

# A FESTIVAL FOR AND THEIR DOLL

by Elisabeth Latsch

**J**UST before spring has fully arrived in the land of cherry blossoms the little girls of Nippon have a festival of their very own. And what a great event it is for those little girls who have had the joy of playing with a large doll family throughout the year! Of course, taking care of dollies, washing their clothes, putting them in the warm sun to dry has been

lots of fun. Sometimes, too, there has been mending to do, especially, on rainy days when one couldn't play out-of-doors. It seems that even dollies' clothes would get torn through the year or a button or two would get lost. But on this festive occasion all every day clothes are neatly folded and put away in dollies' clothes chest. Yes, a little Nipponese girl with a doll family has just as much work with her doll children as a real mother.

The Doll's Festival has been celebrated



for a long, long time. Just a little after the time when Ferdinand Magellan landed in the Philippine Islands Japanese children were already having a real holiday for their doll families. So that the Doll's Festival is over three hundred years old. It was first observed in celebration of a marriage which had taken place in the Emperor's Family.

When the festival begins all the dolls are dressed up in as fine clothes as the parents of the little girls can afford to buy. One

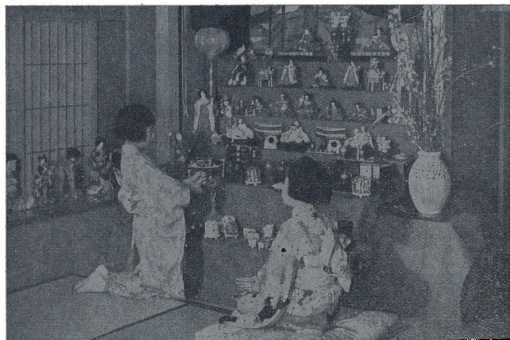
Retold by Elisabeth Latsch

## The Story of Sess

**S**ESSHIU, like many other little boys of Nippon loved to go to gaze at the cherry blossoms. He would stand where the most beautiful and where the greatest number of them could be seen as closely as possible. Aside from admiring the things that were pretty he also enjoyed participating in all the sports that his companions care for. When New Year came around he was restless waiting for the Good Luck Branch which carries so many inter-

esting things. There would be the bows and arrows for shooting games; gorgeous kites for the windy days; jumping jacks for sheer fun; dolls for the girls; and many other amusements. For instance, the drawing box fascinated him a great deal. Very often while his brothers and sisters or his little friends were having a wonderful time playing games, Sesshiu was eagerly brushing away one picture after another

## R LITTLE GIRLS FOR CHILDREN



doll is dressed like a princess; another is dressed like a prince; others wear the clothes of maids of honor and others those of court musicians. Certainly since the Doll Festival commemorates a wedding in the highest ranking family of the nation all dolls must be dressed and placed just like the royal personages at court functions.

There are seldom less than fifteen different kinds of dolls on exhibit in a little girl's house during the Doll Festival. They are placed on platforms or shelves arranged

like a stairway. On the top-most platform appear the Prince and Princess in beautiful court costumes. On the next shelf are the maids of honor. Below are the lovely enchanting flowers for decorations and the dainty things to eat and drink, it sounds and looks almost like Christmas Day to the children of other lands!

Perhaps, you have guessed already who eats those "dainties of the mountain and deli-

cacies of the sea." Of course, it's the little doll mother and her many little girl friends who come to visit her during the Doll's Festival. Although, the Festival is only one day, most of the little girls keep their dollies on exhibit for a whole week so they can enjoy them longer and have a chance to invite all their little playmates.

*See page 185 for titles of other interesting stories about Japan*

## niu and the Mouse

of the things that he saw.

When those well trained soldiers of his country would pass his house he thought he would like to be among them some day. And yet deep in his heart he wanted something else still more. He was yearning to become a great artist. And when he painted away his whole heart and soul ran through every stroke that his fingers would make with the little brush.

It so happened that Sesshiu's father did not know of what his little son's dreams were made. Sesshiu's father was seriously planning to have his son trained for the priesthood. He wanted to think of him as serving some day in the Lord Buddha's temples. Thus one day Sesshiu was requested by his father to prepare himself for a long stay in the temple of Hofukuji. The priests in the temple had been informed that they were to guide and instruct Sesshiu. "I wish you to be a priest, yourself, some day," said Sesshiu's father to his son. Alas,

*(Please turn to page 189)*