PAPER BAGS
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ONE of the most impressive facts foreigners realize when they first come to Japan is the extent to which paper is used in the general economy of the country. The windows of the Japanese house are covered with paper, to let in the light, the sliding screens or doors between the rooms of the house are also covered with paper and the handkerchiefs of the people are of paper too. The paper window has not the clear transparency of glass, but it lends a softer light to the eye and is much more artistic. The Japanese child may fall against the paper screen and tear it but he has no fear of being cut by broken glass; and his mother can easily repair the break by pasting on a new piece of paper. Moreover, though the occupants of a room may throw queer shadows on the paper window, no one can really peer into the room and see what is going on; and the paper, being more porous than glass, affords some measure of ventilation to the room. For such an essential of the Japanese house only native paper is used; foreign paper would not do at all.

Foreign paper is coming into use for such duty as wrapping, printing and books generally, as well as for
making cans owing to the high price of tin, but there are many things for which Japanese paper is still necessary. An example of this is the screen door already mentioned. In the old days even mosquito nets were made of paper, and also many kinds of utensils and ornaments, especially in papier maché. There is a cloth woven from paper, too, made principally at Atami, which is quite serviceable, and often used for wadded vests. In recent years very remarkable development has been experienced in the making of wrapping papers of all kinds, especially for bags and envelopes.

In the old days letters were not despatched in paper envelopes but in wooden boxes, of oblong shape and lacquered, the address being written on the cover of the box. With the introduction of the western postal system envelopes came into use, though the Japanese envelope is always different from that of the occident, being some seven or eight inches long and only some three inches broad, and made of very thin paper lined with green paper, a sort of double envelop. The larger business firms, however, now use foreign paper for correspondence nearly altogether. Some Japanese are very fond of decorated correspondence paper and envelopes, which foreigners do not fancy at all, save as a curiosity. Some of this decorated paper is very artistic, nevertheless, scenes of mountains, trees, or blossoms appearing dimly on it like an apparition. Some of the commercial houses utilize this art to have their manufactures or places of business appear dimly and
delicately in the background on their correspondence paper. Japanese writing paper in a long roll several feet long, unrolled as one writes or reads.

For sending special presents the Japanese use a large envelope, like a paper bag, but made of very beautiful paper, soft as flannel and often quite as thick. Gifts exchanged at the New Year and on festal family occasions are sent in such envelopes. On the outside of these is attached a piece of red and white paper like an oblong diamond or kite shape, to indicate good luck or best wishes. This is known as noshi paper, and the method of folding the paper is various. Money also is handed to the recipient always in a paper bag or envelope with the usual symbol of good wishes and congratulations, except in the case of funerals when it is tied round with a strip of black paper. Even tips to servants are placed in a special bag for the purpose. In theatres and places of amusement the ushers and other employees are given presents in such bags ("Oiri bukuro," by the management when the audience reaches a certain number.)
In the shops goods are wrapped in paper of foreign style, the quality of the wrapping depending on the value of the goods. The poorer shops use merely old newspaper for this purpose, even
making paper bags of it. For tea the paper bags are long and slender and usually of native paper, often stained with persimmon juice to make it more durable. Unlike foreign paper tea bags there is no printing of any kind on them.
Presents of tea, however, are sent in pretty caddies which the tea merchant always keeps in stock. The candy shops follow a different custom, usually having an advertisement printed on the paper bags they use—Some of the Japanese confectioners use wooden boxes for candy, while others put it in cardboard boxes, as foreigners do. Many of the poor shops use any sort of old paper for bags, such as newspaper, magazines, account books, bills of landing, express receipts and so on; so that one can read on the outside of one's purchases various transactions that took place years ago. Such bags are used mostly by grocers and vegetable shops.

The Japanese drug stores are now using foreign style paper bags and boxes to put up their medicines. The Japanese are very skilful at making paper bags, boxes and cartons, and now have such facilities for producing these on a large scale, and at cheaper rates than western countries that big orders are often re-
Cake Bag for Present

received from abroad. In some cases the effect of the medicine is printed on the wrapper in picture, vermifuge having worms on it, and bear-gall pills the picture of a bear. At New Year and the midsummer holiday gifts of sugar are exchanged, and this placed in a special sort of bag with
printing in ink of various colours, a special feature being that that the bag is four times the sixe of its contents. The idea obviously is to make a bigger impression than the contents justify. When you see a boy hurrying along the street with a small quantity of something at the bottom of a big paper bag you know that is a sugar present for somebody. When Japanese go shopping they always take with them a square piece of cotton or silk cloth, about two feet wide, called a furoshiki, to carry home their purchases, whether the latter be wrapped in paper or not. It is contrary to Japanese taste to carry anything uncovered in public. Even the labourer wraps his hoe or his shovel in paper before going on the street car. Another thing taboo in Japan is to eat anything while walking along the street or strolling in a park.

Many of the cheaper paper bags are made by hand in poor households at the rate of from 7 to 10 sen a thousand, material supplied; and it is said that rapid worker can makers some 5000 in a day. Cartons for tobacco, soap and cake are also often made this way. But there are many big paper bag manufacturing companies, among which the Japan Paper Industry Company, with a capital of 10,000,000 yen, is the largest, and makes every form of paper wrapping and boxes, including those for jewels and medicine. Some of the single machines in this factory can make up 300,000 cases a day, cutting, folding and pasting all at the same time, with printing if necessary. Canada, India and Australia are now obtaining large supplies of
paper packing goods from Japan. A few years ago this was only household industry. The Japanese paper products stand very favourable comparison with those made in Europe and America.