemum is the spoiled pet of the Japanese, who never tire of singing its praises.



