

THE JAPANESE FLORAL CALENDAR.

BY ERNEST W. CLEMENT, M. A.

X. THE MAPLE.

AS we have already stated, the Japanese word *hana* is much more comprehensive in meaning than the English word "flower," and includes also grasses and leaves. It is for that reason, therefore, that the maple, with its beautiful leaves, may be treated under our general heading.

It is, however, an open question whether the maple should be treated this month or next. In Japanese calendars generally, the chrysanthemum is put down for the ninth month (o. c.), or October, and the maple for the tenth month (o. c.), or November. But, as the Emperor's birthday comes on November 3, and the chrysanthemum is an imperial badge, we have reserved that flower for next month. Moreover, it is during the month of October, according to the *Hand Book of Japan*, that the famous maples of Nikko and Tatta should be visited.

The maple is also given the name of "poison-dispelling plant," because "there is an idea that the maple absorbs all poison and infection from the air." Mr. Conder also informs us that "this is one of the most important flowerless trees, the branches of which are used as 'flowers' in Japanese compositions." It is appropriate to use it in combination with the chrysanthemum (white or yellow); and a painting of a stag requires maples in association with it.

But if we may believe Miss Scidmore, the maple has also its more practical use; for "the coquette sends her lover a leaf or branch of maple to signify that, like it, his love has changed."* And when a blush of modesty spreads over a maiden's cheek, the Japanese say that "she is scattering red leaves on her face." And a small delicate hand is called "a hand like a maple leaf."

* *Jinrikisha Days in Japan.*

Not only the Japanese landscape, but also Japanese literature, is resplendent with *momiji*. The famous collection of One Hundred Poems contains six which celebrate the beauties of the autumn leaves, especially the maples. One of these, by the well-known Narihira, was as follows:

“O Tatsuta! when the autumnal flow
I watch of thy deep, ruddy wave,
E'en when the stern gods long ago
Did rule, was ne'er beheld so brave,
So fair a stream as thine, I vow.”*



MAPLE LEAVES IN THE VILLA OF MR. SHIBUSAWA AT OJI.

“Beautiful is the Tatsuta
With Autumn's brightest weaving;
If I cross the stream,
Alas! the brocade will be rudely rent.”

The comparison of the leaves to brocade (*nikishi*) seems to be quite common. Another of the Hundred Poems reads as follows:

“By the wind-storm's blast
From Mimuro's mountain-slopes,

* Translation by Mr. F. V. Dickins.

Maple leaves are torn,
And, as (rich) brocades are wrought
On blue Tatta's quiet stream.

"My wandering feet
So rudely tear
The carpet red
Of rich brocade
O'er Mimuro spread.

"In a mountain stream,
Builded by the busy wind,
Is a wattled barrier drawn,
Yet it is but maple leaves,
Powerless to flow away.

"In the mountain depths,
Treading through the crimson leaves,
Cries the wandering stag.
When I hear the lonely cry,
Sad—how sad—the autumn is!"*

* Translation by Prof. Clay MacCauley.