

## THE JAPANESE FLORAL CALENDAR.

BY ERNEST W. CLEMENT, M. A.

## IX. THE NANAKUSA.

THE word *nanakusa* is the name of three categories in Japan. It means literally "seven grasses" and is sometimes applied to seven kinds of grasses occasionally used together. It is also the name given to the seven vegetables or "greens" eaten on the seventh day of the New Year. And the same name is applied to seven kinds of "flowers" which are used for decorative purposes on the special occasion of "moon-viewing" on the fifteenth day of the eighth month (o. c.) or about the end of September. It will thus be seen that for the present number we have been unable to select any one "flower" as pre-eminently appropriate, although there are plenty of blossoms; and also that this time the "flowers" (which, in this case include "grasses") are a subordinate element in the great festival of viewing the harvest moon.

The authorities differ as to the flowers included among the *nanakusa*; but we have chosen the following list:

*Hagi* (lespedeza or bush-clover); *Obana* (eulalia); *Kuzu* (*pueraria*); *Nadeshiko* (pink); *Ominacshi* (*patrinia*); *Fuji-bakama* (*eupatorium*); *Asagao* (wild morning-glory).

This list has been put into verse\* by an ancient poet, as follows:

*"Hagi ga hana  
Obana, Kuzu-hana,  
Nadeshiko no  
Hana, ominacshi,  
Mata Fuji-bakama,  
Asagao no hana."*

This verse is meaningless except as a catalogue of the *nana-*

\*Chamberlain's *Things Japanese*.

*kusa*; it contains merely their names, with the repetition of the word *hana* (blossom) and the use of the necessary connections.\*



AUTUMN GRASSES.

In spite of the fact that these flowers are used at the autumn

\*Another list substitutes *kikyō* (*platycodon*) for *fuji-bakama*, and re-arranges the order.

moon festival, the *hagi* and the *susuki* (= *obana*) are, according to Mr. Cinder, among "flowers prohibited for auspicious occasions." Of the varieties of *lespedeza* the red ranks first.



FLOWER VENDER.

The *hagi* (bush-clover) is said to have attached to it several "fables, chief amongst them being that in which it is represented as

a maid beloved by a stag."\*It also figures, somewhat more perhaps than the others of this category, in Japanese literature. The following poems are examples:

"The bush-clover wavers tenderly in the morning breeze,  
But the pearls on the leaves enjoy safely their brief happiness,"

or, concisely:

"Ah! the waving lespedeza,  
Which spills not a drop  
Of the clear dew."

"The rotten bush-clover is gathered together,  
In order to construct the fence of the Imperial palace."†

"The deer lying on the bed made of bush-clover,  
Cries out full of pathos and tenderness.  
We can not see the form of the lovely creature,  
But the voice is clear and fascinating."

"The sound of the wind is dull and drear  
Across Miyagi's dewy lea,  
And makes me mourn for the motherless deer  
That sleeps beneath the Hagi tree."

\* It is also associated with the sleeping wild boar.

† A satire on the men of Hagi in Choshu, because they took a prominent part in the Restoration of 1867-8.