

THE JAPANESE FLORAL CALENDAR.

BY ERNEST W. CLEMENT, M. A.

VI. THE IRIS.

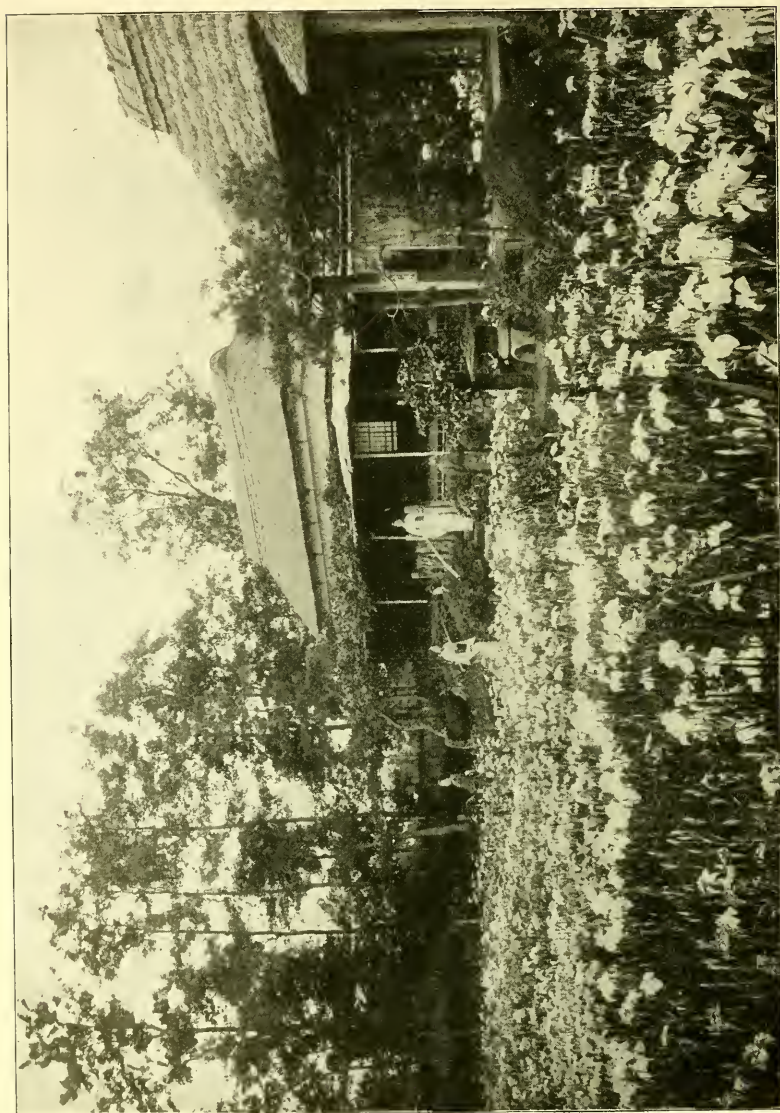
OF the iris there are several Japanese varieties, known as *ayame-hanashobu*, *kakitsubata*, *shaga*, etc. In Tokyo the most famous show of this flower is at Horikiri, "where in ponds and



THE IRIS AT HORIKIRI, TOKIO.

trenches grow acres of such fleur-de-lis as no Bourbon ever knew." In strong contrast to the riotous carnival of the cherry-viewing, "this festival is a quiet and decorous garden-party, where summer-houses

hills, lakes, armies of royal flowers, and groups of visitors seem to be consciously arranging themselves for decorative effects."



THE IRIS AT HORIKIRI, TOKIO.

The iris is a favorite flower in art. Not only do "we find its among flowers used for ceremonies and congratulatory occasions, except that, on account of its purple color, it is prohibited from wed-

dings. In arranging *hanashobu* according to the complex theory of flower arrangement explained by Mr. Conder "the three center-most leaves should be long and a special leaf called the *Kammuri-ba* or *Cap-leaf* must be placed as a back-ground to the principal flowers."

The iris is a favorite flower in art. Not only do "we find its delicate-colored flowers on stuffs, lacquer, inlaid ivories, and in mother-of-pearl"; but "the metal-worker, too, twists its graceful leaves into delightful patterns for his pierced sword-guards."

From a pretty crepe booklet on *The Japanese Months*, we learn the following folk-lore item:

"There used to be a custom of hanging beneath the eaves, on the 5th day of the 5th month (O. S.), bunches of sweet-flag (*shobu*); and mugwort, and of putting the former into the hot water of the public baths, so that bathers carry away with them its agreeable odor. The sweet-flag is also steeped in *sake*, which, flavored in this way, is drunk on the 5th day of the 5th month,—the plant in question being commonly believed to be efficacious in the prevention of disease."

Piggott adds the following points: "Probably the same superstition led to the common custom of planting beds of iris along the ridges of the thatched cottages in the country. In days gone by, boys wore wreaths of iris leaves, and made ropes of them to dance with, and beat the ground to frighten away the demons from their festival."

A famous Japanese poetess, by the name of Kaga No Chiyo, wrote the following pretty little poem:

"Water was the painter,
Water again was the eraser,
Of the beautiful fleur-de-lis."

To illustrate the brevity of Japanese poetry, the original is added here:

*"Mizuga kaki
Mizuga keshikeri
Kakitsubata."*

We append two more poems concerning the iris, as translated by a young Japanese teacher of English:

"The iris, grown between my house and the neighbor's,
Is just burnishing in its deepest color and glory;
I wish that some one would come to see it,
Before it withers away and returns to the dust."

“On my journey far away from home
My heart flies to the beloved left at home,
Who has been as indispensable to me
As the soft cloth that I put on constantly.”

The last poem is, in the original, an acrostic which spells out *kakitsubata*. It is for that reason only that it was selected. This style of poem is quite prevalent in Japanese literature.