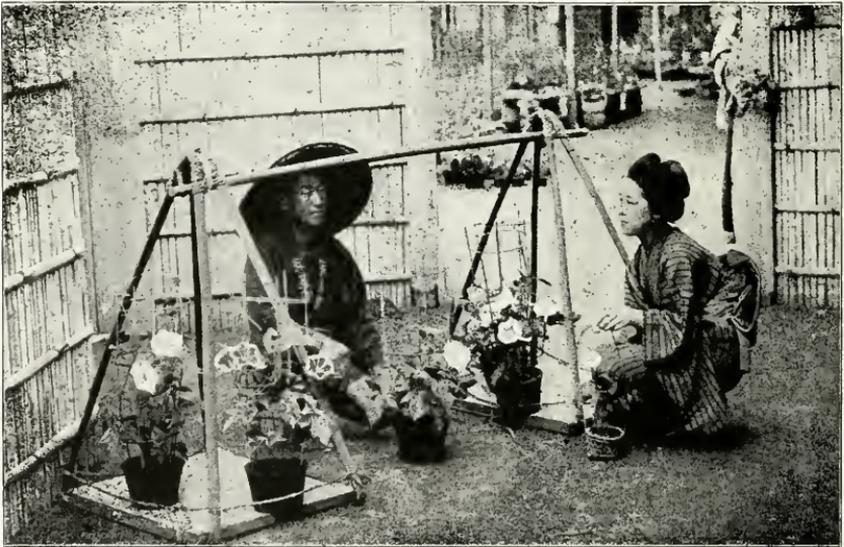


THE JAPANESE FLORAL CALENDAR.

ERNEST W. CLEMENT, M. A.

VII. THE MORNING-GLORY.

WHAT is known in the Occident as the morning-glory goes in Japan by the name of *asagao*, or "morning-face." But the Japanese variety is far beyond comparison with any other variety, as



A MORNING-GLORY SELLER.

we learned when our Japanese vines were the wonder and admiration of our Chicago neighbors. And the Tokyo master of the *asagao*, Suzuki by name, said to Miss Scidmore*: "Yes; I know the Korean and the American *asagao* are little wild things, like weeds, not beautiful or worth growing." And Miss Scidmore herself testifies as follows: "For size, beauty, range of color, and illimitable variety

there attained, this sunrise flower precedes all others, until its cultivation has become a craze which is likely to spread to other countries, and—who knows?—perhaps there introduce the current Japanese custom of five-o'clock-in-the-morning teas and garden parties.”



CONVOLVULUS, OR (MORNING GLORY.)

The *asagao* is said to have been brought from China into Japan by scholars and priests who went over there to study Buddhism. And a Chinese priest who came to Japan wrote a poem to the following

purport: "The *asagao* blooms and fades so quickly, only to prepare for tomorrow's glory." It is quite likely this connection with religion as well as the fact that it fades so quickly that makes the *asagao* unsuitable for use on felicitous occasions.

Miss Scidmore states that "the late Empress-Dowager, a conservator of many old customs and aristocratic traditions, and a gentle soul with a deep love of flowers, poetry and art, kept up the culture of the *asagao*, and had always a fine display of flowers at her city and summer palaces during the lotus-time of the year." But in Tokyo the finest morning-glory gardens are at a place called Iriya, beyond Uyeno Park; there wonderful varieties, too numerous to mention, are exhibited. Of the different colors, the dark blue takes first rank.

Two well-known poems about the morning-glory run as follows:—

"Every morn, when the dawn brightens into joy,
The morning-glory renews its beautiful flowers,
And continues blooming long in this way,
To give us hope and peace that wither not."*

"Oh, for the heart
Of the morning-glory!
Which, though its bloom is for a single hour,
Is the same as that of the fir-tree,
Which lives a thousand years."

The Japanese also have what they call *hirugao*, or "noon-face," and *yugao*, or "evening-face." The latter, which Occidentals would presumably name "evening-glory," seems to be especially famous for the beauty of its white blossoms. In the *Genji Monogatari*, a lady-love of the hero sings as follows:—

"The crystal dew at evening's hour
Sleeps on the Yugao's beauteous flower;
Will this please him, whose glances bright,
Gave to the flowers a dearer light?"

The most famous verse about the morning-glory is, of course, that of the maiden, O Chiyo San, who, having found a vine with its blossoms twining around her well-bucket, would not disturb it, but went elsewhere to beg some water. The poem, which is in the form of the *hokku*, runs as follows:—

"*Asagao ni*
Tsurube torarete
Morai-mizu."

* See the *Century Magazine* for December, 1897.

This means, literally translated, "By *asagao* bucket being taken, begged water." But Sir Edwin Arnold's poetical version is also worth quoting :—

"The morning-glory
Her leaves and bells has bound
My bucket-handle round.
I could not break the bands
Of those soft hands,
The bucket and the well to her I left ;
'Lend me some water, for I come bereft.'"

With the recommendation to read Miss Scidmore's illustrated article, quoted above, for an insight into the occult features of morning-glory culture in Japan, we close with her final sentence: "The *asagao* is the flower of Japanese flowers, the miracle of their floriculture, and one may best ascribe it to pure necromancy, and cease to question and pursue."