Title: Romances of Old Japan

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OF OLD JAPAN
YUKIO OZAKI

What was his breathless amazement to see that the picture he so much admired had actually taken life ... and was gliding lightly towards him—see here. (*Frontispiece*)

ROMANCES OF OLD JAPAN

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH FROM JAPANESE SOURCES

By

MADAME YUKIO OZAKI

BRENTANO'S NEW YORK

1920

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ILLUSTRATIONS

will ever drink with him

To his unspeakable horror and amazement the moonlight reveals the head of Kesa—his love!

His grandfather had been a retainer of Ota Dokan ... and had committed suicide when his lord fell in battle

He glared fiercely at the apparition, and then, half unconsciously, turned for the *samurai's* only safeguard, his sword

Tama's father was delighted when Hayashi proved to be an expert at *go*, and often asked him to come and spend the evening

He was suddenly startled to see a girlish form coming towards him in the wavering shadows

Hayashi visits the temple where his lost love was buried and dedicates his whole life to praying for the repose of her soul

"When I was eighteen years of age, bandits ... made a raid on our village and ... carried me away"

When the bride was led into the room and seated opposite Toshika, what was his bewildering delight to see that she was ... the lady-love of his picture

Urasato's escape from the Yamana-Ya

As she spoke, Urasato leaned far out over the balcony, the picture of youth, grace and beauty

O Tatsu ... took her stand behind Urasato, and with deft fingers put the disordered coiffure to rights

Sawaichi, turning his sightless face towards the altar, repeated the Buddhist invocation: "*Namu Amida Butsu!*"

There in the grey light of the breaking dawn, she could see the lifeless form of her husband stretched upon the ground

"Listen, Sawaichi!" said the Heavenly Voice, "Through the faith of your wife and the merits of her accumulated prayers, your lives shall be prolonged"

"This is the head of Kanshusai, the son of the Lord Sugawara!"

The box, which served her as a shield, was speedily cut in two, and there appeared, unfolding and fluttering in the breeze, a little winding-sheet and a sacred banner for the dead

"No, no," said Matsuo ... "this is not the body of my boy. We are going to bury our young lord!"

From earliest times Kinu and Kunizo were accustomed to play together

Her ghastly face and blood-stained garments struck terror to the souls of the petrified spectators

Kunizo, almost beside himself with happiness, did his utmost to minister to his beloved lady

Suddenly a young girl appeared from the gloom as if by magic!

His beautiful hostess, seating herself beside the *koto*, began to sing a wild and beautiful air

An old priest suddenly appeared ... staff in hand and clad in ancient and dilapidated garments

What was the young man's astonishment to see a pretty young girl standing just within the gate

Suddenly he saw that the three performers had become *headless*!... Like children playing a game of ball, they tossed their heads from one to the other

In one of the dark corners of the temple-chamber, they came upon the dead body of an old, old badger

His old widowed mother would not die happy unless he were rehabilitated, and to this end he knew that she and his faithful wife, O Yumi, prayed daily before the family shrine.

How often had he racked his brains to find some way by which it were possible to prove his unchanging fidelity to Shusen; for the true big-hearted fellow never resented his punishment, but staunchly believed that the ties which bound him to his lord were in no wise annulled by the separation.

At last the long-awaited opportunity had come. In obedience to the mandate of the Shogun Ieyasu that the territorial nobles should reside in his newly established capital of Yedo during six months of the year, the Daimio of Tokushima proceeded to Yedo accompanied by a large retinue of *samurai*, amongst whom were his chief retainers, the rivals Shusen Sakurai and Gunbei Onota.

Like a faithful watchdog, alert and anxious, jurobei had followed Shusen at a distance, unwilling to let him out of his sight at this critical time, for Gunbei Onota was the sworn enemy of Shusen Sakurai. Bitter envy of his rival's popularity, and especially of his senior rank in the Daimio's service, had always rankled in the contemptible Gunbei's mind. For years he had planned to supplant him, and Jurobei knew through traitors that the honest vigilance of his master had recently thwarted Gunbei in some of his base schemes, and that the latter had vowed immediate vengeance.

Jurobei's soul burned within him as this sequence of thoughts rushed through his brain. The tempest that whirled round him seemed to be in harmony with the emotions that surged in tumult through his heart.

More than ever did it devolve on him to see that his master was properly safeguarded. To do this successfully he must once more become his retainer. So Jurobei with vehement resolution clenched his hands over the handle of his umbrella and rushed onwards.

Now it happened that same night that Gunbei, in a sudden fit of jealous rage and chagrin, knowing that his rival was on duty at the Daimio's Palace, and that he would probably return alone after night-fall, ordered two of his men to proceed to Shusen's house and to waylay and murder Shusen on his road home. Once and for all he would remove Shusen Sakurai from his path.

Meanwhile Jurobei arrived at Shusen's house, and in the heavy gloom collided violently with the two men who were lying in ambush outside the gate.

"Stop!" angrily cried the assassins, drawing their swords upon him.

Jurobei, recognizing their voices and his quick wit at once grasping the situation, exclaimed:

"You are Gunbei's men! Have you come to kill my lord?"

"Be assured that that is our intention," replied the confederates.

"I pray you to kill me instead of my lord," implored Jurobei.

"We have come for your master and we must have his life as well as yours. I have not forgotten how you cut me to pieces seven years ago. I shall enjoy paying back those thrusts with interest," returned one of them sharply.

Jurobei prostrated himself in the mud before them. "I care not what death you deal me, so long as you accept my life instead of my lord's. I humbly beg of you to grant my petition."

Instead of answering, one of the miscreants contemptuously kicked him as he knelt there.

Jurobei, whose ire was now thoroughly provoked, seized the offending leg before its owner had time to withdraw it, and holding it in a clutch like iron, inquired:

"Then you do not intend to grant my request?"

"Certainly not!" sneered the wretches.

Jurobei sprang to his feet and faced them. Without more ado they both set upon him with their weapons.

Overhead the storm increased in violence. The floodgates of heaven were opened, peals of heavy thunder shook the earth with their dull reverberations, and the inky skies were riven with blinding flash upon flash of forked lightning, which lit up the dark forms and white faces of the combatants, and glinted on their swords as they parried and clashed together in mortal strife.

Now Jurobei was an expert swordsman of unusual and supple strength. He defended himself with skill and ferocity, and soon his superiority began to tell against the craven couple who were attacking him. It was not long before they realized that they were no match for such a powerful adversary, and turned to flee. But Jurobei was too quick for them, and before they could escape he cut them down.

Mortally wounded, both men fell to the ground, and so fatal had been Jurobei's thrusts that in a few minutes they breathed their last.

By this time, the fury of the storm having spent itself, the sky gradually lifted and the moon shone forth in silver splendour between the masses of clouds as they rolled away, leaving the vast blue vault above clear and radiant and scintillating with stars.

Jurobei raised a jubilant face heavenwards and thanked the gods for the victory. He had rescued

his master from death. He felt that the sacrifices that he and O Yumi had made in the past—the breaking up of the old home and the parting from their baby-daughter and the old mother—had not been in vain. The prescience, which had warned him that evil was hanging over Shusen, and which had made him so restless and uneasy of late, had been fulfilled, and he had forestalled the dastardly intention of the treacherous Gunbei and his two scoundrels.

In the stillness after the tumult of the fray, Jurobei's ear caught the sound of approaching footsteps. Turning in the direction from whence they came, there in the bright moonlight he clearly discerned the form of his beloved master, crossing the bridge.

"Oh, my lord! Is it you? Are you safe?" he exclaimed.

"Who is it?" demanded the startled *samurai.*"Ah—it is Jurobei! What brings you here at this hour?" Then noticing the two lifeless bodies lying across the path, he sharply interrogated, "What does this mean? Has there been a fight? What was the cause of the quarrel?"

"They are Gunbei's assassins. They were waiting in ambush for your return, by Gunbei's order. I found them here. They attacked me and I killed them both, the cowards!"

Shusen started. An exclamation of dismay escaped him.

"It is a pity that you should have killed those particular men at this juncture." He mused for a few seconds, gazing at the dead faces of his would-be murderers. "I knew these rascals. My purpose was to let them go free, and to lure them over to our side: they could soon have been persuaded to confess the crimes of their master."

Jurobei realized that he had blundered. Overcome with disappointment, he sank upon the ground in a disconsolate heap.

"The intelligence of inferior men cannot be relied upon," said Jurobei with chagrin. "Alas, they unwittingly err in their judgment. I did not give the matter enough consideration. My sole idea was to save your life at all costs, my lord! I have committed a grave error in slaying them. With the intention of tendering abject apologies for my past misconduct, which has lain upon me like a heavy yoke all these years, I came here to-night. I killed these men to save your life—hoping that for this service you would reinstate me. I beg of you to forgive my stupidity."

Mortally wounded, both men fell to the ground, and so fatal had been Jurobei's thrusts that in a few minutes they breathed their last.

With these words he drew his sword and was about to plunge it into himself and rashly end his life by *hara-kiri*, by way of expiation.

Shusen seized his arm and stopped him in the act. "This is not the time to die! It would be a dog's death to kill yourself here and now. Perform some deed worthy of a *samurai* and then I will recall you as my retainer. You are a rash man, Jurobei! In future think more before you act."

"Oh, my lord, do you really forgive me? Will you indeed spare a life forfeited by many errors committed in your service?" and Jurobei gave a sigh of relief.

"Certainly I will," replied Shusen, aware that the affinity existing between lord and retainer is a close relationship not to be lightly severed.

"You were about to throw away your life," he continued, "for what you considered a *samurai's* duty. I commend that, anyhow! I tell you now to wait until you have accomplished some real work in the world. Listen to what I have to say.

"From generation to generation the Lords of Tokushima have entrusted to the care of our house one of their most valuable treasures and heirlooms, a talisman of the family, the Kunitsugu sword. At the end of last year we gave a banquet and entertained a large number of friends. While the attention of every one was absorbed in waiting upon the guests, some robber must have entered the house and stolen the sword, for on that night it disappeared.

"In my own mind I have strong suspicions as to who the guilty party may be, but as yet there is no proof. While I was pondering in secret over possible ways and means of bringing the theft to light, another complication has arisen.

"It has come to my knowledge that Gunbei, our enemy, is organizing a conspiracy to make an attack upon the life of my lord, the Daimio of Tokushima. My whole attention must be concentrated on this plot, to circumvent which requires very subtle and adroit handling, so that it is impossible for me to take any steps in the matter of the sword at the present time. There is no

one to whom I can entrust this important mission except yourself, Jurobei. If you have any gratitude for all that I have done for you, then stake your life, your all, in the search for the lost sword.

"There is no time to lose! This is January and our Daimio's birthday falls on the third of March. The sword must be laid out in state on that festive occasion in the palace. I shall be disgraced and my house ruined if the sword be not forthcoming that day. My duties at the palace make it impossible for me to undertake the search. Even supposing that I were at liberty to go in quest of the sword, to do so would bring about my undoing, which is just what our enemy Gunbei desires. You are now a *ronin* [a masterless *samurai*], you have no master, no duty, no appearances to maintain. Your absence from our midst will cause embarrassment to no one. Therefore undertake this mission, I command you, and restore the sword to our house. If your search is crowned with success, I will receive you back into my household, and all shall be as it was between us in former times."

With this assurance Sakurai took his own sword from his girdle and handed it to Jurobei as a pledge of the compact between them.

Jurobei stretched out both hands, received it with joy, and reverently raised it to his forehead.

"Your merciful words touch my heart. Though my body should be broken to pieces I will surely not fail to recover the sword," replied Jurobei.

He then began to examine the dead men hoping to find their purses, for in his new-formed resolution he realized the immediate need of money in his search for the lost treasure.

"Stop, stop!" rebuked Shusen, "take nothing which does not belong to you, not even a speck of dust."

"*Kiritori goto wa bushi no narai*" [Slaughter and robbery are a knight's practice], answered Jurobei, "has been the *samurai's* motto from ancient times. For the sake of my lord I will stop at nothing. I will even become a robber. In token of my determination, from this hour I change my name Jurobei to Ginjuro. Nothing shall deter me in my search for the sword. To prosecute my search I will enter any houses, however large and grand they may be. Rest assured, my lord. I will be responsible for the finding of the sword."

"That is enough," returned his master. "You have taken the lives of these two men—escape before you are seized and delivered up to justice."

"I obey, my lord! May all go well with you till I give you a sign that the sword is found."

"Yes, yes, have no fear for me. Take care of yourself, Jurobei!" answered Shusen.

Jurobei prostrated himself at his master's feet.

"Farewell, my lord!"

"Farewell!"

And Shusen Sakurai and his faithful vassal separated.

PART II

On the quest of the lost sword Jurobei and his wife left Yedo buoyant with high hope and invincible courage.

The sword, however, was not to be found so easily. Jurobei was untiringly and incessantly on the alert, and week followed week in his fruitless search; however, his ardour was unabated, and firm was his resolution not to return until he could restore the missing treasure upon which the future of his master depended. Possessing no means of support, Jurobei became pirate, robber, and impostor by turns, for the *samurai* of feudal times considered that all means were justified in the cause of loyalty. The obstacles and difficulties that lay in his path, which might well have daunted weaker spirits, merely served to inflame his passion of duty to still greater enthusiasm.

After many adventures and hairbreadth escapes from the law, the vicissitudes of his search at last brought him to the town of Naniwa (present Osaka) where he halted for a while and found it convenient to rent a tiny house on the outskirts of the town. Here Jurobei met with a man named Izæmon who belonged to the same clan—one of the retainers of the Daimio of Tokushima and colleague of Shusen Sakurai.

Now it happened that an illegitimate half-sister of the Daimio by a serving-woman had sold herself into a house of ill-fame to render assistance to her mother's family which had fallen into a state of great destitution. As proof of her high birth she had in her possession a *Kodzuka*[1] which had been bestowed on her in infancy by her father, the Daimio. Izæmon, aware of her noble parentage, chivalrously followed her, and in order to redeem the unfortunate woman borrowed a sum of money from a man named Butaroku, who had proved to be a hard-hearted wretch, continually persecuting and harassing Izæmon on account of the debt. Jurobei was distressed by Butaroku's treatment of his clansman, and magnanimously undertook to assume all responsibility himself. The day had come when the bond fell due and the money had to be refunded. Jurobei was well aware that before nightfall he must manage by some way or another to obtain the means to satisfy his avaricious creditor or both himself and Izæmon would be made to suffer for

the delay.

At his wit's end he started out in the early morning, leaving his wife, O Yumi, alone.

Shortly after his departure a letter was brought to the house. In those remote days there was, of course, no regular postal service, and only urgent news was transmitted by messengers. The arrival of a letter was, therefore, looked upon as the harbinger of some calamity or as conveying news of great importance. In some trepidation, therefore, O Yumi tore open the communication, only to find that her fears were confirmed. It proved to be a warning from one of Jurobei's followers with the information that the police had discovered the rendezvous of his men—some of whom had been captured while others had managed to escape. The writer, moreover, apprehended that the officers of law were on the track of Jurobei himself, and begged him to lose no time in fleeing to some place of safety. This intelligence sorely troubled O Yumi. "Even though my husband's salary is so trifling yet he is a *samurai* by birth. The reason why he has fallen so low is because he desires above all things to succeed in restoring the Kunitsugu sword. As a *samurai* he must be always prepared to sacrifice his life in his master's service if loyalty demands it, but should the misdeeds he has committed during the search be discovered before the sword is found, his long years of fidelity, of exile, of deprivation, of hardship will all have been in vain. It is terrible to contemplate. Not only this, his good qualities will sink into oblivion, and he will be reviled as a robber and a law-breaker even after he is dead. What a deplorable disgrace! He has not done evil because his heart is corrupt—oh, no, no!"

Overcome with these sad reflections, she turned to the corner where stood the little shrine dedicated to Kwannon, the Goddess of Mercy and Compassion, and sinking upon her knees she prayed with the earnestness of a last hope, that the holy Kwannon would preserve her husband's life until his mission should be accomplished and the sword safely returned to its princely owner.

As she was kneeling before the shrine there floated into the room from outside the sound of a pilgrim's song chanted in a child's sweet treble.

Fudaraku ya!
Kishi utsu nami ya
Mi Kumano no
Nachi no oyama ni
Hibiku takitsuse.

Goddess of Mercy, hail!
I call and lo!
The beat of surf on shore
Suffers a heaven-change
To the great cataract's roar
On Nachi's holy range
In hallowed Kumano.[2]

O Yumi arose from her knees and went out to ascertain who the singer could be. A little girl about nine years of age was standing in the porch. On her shoulders was strapped a pilgrim's pack. Again she sang:

Furusato wo
Harubaru, kokoni
kii—Miedera
Hana no Miyako mo
Chikaku naruran.

From home and birth
Far ways of earth
Forwandered here
Kii's holy place
A sojourn's space
Receives me, ere
Anon thy bowers,
City of Flowers,[3]
(Life's goal) draw near.

When she saw that some one had appeared, her song ceased, and she plaintively added:

"Be kind enough to give alms to a poor little pilgrim."

"My pretty little pilgrim," answered O Yumi, "I will gladly give you some alms," and placing a few coins in a fold of paper she handed it out to her.

"I thank you from my heart!" responded the child in grateful accents. By the manner in which these words were uttered, and in spite of the travel-stained dress and the dust of the road, it was apparent to O Yumi that the little girl before her was no common beggar, but a beautiful and well-born child. Naturally of a fair complexion, her eyes were clear and bright, her dishevelled hair was long and jet black. The hardships of the pilgrimage had left their mark upon the child, she was thin and seemed so weary, that it filled the heart with pity. O Yumi found her thoughts carried back to the infant she had been compelled to leave behind in the old home seven long years before, when she and Jurobei had followed their lord Shusen Sakurai to Yedo.

For some inexplicable reason she felt strangely touched by the plight of the little girl before her,

and reflected sadly that her own child—so far away, and deprived at such an early age of her mother's love and care—would now be somewhat of the same age and size as the little pilgrim.

"Dear child," said O Yumi, "I suppose you are travelling with your parents. Tell me what province you came from?"

"My native province is Tokushima of Awa," was the reply.

"What?" exclaimed O Yumi. "Did you say Tokushima? That is where I was born, too! My heart thrills at hearing the beloved name of the place of my birth. And so you are making a pilgrimage with your parents?"

The woman's question was a reasonable one, for a Buddhist pilgrim wanders around from temple to temple all over the country to worship the founder of their faith and patron saints, and it was most unlikely that a child of such tender years should set out alone upon so long and arduous a journey. It was, indeed, a great distance from Tokushima, in the Island of Shikoku, to the town of Naniwa. But the little girl shook her head and answered in forlorn accents:

"No, no. I have not seen my parents for seven years. I have left my home in Awa and come upon this long pilgrimage entirely in the hope of finding them."

On hearing these words O Yumi became agitated in mind. Perchance this child might prove to be her own daughter! Drawing near the little pilgrim and scanning her features eagerly, she asked:

"Why do you go on this pilgrimage to seek your parents? Tell me their names?"

"When I was only two years of age my parents left our native place. I have been brought up entirely by my grandmother. For several months now we have had no news of them, since they followed our lord to Yedo; they seem to have left Yedo, but no one knew whither they went. I am wandering in search of them: my one wish being to look upon their faces if but once again in this life. My father's name is Jurobei of Awa and my mother is called O Yumi."

"What? Your father is Jurobei and your mother O Yumi?" stammered out the astonished parent, greatly taken aback by this statement. "And they parted from you when you were two years of age, and you were brought up by your grandmother?"

Oh! there was no room for doubt. An angel must have guided the wandering footsteps of the little pilgrim, for it was indeed her own little daughter, the sole blossom of her youth and early married life. The more carefully O Yumi regarded the child, the more her memory convinced her that in the young face before her she could trace the baby features so sadly missed for seven long years—and finally her eager eyes detected an undeniable proof of her identity—a tiny mole high up on the child's forehead.

The poor mother was on the verge of bursting into tears and crying out: "Oh, oh! You are indeed my own, O Tsuru!" But with a painful effort she realized what such a disclosure would mean to the child.

"Who knows!" reflected the unhappy woman. "My husband and I may be arrested at any moment. I am indeed prepared for the worst that may befall us—even to be thrown into prison—but if I disclose my identity to O Tsuru, she must inevitably share our misery.[4] It is in the interest of my poor child's welfare that I send her away without revealing the truth which would expose her to untold trouble and disgrace."

In those ancient times the criminal law enacted that innocent children should be implicated in the offences of the parents, and that the same sentence of punishment should cover them also. Love gave clearness to the workings of her mind, and in a moment O Yumi remembered what was threatening them and the inexorable decrees of the law. Involuntarily her arms were extended with the mother's instinct to gather the child to her heart, but she quickly controlled her emotion and did her best to address the little girl in a calm voice:

"Oh, yes, I understand. For one so young you have come a long, long way. It is wonderful that alone and on foot you could traverse such a great and weary distance, and your filial devotion is indeed worthy of praise. If your parents could know of this they would weep for joy. But things are not as we wish in this sad world, life is not as the heart of man desires, alas! You say your father and mother had to leave you, their little babe, for whose sake they would gladly sacrifice their own souls and bodies. My poor child, they must have had some very urgent reason for parting from you in this way. You must not feel injured nor bear them any resentment on that account."

"No, no," replied the little one intelligently, "it would be impious even to dream of such a feeling. Never have I felt resentment even for a single moment against my parents, for it was not their wish or intention to forsake me. But as they left me when I was only a baby I have no recollection of their faces, and whenever I see other children being tended and cherished by their mothers, or at night hushed to rest in their mother's arms, I cannot help envying them. I have longed and prayed ever since I can remember that I might be united to my own mother, and know what it is to be loved and cherished like all the other children! Oh, when I think that I may never see her again, I am very, very sad!"

The lonely child had begun to sob while pouring out the grief that lay so near her heart, and the tears that she could no longer restrain were coursing, *pororí, pororí*, down her cheeks.

O Yumi felt as though her heart was well-nigh breaking. Indeed, the woman's anguish at being an impotent witness of the sorrows of her forsaken child was of far greater intensity than the woes of the little girl's narration, yet as she answered, the mother's heart felt as though relentless

circumstances had transformed her into a monster of cruelty!

"In this life there is no deeper *Karma*-relation than that existing between parent and child, yet children frequently lose their parents, or the child sometimes may be taken first. Such is the way of this world. As I said before, the desire of the heart is seldom gratified. You are searching for your parents whose faces you could not even recognize, and of whose whereabouts you are entirely ignorant. All the hardships of this pilgrimage will be endured in vain unless you are able to discover them, which is very improbable. Take my advice. It would be much better for you to give up the search and to return at once to your native province."

"No, no, for the sake of my beloved parents," expostulated the child, "I will devote my whole life to the search for them, if necessary. But of all my hardships in this wandering life the one that afflicts me most is that, as I travel alone, no one will give me a night's lodging, so that I am obliged to sleep either in the fields or on the open mountain-side; indeed, at times I seek an unwilling shelter beneath the eaves of some house, from whence I am often driven away with blows. Whenever I go through these terrible experiences I cannot help thinking that if only my parents were with me I should not be treated in this pitiless way. Oh! some one must tell me where they are! I long to see them ... I long ..." and the poor little vagrant burst out into long wailing sobs.

The distracted mother was torn between love and duty. Oblivious of everything, for one moment she lost her presence of mind and clasped her daughter to her heart.

She was on the point of exclaiming:

"My poor little stray lamb! I cannot let you go! Look at me, I am your own mother! Is it not marvellous that you should have found me?"

But only her lips moved silently, for she did not dare to let the child know the truth. She herself was prepared for any fate however bitter, but the innocent O Tsuru must be shielded from the suffering which would ultimately be the lot of her father and mother as the penalty for breaking the law. Fortified by this resolution, the Spartan mother regained her self-control and managed to repress the overwhelming tide of impulse which almost impelled her, in spite of all, to reveal her identity.

Holding the little form closely to her breast she murmured tenderly:

"I have listened to your story so carefully that your troubles seem to have become mine own, and there are no words to express the sorrow and pity I feel for your forlorn condition. However, 'while there is life there is hope' [*inochi atte monodane*]. Do not despair, you may some day be united to your parents. If, however, you determine to continue this pilgrimage, the hardships and fatigues you must undergo will inevitably ruin your health. It is far better for you to return to the shelter of your grand-mother's roof than to persist in such a vague search and with so little prospect of success. It may be that before long your parents will return to you, who knows! My advice is good, and I beg you to go back to your home at once, and there patiently await their coming."

Thus O Yumi managed to keep up the pretence of being a stranger, and at the same time to give to her own flesh and blood all the help and comfort that her mother's heart could devise. But nature would not be disguised, and although she knew it not, a passion of love and yearning thrilled in her voice and manner and communicated itself to the child's heart.

"Yes, yes," answered the little creature in appealing tones. "Indeed, I thank you. Seeing you weep for me, I feel as if you were indeed my own mother and I no longer wish to go from here. I pray you to let me stay with you. Since I left my home no one has been so kind to me as you. Do not drive me away. I will promise to do all you bid me if only you will let me stay."

"Do you wish to make me weep with your sad words?" was all that O Yumi could stammer out, her voice broken with agitation. After a moment she added: "As I have already told you, I feel towards you as though you were indeed my own daughter, and I have been wondering if by any means it would be possible to keep you with me. But it cannot be. I am obliged to seem cold-hearted and to send you away, and all that I can tell you is that for your own sake you must not remain here. I hope you fully understand and will return to your home at once."

With these words O Yumi went quickly to an inner room, and taking all the silver money she possessed from her little hoard she offered it to O Tsuru, saying:

"Although you are travelling in this solitary and unprotected state you will always find some one ready to give you a night's lodging if you can offer them money. Take this. It is not much, but receive it as a little token of my sympathy. Make use of it as best you can and return to your native province without delay."

"Your kindness makes me very happy, but as far as money is concerned I have many *koban* [coins of pure gold used in ancient times], I am going now. Thank you again and again for all your goodness to me," replied O Tsuru in wounded accents, and showing by a gesture that she refused the proffered assistance.

"Even if you have plenty of money—take this in remembrance of our meeting. Oh ... you can never know how sad I am at parting from you, you poor little one!"

O Yumi stooped down and was brushing away the dust which covered the hem of O Tsuru's dress.

"Oh, you must never think that I want to let you go.... Your little face reminds me of one who is the most precious to me in all the world, and whom I may never see again."

Overcome with the passion of mother-love, she enfolded the poor little wayfarer in a close embrace, and the little girl, nestling in the arms of her own mother, thought she was merely a stranger whose pity was evoked by the recital of her sufferings.

Instinct, however, stirred in her heart, and she could not bear the thought of leaving her new-found friend. But since it was impossible for her to stay with this compassionate woman, nothing remained but for her to depart. Slowly and reluctantly she passed out from the porch, again and again wistfully looking back at the kind face, and as O Tsuru resumed her journey down the dusty road she murmured a little prayer:

"Alas! Shall I ever find my parents! I implore thee to grant my petition, O great and merciful Kwannon Sama!" and her tremulous voice grew stronger with the hopefulness of childhood as she chanted the song of the pilgrim.

Chichi haha no
Megumi mo fukahi
Kogawa-dera
Hotoke no chikai
Tanomoshiki Kana.

Father-love, mother-love,
Theirs is none other love
Than in these Courts is mine.
Safe at Kogawa's shrine,
Yea, Buddha's Vows endure,
Verily a refuge sure.

Meanwhile, from the gate, the unhappy mother sadly followed with her eyes the pathetic little figure disappearing on her unknown path into the gathering twilight, while the last glow of sunset faded from the sky. The little song of faith and hope sounded like sardonic mockery in her ears. In anguish she covered her face with her sleeves and sobbed:

"My child—my child—turn back and show me your face once more! As by a miracle her wandering footsteps have been guided to the longed-for haven from far across the sea and the distant mountains. Oh, to have ruthlessly driven her away! What must our *Karma*-relation have been in previous existences! What retribution is this! What must have been my sin to receive such punishment!"

While these torturing reflections voiced themselves in broken utterance her daughter's shadow had vanished in the gloom, and O Yumi, standing at the gate, felt her grief become unbearable.

Vividly there arose before her mind the bitter pangs of leaving the old home and her baby child, and the misfortunes and poverty which had come upon them ever since Jurobei's discharge; the weariness and disappointment of the months of fruitless search for the lost sword; the homesickness of the exile banished from his own province and his lord's service by cruel circumstances; the disgrace which had now fallen upon her husband; all the accumulated pain of the past hushed to rest by the narcotic necessity of bearing each day's burden and meeting with courage and resource the ever-recurring difficulties and dangers of their hunted life. All these cruel phantom shapes arose to haunt the unhappy woman with renewed poignancy, sharpened by the agony of repression which her mother-love had been enduring for the past hour. Neither the arrow of hope which pierces the looming clouds of the future, nor the shield of resignation, would ever defend her again in this sorrow of sorrows. Suddenly a new resolve stirred her to action. "I can bear this no longer!" she cried frantically. "If we part now we may never meet again. I cannot let her go! From the fate that threatens us there may still be some way of escape. I must find her and bring her back."

Hastily gathering up the lower folds of her *kimono* she rushed out into the road that wound between the rice-fields and the dark gnarled pines. The evening wind had begun to moan through the heavy branches, and as it tossed them to and fro, to her fevered imagination they seemed to be warning her to retrace her steps and to wave her back with ominous portent. On and on she sped along the lonely road into the shadowy vista beyond which her child had disappeared into the darkness....

The unhappy mother sadly followed with her eyes the pathetic little figure disappearing on her unknown path.

PART III

The temple bell was booming the hour of parting day as Jurobei disconsolately hurried home. All his attempts had failed to procure the money wherewith to pay Izæmon's debt to Butaroku, and knowing that Butaroku was the kind of man to take a merciless revenge, he was in a mood of profound depression.

Suddenly in the road he came upon a group of beggars surrounding a little girl dressed as a pilgrim. The wretches, thinking her an easy prey to their cupidity, were tormenting the poor little wayfarer and trying to wrest from her the contents of her wallet, but she was bravely defending herself and resisting their attacks with great spirit.

Seeing how matters stood, Jurobei promptly drove the beggars away with his stick, and then, to avoid the return of her assailants, he compassionately took the child by the hand and led her home with him.

But alas! by a fatal mischance they had taken a different road to that chosen by O Yumi.

As soon as they reached the porch he called out:

"I have come back, O Yumi!"

Contrary to his expectation there was no response, and entering hastily he found the cottage empty and in darkness.

"How is it that the place is deserted? Where can O Yumi have gone to at this hour?" he grumbled as he groped his way across the room and set light to the standing lantern.

Then by its fitful glow he sank down upon the mats in gloomy abstraction and the lassitude of disappointment, and pondered seriously on the desperate straits to which he and his wife were

reduced: the situation seemed hopeless, for well he knew that no clemency could be expected from the enemy and unless some money was forthcoming that very night he was a lost man. All at once a thought struck him. He beckoned the little pilgrim to draw near.

"Come here, my child! Those rascally beggars from whom I rescued you were trying to steal your wallet. Tell me, have you much money with you?"

"Yes, I have what several kind people have given me," was her reply.

"Let me see how much you have?" demanded Jurobei peremptorily.

O Tsuru, for indeed it was she, took out a little bag, and reluctantly offered a few coins for her inquisitor's inspection.

"Is this all you have, child?" he persisted impatiently.

"No, no, I have several *koban*[5] besides," answered the girl, her childish mind exaggerating the amount.

"Oh, indeed, so you have many *koban*?" Jurobei mused for a few minutes. Here was an unexpected opportunity to satisfy the avarice of Butaroku. "Let me take care of the *koban* for you. It is not safe for you to keep them," said Jurobei, stretching out his hand towards her.

"No, no!" replied O Tsuru, shaking her head with decision. "When my grandmother was dying she made me promise faithfully never to show the money to any one, as it is tied together with a very precious thing. I must not give or show the bag to any one."

Jurobei, who saw deliverance from his debt of honour in the money he supposed the child to carry, tried to frighten her into giving it up to him, but she was firm in her refusal, and rose to her feet with the intention of escaping from her persecutor.

"Oh, I will stay here no longer. You frighten me!" she exclaimed, moving towards the porch.

Jurobei, in fear lest his last hope should fail, seized her by the collar of her dress.

"Oh, oh, help, help!" loudly screamed the girl in terror.

"What a noise, what a noise!" exclaimed Jurobei in exasperation, and alarmed lest the neighbours should overhear the child's cries, he roughly attempted to stifle her screams with his hand across her mouth.

For a few minutes, as a snared bird flutters in the net of its captor, the hapless O Tsuru put forth all her strength and endeavoured desperately to disengage herself; her struggles then subsided and she grew still.

Jurobei began to reason with her without removing his hold:

"There is nothing whatever to fear! The truth is I am in pressing need of some money. I do not know how much you have, but lend it to me for a few days. During that time stay here quietly. I will take you to visit the Temple of Kwannon Sama, and we will go every day to see the sights of the city near by and amuse ourselves. Never fear, only lend me all you have like a good child."

As he freed her she fell to the ground.

"What is the matter?" said Jurobei, anxiously bending over her little form.

There was no answer. She lay quite still with no sign of life or motion.

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed Jurobei. Thinking that she had fainted, he fetched water and sprinkled her pale face and tried to force a few drops between her closed lips, but there was not even a flicker of response.

The child lay dead before him. Worn out with the hardships and fatigues of the long, long pilgrimage, as a frail light flickers out before a rough gust of wind, her waning strength had failed in that last struggle. The griefs of earth were left behind and the brave little soul had set out on its longer journey to the *Meido* (Hades).

Jurobei was thoroughly alarmed. In that tragic moment he knew not what to do. However, hearing his wife's returning footsteps, he hastily moved the body to one side of the room and covered it with a quilt.

O Yumi entered the room in great perturbation.

"Oh, oh! Help me to look for her, help me! While you were out this afternoon, wonderful to tell! who should come here in search for us but our own child, O Tsuru. How I longed to reveal myself to her, the poor, poor little one! But the knowledge that she must share our miserable fate when we are arrested, which may be at any moment now, forced me to send her away without telling her that I was her mother. After she had gone I could not bear the thought of never seeing her again. I ran after her, but she had disappeared! She cannot have gone far. I came back to fetch you. Let us look for her together."

Jurobei was dumbfounded at this totally unexpected intelligence. He stood up as though ready to start out into the night.

"How was she clothed? What kind of dress did she wear?" he asked hurriedly.

"She wore a long-sleeved robe brightly patterned with designs of spring blossoms, and on her shoulders she carried a pilgrim's pack."

"She carried a pilgrim's pack!" echoed Jurobei forlornly, and seized with an icy trembling. The

frightful truth had flashed upon his brain. He knew that he had killed his own child!

O Yumi, wondering at his hesitation, prepared to start out again.

"You need not go to look for our child!" Jurobei hoarsely muttered. "She is already here!"

"Has she come back?" cried O Yumi in excitement. "Tell me where she is."

"She is lying there under that quilt," he replied, pointing to where the body lay.

O Yumi quickly crossed the room and drew back the coverlet. "My child! Oh, my child! At last, at last I may call you so!" cried the delighted mother sinking on her knees in a transport of joy.

Long and tenderly she gazed at the little figure, lying prone before her. But how strange that her clothes were still unloosened and the heavy pack had not been unstrapped from the tired shoulders. O Yumi touched her hands and found them cold. Panic-stricken, she listened at the child's breast only to find her fears confirmed and that the little form was still and lifeless.

"Oh, oh, oh!" wailed O Yumi, "She is dead! She is dead!"

The shock was too deep for tears. For a moment the unhappy woman was paralysed.

Then turning to her husband:

"You must know how she died. Tell me! Tell me!" she gasped distractedly.

The half-dazed Jurobei related as well as he could all the events of that fatal afternoon. He finished his recital:

"I put my hand over her mouth to stop her screaming, and on releasing her she fell to the ground. I had no intention of killing her and pitied the poor unfortunate girl, though I had no idea that she was my little Tsuru. That I should have slain our own child must be the result of sin committed in one of the former states of existence, alas! Forgive me, O Yumi! Forgive me!" and the stricken man broke down and wept.

"Was it you, her father, who killed her?" cried O Yumi, in horror.

"Oh, my child, my own child!" she sobbed. "It was your fate to come in search of such cruel, unnatural parents. When you told me of the hardships you had suffered in looking for them, my soul was pierced with woe. When I refrained from making myself known to you I felt as though my heart must break. It was only the depth of my love for you that made me drive you away from our door. If only I had kept you here this would never have happened. This calamity has come upon us as a result of my driving you away. Forgive me, oh, forgive me! O Tsuru, O Tsuru!" and the miserable mother gathered the lifeless form of her little daughter to her breast and rocked herself to and fro in the frenzy of grief unutterable.

"Words are useless. What is done can never be undone. If only I had not known that she possessed the money to help me out of this crisis it would never have happened. Money is a curse!" he said in broken accents, as he took out from the folds of the child's dress the bag containing the coins. Opening it only three *ryo*[6] were disclosed.

"What a miserable pittance! Can this be all? I made a mistake in thinking she had a great deal. This certainly must be retribution for some bad action in my previous existence!"

His hand still searching the bag came upon a letter. He drew it forth and read the address:

"*To Jurobei and his Wife!*"

"Ah! this is my mother's handwriting!"

Jurobei tore it open and began to read:

> "Ever since the day you left home we must have felt mutual anxiety concerning each other's health and welfare. This is the natural feeling between parent and child, so I shall not write more upon this subject, but inform you of the real reason for this letter without further detail.
>
> "First of all what I wish to tell you is, that it has come to my knowledge that Onota Gunbei has the lost Kunitsugu sword in his possession. Immediately I tried to obtain indisputable evidence of this fact, but as I am only a stupid woman, on second thoughts I feared that were I to take any steps in this direction it might result in more harm than good.
>
> "Intending, therefore, to seek you out and let you proceed in this matter, I began to prepare myself and O Tsuru for the journey. But at the last moment I was suddenly taken with a mortal illness and was compelled to relinquish all hope of setting out to find you. I write this letter instead. As soon as it reaches your hands return home at once.
>
> "Restore the sword to its rightful owner and earn your promotion—for this I shall wait beneath the flowers and the grass."

"Oh," exclaimed Jurobei, "then it was Gunbei who stole the sword. How grateful I am to my mother for this discovery. But what a cruel blow to think that she is dead!"

O Yumi took the letter from his hand and continued to read aloud:

> "My greatest anxiety now is concerning little O Tsuru left helpless and friendless, and about to start alone on this journey. If by the mercy and help of the Gods she

reaches you safely, bring her up tenderly and carefully. She is a clever child. She writes and plays the *koto* well, besides being clever at her needle, and can skilfully sew *crêpe* and silken robes. I myself have taken pains to instruct her, and am proud of my pupil. Give her an opportunity of showing her handiwork, and then praise her both of you.

"She brings with her the medicine which I have found by experience to suit her best. Should she ail at any time, fail not to administer it. Although repetition is irksome, yet again I beg you to take every care of my precious grandchild."

Here O Yumi, unable to read further, broke down in lamentations and cried aloud.

Now the spiteful Butaroku, finding that Jurobei did not come to pay Izæmon's debt according to agreement, was highly incensed. Knowing that the authorities were on the alert to seize Jurobei, he maliciously went and lodged information of his whereabouts.

Just at the moment they had finished reading the momentous letter the officers of the law arrived outside the house with a great noise, shouting and clamouring.

Jurobei and O Yumi, to gain a few minutes' time, snatched up the body of O Tsuru and quickly concealed themselves in a back room.

The police entered and a scene of wild confusion ensued. Confident of finding their prey hidden somewhere in the cupboards, they broke down the walls, the *shoji*, the boards of the ceiling, and even the little shrine dedicated to the Goddess Kwannon.

Jurobei had in those few moments braced himself up for a desperate fight. He would rather die than surrender to the law before his mission of finding the sword had been accomplished. Like a whirlwind he rushed into the room where his adversaries were battering down all before them, and like a demon of fury he attacked them, mortally slashing with his sword each man that attempted to lay hands on him.

The savage bravery of his onslaught was terrific, and so dexterous and unerring was his aim that he seemed possessed of superhuman strength: his opponents were terror-stricken, and in a few minutes, like a spider's nest, when the threads of the binding web are broken by rough contact, they fled for their very lives and rushed scattered in all directions.

"Now is our time! Let us escape!" cried O Yumi.

Both began to run from the wrecked house.

"You have forgotten our child!" Jurobei whispered brokenly.

"She needs our anxiety no more. She is safe beyond the suffering of this world. We will bury her here before we leave."

Hurriedly retracing their steps they re-entered the house, and seizing the debris that lay strewn in all directions, placed it in a heap upon the little corpse. It was the work of a few moments to light the torches: this was the sole alternative that was left them to prevent their beloved dead from falling into the desecrating hands of callous strangers.

It was impossible to carry the body with them in their flight.

As the flames crackled and blazed up, Jurobei and O Yumi stood side by side, praying for the departed soul with uplifted hands placed palm to palm, while they watched the burning of their child's funeral pyre.

PART IV

It was springtime, and in the town of Tokushima the cherry-blossoms were bursting into bloom. The second of March[7] had come, and Onoto Gunbei was secretly rejoicing in the wicked thought that his schemes for the disgrace of his rival had been successful. Sakurai once removed from his path, his own advancement would be certain. To-morrow Sakurai must take the Kunitsugu sword to the palace and lay it in state before the Daimio. For reasons of his own Gunbei knew that this would be a matter of impossibility. Sakurai would therefore be suspected of having stolen it and his degradation would be the certain result.

Gunbei's sinister features relaxed into a malignant smile as he proudly stalked along the road on his way to the shrine at the western end of the town.

Two of his retainers were following at a respectful distance in his rear.

He had reached the precincts of the temple when one of these men came hurrying up:

"My lord! Jurobei, the man for whom you are constantly on the look out, is in that tea-house close by. I have just recognized him. What steps shall we take?"

"Very good!" said his master. "You have done well. Let us hide ourselves, and when he leaves the place rush upon him unawares and seize him."

Jurobei, after a short time, walked out from the hostelry. His mind was entirely engrossed with the thought that the sword must be retrieved from Gunbei's possession before the morrow, the third of the third month.

As he abstractedly strolled along, the enemy lying in ambush pounced upon him from behind. But his years of *ronin's* hard and reckless life had trained his muscles to such phenomenal strength that in the tussle that followed, within a few rounds, he came off triumphantly the victor.

Gunbei, who had been a spectator of this unequal contest, drew his sword.

Jurobei, noting his action, caught up one of Gunbei's men and used him as a shield to ward off the blows.

The news of the fight was soon carried to Sakurai, who immediately hurried to the spot.

Directly he became aware of the identity of Gunbei's opponent, he shouted:

"What presumption to stand up and attack your superior. Surrender at once!"

He then turned to Gunbei.

"I will take him, therefore put up your sword."

Jurobei, who understood that this was strategy on his master's part, obediently allowed himself to be bound. Sakurai then handed him over to Gunbei, who gave him in charge of his henchmen and bade them conduct him to his house.

Gunbei's joy was extreme at having Jurobei in his power. He ordered him to be secured to a tree in the inner garden while he stood and mocked at him.

"Ho, Jurobei! I have a grudge to pay off against you. Why did you kill two of my men three months ago—tell me that?"

"I slew them because they intended to murder my master," replied Jurobei.

"Indeed! I believe that you are also the man who stole the sword for which your master is responsible—ho, ho, ho! You are both robbers, you must have connived at the theft of the sword together—confess!"

"You may say what you like of me, but you lie with regard to Shusen."

In a rage Gunbei and his accomplices put their sheathed swords beneath the ropes which bound Jurobei, and twisted them round and round so that they cut into the flesh and inflicted great torture on their victim.

Now it happened that Takao, the Daimio's illegitimate half-sister, whom Izæmon had been enabled to rescue from the infamous quarter through Jurobei's help, had been taking refuge in Sakurai's home. Here she had been seen by Gunbei, who had fallen madly in love with her beauty, and had planned to make her his mistress. One day in the absence of Sakurai he had sent his retainer, Dotetsuke, to carry her off by force.

Takao, now installed beneath Gunbei's roof, was obliged to listen to his dishonourable advances, but so far had managed to repel them. She was in the secret of the lost sword, and her purpose was to use the present occasion as an opportunity of laying hands on it if possible.

On hearing the commotion she opened the *shoji* and eagerly scanned the direction whence it arose. To her astonishment and distress she recognized in the bound and helpless form none other than her valiant friend Jurobei. The thought that she owed her deliverance from her wretched past to his chivalrous generosity flashed through her mind. Trained to resource and intrigue, on the spur of the moment she resolved to pretend that Jurobei was her brother. This feigned relationship would afford them facilities for consultation concerning the sword. Impetuously advancing to the edge of the veranda, she looked earnestly at the captive and uttered a piteous cry:

"Oh, oh! it is my brother! Oh! my poor brother!"

"This is interesting!" jeered Gunbei. "Are you really brother and sister?"

Takao implored Gunbei to release Jurobei.

"If you listen to me I will set him free," replied Gunbei, whose desire was all the more inflamed by her rejection of his suit. "But if you refuse to obey me, I will torture him with both fire and water."

Takao wept with her face hidden in her sleeves. "Is it possible that you are a *samurai*?" she sobbed.

"Does your heart know no sympathy—no mercy? This is unendurable! I cannot bear to see it!"

"It is you who know no sympathy either for me or your brother. I have made conditions with you, Takao. It rests entirely with you. Accept my love and you are both free."

"Such a matter cannot be decided of my own will. I am a woman and not a free agent. I must consult my elder brother."

"Very well," responded Gunbei, "if you cannot decide this by yourself, by all means consult with your elder brother Jurobei—and come to a good understanding. I will leave you both for a while."

At a sign Gunbei's henchmen released Jurobei. "Persuade your sister to obey me and I will forgive you all and set you free. I must have Takao's affection. Think well, and give me an answer that will gladden me."

Then turning to Takao he continued:

"If you finally reject my proposals you shall both be cruelly put to death. Your two lives depend upon your will. I shall await your decision in the inner part of the house."

Here Gunbei retired. Blinded by his wild passion for the unfortunate girl he was unable to see the resolution expressed on both their faces. Both his mind and soul were clouded by the desire to possess at all costs the beautiful woman who defied him. Unaware of her high birth, the knowledge of which would have abashed him in his pursuit of her, he considered that she was the legitimate prey to his will.

Takao and Jurobei were left alone. They entered the room, crossing the veranda. Seating themselves, Jurobei made a profound obeisance at a respectful distance from Takao.

"Even though it is for the sake of the Kunitsugu sword, it is a sacrilege that the close relative of our noble Daimio should for one moment be called the sister of such a poor fellow as myself."

"It is not worth while to trouble your mind about these trifles while the finding of the sword is at stake. Think not of who is master or servant. We must find the sword this very night."

"Yes, yes," replied Jurobei, "I have the same purpose as yourself. Now is a good opportunity. Gunbei is madly in love with you. For a time pretend to listen to his wooing—whatever he may say do not let it anger you—then while he is off his guard draw out the sword he is wearing from its sheath: if the *habaki* (the ring which secures the guard to the blade) is of gold, ornamented with carven butterflies and flowers, and the markings on the edge of the blade is the *midare-yake*,[8] be sure that it is the missing Kunitsugu sword. Then give me a sign. Till that moment I will be waiting in concealment close at hand."

"Yes, yes," answered Takao. "Although Gunbei's attentions are hateful to me, it is my duty, for the sake of the sword, to pretend to yield to him for a short time. In this way Sakurai will be saved. Let us agree upon a signal. I will go to the stream and, throwing some cherry flowers into it, I will repeat:

Hana wa sakura:
Hito wa bushi.

The cherry is first among flowers:
The warrior first among men."

They separated quietly. Takao sank upon the mats, musing sadly. The prospect that lay before her was utterly revolting to her mind. Meanwhile Gunbei, eager to know the result of the conference he had permitted between the two, quietly entered the room from behind.

Her attitude of dejection greatly enhanced her pale and aristocratic beauty, and Gunbei thought that she looked more ravishingly lovely than he had ever seen her before. The sight of her inflamed his longing to possess her as his own.

"What a woman!" he thought to himself. "She shall be mine!"

As he moved across the room, Takao, who was hitherto unaware of his presence, started to her feet.

"No, no," remonstrated Gunbei in seductive accents, "I cannot allow you to run away—do not deceive yourself for one moment. I have come for your answer, Takao. It is 'Yes,' is it not?"

He thought that as he found her alone and in this pensive frame of mind that Jurobei must have persuaded her to become his paramour. His pulses throbbed and the blood in his veins ran fire. In his overmastering passion he did not notice that his would-be victim shuddered as he took her hand and drew her close to him till she was reclining on his knees. Dreamily he whispered:

"Takao, you are as beautiful as an angel. Yield to my desire and I will make you my wife. Only listen to me, and all shall be as you wish both for yourself and your brother, Jurobei.—Come, come! Let us belong to each other!" and he endeavoured to draw her towards the inner room.

Takao, in the meantime, had rested her hand on the hilt of his sword and was about to draw it from its sheath.

"What are you doing, Takao! Why do you touch my sword?" asked Gunbei sharply, roused out of his reverie of love.

"Think of me no more! With this sword I will cut off my hair and become a nun. You may rest assured that never shall another man touch me all my life."

With these words she attempted to draw the sword from his girdle.

Gunbei, thwarted in his longing for the beautiful woman, now lost his temper. He pushed her roughly to one side:

"You scorn my love then? You are an obstinate creature! Instead of forgetting you I will torture Jurobei. You shall soon know what my hatred means." Clapping his hands, he called his confidential servant:

"Dotetsuke! Dotetsuke!"

When the man appeared his master wrathfully gave the imperious command:

"Tie up that woman to yonder cherry-tree."

Dotetsuke obediently dragged Takao into the garden and bound her with the rope that had a little

time before made Jurobei a prisoner to the same tree.

Gunbei, who had watched the execution of his cruel order from the veranda, retired into the room to meditate sulkily on his ill-success. His heart was bitter within him with chagrin and baffled desire.

Suddenly, through a small side gate, there appeared a priest of sinister appearance who, approaching the balcony, saluted Gunbei.

"According to your wishes I have prayed seven days in succession for the Daimio of Tokushima to be seized with mortal illness. Where is my reward?"

"Do not speak so loudly!" reproved Gunbei. "You may be overheard! You shall be duly compensated for your services later. This is not the time. Return at once!"

"Yes, yes, I will obey you, but do not forget to let me have the money soon."

And Kazoin, the wicked priest, fingering his rosary and praying for evil, departed as stealthily as he had come.

Meanwhile the unhappy Takao was left alone. She struggled to free her hands from the cords that cut into her tender flesh, but in vain.

"What shall I do?" she sobbed. "Jurobei must be waiting for my answer. I must find some means of letting him know my condition. Is there no way by which I can get free? I am powerless to find the sword or to help Shusen."

She struggled desperately against the tree and in her anguish she murmured:

"Gunbei is surely a devil in human form. He has stolen the sword himself in order to incriminate others. Shusen will be lost and his house ruined unless we can recover it this very night."

In her violent efforts to wrench herself free the cherry-tree was shaken and several blossoms fell into the stream. The falling flowers brought hope and comfort to Takao's heart.

"The holy Buddha has come to our aid," she reflected. "Jurobei will surely see the flowers in the water, and think that it is the pre-arranged signal."

Meanwhile Jurobei, from his hiding-place, was watching the stream, waiting with impatience for the promised sign. Just as he was beginning to chafe at the unexpected delay he caught sight of a cluster of white blossoms floating down the current of the rivulet.

"Ah, then it was the Kunitsugu sword which Gunbei stole and wore on his person, never letting it out of his sight night or day."

Gunbei had watched the execution of his cruel order from the veranda.

Creeping along within the shadow of the trees he stealthily made his way across the inner garden towards the room where he expected to find Takao.

But what was his surprise when he came upon her bound to the cherry-tree.

"Jurobei, at last you have come!" she gasped.

"Takao Sama, whatever has happened? Why are you treated like this?"

"It is because I could not endure Gunbei's hateful attentions," she answered, weeping. "Help me, I cannot move!"

Jurobei set to work to unfasten the ropes and in a few minutes Takao was released.

"Leave this matter to me!" advised Jurobei. "I will find some means of outwitting Gunbei yet."

And Jurobei, followed by Takao who was endeavouring to arrange her disordered robes, boldly strode into the room of his enemy.

The screens were pushed aside and Gunbei appeared. He glared fiercely at the intruding couple.

"How dare you release that woman without my permission?"

"It is my intention to counsel her to comply with your wishes," replied Jurobei, "therefore have I set her free—to give her to you as my sister."

"Ya, Jurobei, have your powers of persuasion induced your sister to consent to my proposals?" inquired Gunbei in mocking tones.

"Yes, I know not which I am, an elder brother or a go-between. If you have any other work for me, I am at your service."

"Ha, ha!" sneered Gunbei, "then as your sister agrees to please me we shall now be members of the same family. As a sign that we are closely related, take this by way of congratulation," and

suddenly drawing his sword, he slashed at Jurobei.

Jurobei's keen eye forestalled the action, and, skilled fencer that he was, like lightning he seized a bucket close at hand and, holding it up, adroitly parried the rain of blows with this improvised shield.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed. "This is too much attention even from a relative. It is troublesome. Surely so much ceremony between members of the same family is unnecessary. Please take it back."

Gunbei's answer was another wild attack on Jurobei, who nimbly avoided the thrusts.

While his whole attention was engrossed in trying to cut down Jurobei, Takao stole behind him and snatched the long sword hanging at his side from its sheath.

"Here is the Kunitsugu sword," she joyfully exclaimed.

On hearing these words, Gunbei turned like a demon of fury upon her.

"If you have found it I will kill you both," shouted Gunbei.

But before he could execute his threat Jurobei seized him from behind.

Dotetsuke, a secret supporter of Shusen Sakurai, and who all this time has acted the part of a spy and pretended accomplice in Gunbei's vile schemes, now escorted his real master upon the scene.

Sakurai loftily addressed his unmasked foe.

"Your villainous plots are all laid bare, and it is impossible for you to escape justice. Confess all and pray for mercy."

Gunbei, choking with rage, flung off Jurobei and rushed upon his abhorred rival.

Sakurai skilfully parried the onslaught, seized Gunbei, and with a prodigious effort hurled him out into the garden.

"Dotetsuke!" called Sakurai, "come and help us!"

"Yes, yes!" answered the man, as he ran to Jurobei's assistance in holding the wretch down.

Gunbei started.

"What? Are you also on Shusen's side?" and he gnashed his teeth in impotent fury.

"You have won!" He turned to Shusen. "It is useless for me to attempt to conceal the truth. I stole the sword, thereby hoping to bring about your ruin. I can say no more. Take the sword and return to your house. Does not that suffice?"

"The sword is but a small part of the crimes you have committed. Listen, villain that you are! You have done a much greater wrong. Our Lord, the Daimio of Tokushima, has loaded you with favours, and you, like a dastardly traitor, have requited his kindness by conspiring to compass the death of your benefactor."

"Silence, Shusen! That is a lie. I have always hated you as my rival, but I have borne no spite towards our Lord. What proof could you possibly have for such base allegations?" and Gunbei stared hard at his accuser.

Shusen smiled superciliously as he clapped his hands. In answer to the summons, Izæmon led in a prisoner, Kazoin, the wicked priest.

"Here are my witnesses of your schemes against the life of the Lord of Tokushima."

Gunbei realized his checkmate: there was nothing to be gained by lying further. He was a declared traitor. In desperation he attempted to rally his strength and attack Sakurai again, but he was promptly seized and again thrown down into the garden.

"You are a bad man, Gunbei. Our Lord shall judge you." Then turning to the men he gave the command:

"Bind him, hand and foot!"

When the mortified Gunbei lay helpless and cringing at his mercy, Shusen turned to his trusty vassal and addressed him, saying:

"Jurobei, I promote you in my service. You are a true and faithful knight. Let us rejoice, for we have triumphed and our enemy will receive his deserts—he is defeated!"

Takao here brought forward the sword and placed it slowly and ceremoniously before Jurobei who had staked his life, his house, his all, and lost his only child in the tragic search.

"It is found in time!" she said. "Look, the dawn breaks! It is the morning of the third of March!"

Receiving the weapon with a profound bow, Jurobei, on bended knees, raised it aloft in both hands and presented it to his feudal master, saying:

"To your keeping is at last restored the stolen treasure of our Daimio!" and thus ended the

Quest of the Lost Sword

NOTE.—Kunitsugu was the name of a famous swordsmith who lived at the end of the Kamakura Period, 1367.

[1] A small knife which fits into the hilt of a sword.

[2] The Shrines of Kumano or The Three Holy Places date from the first century B.C., and are famous for their healing powers. The Nachi waterfall is the third of these ancient shrines, and is No. 1 of the thirty-three places sacred to Kwannon, the Goddess of Mercy.

[3] Lit. Flower-Capital = Kyoto.

[4] In old Japan the sentence of imprisonment, execution, and even crucifixion fell on the wife as well as all the children, even to the youngest babe of the criminal.

[5] *Koban* = the name of an ancient pure gold coin elliptical in shape, worth about one *Yen*, but the purchasing value perhaps a hundred times what it is in the present day.

[6] *Ryo = Yen*, about two shillings, but in those times equal to perhaps a hundred times its present value.

[7] March by the old calendar fell a month later than the present way of reckoning.

[8] Swords of different smiths were distinguished by the marks on their blades, formed by the different methods of welding. The *midare-yake* is an undulating line like the waves of the sea.

THE TRAGEDY OF KESA GOZEN

The beautiful tragedy of Kesa Gozen has been familiar to me since the days of my early youth, when hand in hand I walked the school garden with Fumiko, my friend, and listened with the ardour of a romance-loving nature to the many stories of old Japan, and more especially of its heroines of antiquity, with which she loved to make me familiar.

Fumiko was the daughter of a naval officer, well versed in the literature of her own land, and a good English scholar. I had only just come to Japan, an Anglo-Japanese girl who had been brought up in England, knowing nothing of my fatherland. "Friendships are discovered, not made," says a philosopher, and in our case this was true. In her delightful and sympathetic companionship I began to forget the heart-aching homesickness for my motherland, and to learn to accustom myself to the strange country to which fate and my father had brought me. There is nothing more pitiful than the abysmal loneliness and utter hopelessness of the young, cut off from those they love, and planted in antipodal surroundings; they have no experience to tell them that misery, like joy, is but a condition of time, and that both pass and alternate. Who can say what drew us together? Yet never was I happier than when she put her hand in mine and made me her confidante, and great was my sorrow when she married and left me to pace the garden alone and to the memory of all the stories she had told me. To her I owe my awakening to the beauty of Japanese romance and the love of those old tragedies.

Many years have passed since then, but when I was told that Danjiro was acting the drama of Kesa Gozen at the Kabukiza Theatre my mind flashed back to those convent-like days when Fumiko and I

Lo, as some innocent and eager maiden
Leans o'er the wistful limit of the world,

Dreams of the glow and glory of the distance,
Wonderful wooing and the grace of tears,
Dreams with what eyes and what a sweet insistence
Lovers are waiting in the hidden years,

stirred to life stories of love and duty, old as the dawn which first broke upon the island empire, yet ever new and living while hearts throb to the music of the ideal.

But I am long in coming to the story of Kesa Gozen. This beautiful and touching story of the Japanese ideal of woman's character and morals is told in the drama called *Nachi-No-Taki Chikai No Mongaku*, "The Priest Mongaku at the Waterfall of Nachi" (it is characteristic of the Japanese that they have ignored the heroine in the title of the drama), which was acted by Danjiro Ichikawa, the star of the Japanese stage, at the Kabukiza Theatre during the month of October 1902. The heights of romance and tragedy are scaled, and the pathos of a woman's unflinching and voluntary sacrifice of life, rends the heart. The heroine is not a Francesca da Rimini, caught up by the whirlwind of passion and blown whithersoever it listeth, but a woman who finds herself confronted by a vehement and determined love, out of the toils of which she sees no escape, and so, in the prime of youth and beauty, to save her husband's name, her mother's life, and her own virtue, she calmly arranges by stratagem to die by the hand of her impetuous and would-be lover.

These tragic events took place in the year 1160, and a full account of them may be found in the "Gempei Seisuiki," a record of the rise and fall of the two great rival clans, the Taira[1] and the Minamoto, whose struggles for supremacy disturbed Japan for many years, and find a parallel in the conflicts of the White and Red Roses in England.

What is known historically of the story is this. Kesa, the heroine, was the only child of a widowed mother called Koromogawa, after the place of her residence during her married life. The word "Koromo" means the vestments of a priest, and her daughter was consequently called "Kesa," which means the "stole," her real name being Atoma. Both her father and grandfather were knights. The mother and daughter led a secluded life, always bordering on poverty, and at times menaced by actual want.

Koromogawa took charge of an orphaned nephew, a boy, a few years older than Kesa, and the two young cousins grew up together, with the old-fashioned result that the lad fell in love with the lass. At the age of sixteen, Yendo Morito, called away probably on business connected with his clan, had to leave Kesa, just then budding into exquisite beauty. Before leaving he entreated his aunt to promise him Kesa in marriage. Koromogawa complied. Yendo did not return for five years, and in the meantime, Watanabe Wataru, a wealthy and handsome young warrior, proposed for the hand of Kesa. The mother, probably in consideration of the advantages of the match from a worldly point of view, neglected her promise to Yendo, and married Kesa to Wataru, who also was the girl's cousin. After they have been married two years Yendo Morito returns and sees his lovely young cousin by accident. His boy's love, cherished fondly during long years of absence, flames into a man's overmastering passion at sight of her. He learns, to his despair, that she is married to another, and in his wrath determines to kill his aunt who, by her faithlessness to her promise, has made his life a misery. He rushes out and entering his aunt's house draws his sword upon her. She, to gain time, weakly promises that he shall see Kesa that very evening. Yendo, fain to be content with this hope, retires, and Koromogawa summons her daughter by a letter.

When Kesa arrives she finds that her mother has made all arrangements to kill herself, and on learning the circumstances she undertakes to see her cousin, and quiets her distressed parent. Then she interviews Morito and tells him that she has always loved him, but before she can be his he must first put her husband out of the way. To this he willingly consents. She bids him come that night to the house, where she will make her husband wash his hair and drink wine so that he may sleep soundly. Yendo is to steal in at midnight and, by feeling for the damp hair, find and slay his rival. Kesa returns home, washes her own hair, and sleeps in the room she has pointed out to Yendo, having carefully put her husband to sleep in an inner room.

This is an interesting psychological point, and is perhaps obscure to the Western reader. The ethical training of a Japanese woman teaches her that in any great crisis she is the one to be sacrificed. Kesa, rather than be the cause of a quarrel which would involve her husband and her mother in a blood-feud with Yendo, puts herself out of the way, and by doing so not only saves the lives of all concerned, but preaches a silent and moving sermon to her kinsman, whose ungoverned conduct is contrary to the teaching of all Japanese moralists.

The mad and reckless lover comes, but when he thinks to gaze with triumph on the severed head of his hated rival he is stricken with horror to find that he has murdered the woman he loved so passionately. He confesses his crime to the husband and they both become monks. Years after, from the obscurity of the monastery, having survived a long interval of austere life and self-inflicted penances, there rises into the prominence of political life a monk called Mongaku, who is the friend and counsellor of the great Shogun, Yoritomo, the head of the Minamoto clan. Mongaku, the monk, is the knight Yendo Morito.

It is the opinion of some that Kesa really loved Yendo, but her filial obedience obliged her to marry the man whom her mother chose for her. Then, when she found how great was her cousin's love for her, and knowing that in her heart she returned his love, but that she could not be his without sin, she went gladly to her death, rejoicing, doubtless, that it was by the sword of her beloved she should perish.[2]

This version is the more beautiful and tragic, for we have a woman triumphant in the face of the strongest temptation that can ever beat against a human heart. The invincible yearning of the flesh must have been there, but the soul battled bravely and won. The power of beauty, the joy of conquest in love, these are hers; but Kesa, remaining faithful to duty, by her death places the honour of the family beyond all danger of blemish through her.

The present drama does not recognize this latter version, but is founded on the former. The tragedy is epic from beginning to end, and "is lifted from the outset into the high region of things predestined." Fate, like some dread spider, weaves her fatal web of love and doom, and Kesa is caught in the meshes. The grand simplicity of the play and the purity of purpose of the heroine recall the Greek drama and the Roman tragedy of *Lucretia*. Kesa allows herself no petty, despicable dalliance with admiration; vanity lures her not from the narrow path of right. She sees that nothing will swerve Yendo from his irresistible passion, and she resolves to die. "Fear in the face of danger dies," and having quickly made up her mind she never vacillates nor looks back, but moves forward with the dignity of sublime reserve to pre-determined and self-imposed death. And Kesa was only seventeen years of age. Think of it!

Act I. The play begins with a scene in the open air. A new bridge has been built near the town of Osaka, which can be seen with the hills and pine-trees in the distance. Numbers of Buddhist priests appear in gorgeous robes and offer prayers for the safety of the new bridge.

Some village officials, a retainer of Yendo Morito, who is superintendent of the works, and Watanabe Kaoru, a brother-in-law to Kesa, the heroine, appear, and the young knight tells those present that his brother's wife Kesa is coming to see the opening of the new bridge.

In a few minutes Kesa, the picture of youth and grace, in lovely *crêpe* robes, her face hidden by a gossamer gown held over her head with both hands (an ancient custom resembling the Turkish *yashmak*), comes fluttering over the bridge like some radiant moth, followed by two attendants, Tamakoto and Otose. Before saluting her brother-in-law Kaoru, she removes the gauze veil and reveals to all a face of surpassing loveliness—gracefully oval in shape, a complexion white as the

lily, lips crimson as the bud of the peach blossom, and long almond eyes, surmounted by eyebrows like the crescent of the new moon. She speaks to her brother-in-law, who tells her that he is going to see her cousin, Yendo Morito, the superintendent of the new bridge. Kesa then prepares to retire and, donning the gauze-robe *yashmak*, her attendants helping, she turns to go home. As she moves away Yendo Morito, on horseback, crosses the bridge and, catching sight of the beautiful woman, watches her disappear into the distance. The priest and officials bow in polite salutation, but he is oblivious to everything near him, for his gaze is riveted on the retreating figure of Kesa. He thrills with rapturous emotion at the sight, and happy memories of their childhood and early youth rush over him.

The tragedy begins here. Yendo Morito, after several years' absence, sees his cousin for the first time and, shaken with a mighty love, now learns that she, who was promised to him in his boyhood, is already the wife of another—of his kinsman, Watanabe Wataru.

Act II. The curtain is pulled aside upon the maternal home of Kesa, a small thatched cottage in the country near Kyoto. The whole aspect of the little home denotes genteel poverty, tranquil retirement, and spotless cleanliness. The two ladies who accompanied Kesa in the first Act, Tamakoto and Otose, are discovered in the little sitting-room discoursing. Koromogawa, an old lady with flowing grey hair, comes out from an inner room and receives her two visitors. In the course of conversation they ask her to tell them the reason why she has lived so long in such a remote place as the province of Mutsu. In compliance with their request, Koromogawa says:

"I am the daughter of a knight who held the province in tenure for his services to his feudal lord. My husband was a retainer of the Governor of Mutsu, and so when we were married we went and lived at Koromogawa. My daughter Kesa was born to me there. Soon after my husband died, and I went back with my child to my old home, and have since lived a quiet and humble life. On my return the people of this neighbourhood called me after the place, Koromogawa, where my married life had been spent, and my daughter was called Kesa, though her real name is Atoma. She grew up here and married Watanabe Wataru."

At this point an official named Gorokuro, who seems to be on friendly terms with the old lady, comes in and sits by the charcoal hearth and makes a cup of tea for every one present. The hearth is square, sunk in the floor, and the kettle hangs, gipsy fashion, over the fire, as is the way in the houses of the poorer classes. While serving tea Gorokuro complains of the behaviour of Yendo Morito during the building of the bridge. This young and impetuous knight treated the workmen in such a rigorous manner that insubordination resulted, and he, Gorokuro, had great trouble in controlling them. This incident gives the key to the young knight's character. Koromogawa apologizes to Gorokuro for the trouble her nephew Yendo has given him.

While this conversation proceeds, Kesa, accompanied by one of her husband's retainers, Kisoda by name, arrives. Having dropped her sandals on the stepping-stone to the veranda, she removes her veiling robe, enters the house, and greets the old lady with low bows. She says that, whilst on her way home from visiting a temple with her husband, she has come to see her mother. In a little while the two ladies, Tamakoto and Otose, take their leave, and Kesa and her mother retire to an inner room.

Yendo Morito is now seen approaching the house along the *hana-michi*, and announces himself at the gate. Koromogawa, in answer to the call, comes out to receive him and asks his business. He replies that his business is private and that he must speak with her in secret. Koromogawa then ushers her nephew into a back room, and the passing of the daylight is marked by the lighting of a candle. As he enters the house he starts at the sight of a woman's sandals on the steps, and evidently guesses that Kesa is near at hand. Little dreaming of the storm that is brewing, the old lady asks her nephew to be seated. He ominously remains standing with his hand upon his sword. Suddenly the young knight's eyes flash, he snatches the sword from its sheath, and seizing his astonished aunt, his pent-up sense of injury and the misery of his thwarted hopes find vent in these words:

"Prepare to die at once! You are my enemy, and I am of the Watanabe clan, who never allow their enemies to live even for a day."

"What wrong have I done you that you should wish to kill me?" exclaims the terrified woman.

"Five years ago, before I went away, you promised to give me Kesa in marriage. I come back, and at the opening of the Watanabe bridge I see her, but only as the wife of another. I have always loved Kesa, and now I am bitterly disappointed and sick—sick with hopeless love and despair. It is true no correspondence has passed between us, but that has nothing to do with your promise. Ever since I last saw Kesa I have been ill, and I cannot and will not live without her. This is all your fault. You are my enemy, you shall die! and I will then kill myself. We will die together—prepare yourself!"

"Wait a moment!" shrieks the terrified mother. "I did not mean to break my promise, but Wataru compelled me to give her to him. If you really still love her I will get her back somehow or other. Only calm yourself and listen to reason."

But the young knight is reckless to madness; the old woman's pleading is lost upon him and, perhaps guessing that Kesa is in the next room, he determines to appeal to her filial piety so as to make her appear. He raises his sword and seizes his aunt again, but he has no time to strike: the sliding of a screen, the rustle of a woman's silken garments, and between Yendo and the victim of his vengeance there darts the lovely Kesa—his arm is stayed by her small hand, and, tremulous

with agitation, a voice he has longed to hear for many lonely years says:

"Spare my poor old mother!"

The mother throws herself between Kesa and Yendo, crying:

"I am ready to die. You must not sacrifice your virtue to save me."

Yendo draws his sword, when between him and the victim of his vengeance there darts the lovely Kesa

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Kesa again intervenes between her lover and her mother; again the mother throws herself in an agony of dread between them; but at last Kesa persuades the old woman to retire and to leave all to her discretion. Koromogawa then goes into the next room. The knight fixes his gaze upon his beautiful cousin, he trembles with emotion, and the resolve to possess her strengthens within his storm-tossed soul. She belongs to him by prior right. He had asked for her, and she had been promised to him before Wataru thought of her; what right had her mother to give her to Wataru? Anger sweeps away all remembrance of the past and of what he owes his aunt. Jealousy and desire, and hatred of the one whom he thinks has wronged him, alone remain. In vain Kesa gently pleads and expostulates. As if impatient of the delay of his vengeance, Yendo once more seizes his sword and rushes towards the inner room. Then Kesa wheels round upon him, and with her cheek close to his, her gorgeous *crêpe* draperies touching him and her hand upon his arm, she whispers in his ear:

"I have always loved you, Yendo. If you really love me as you say, you must first put my husband out of the way, and I am yours."

"How can I kill him?" whispers the determined man.

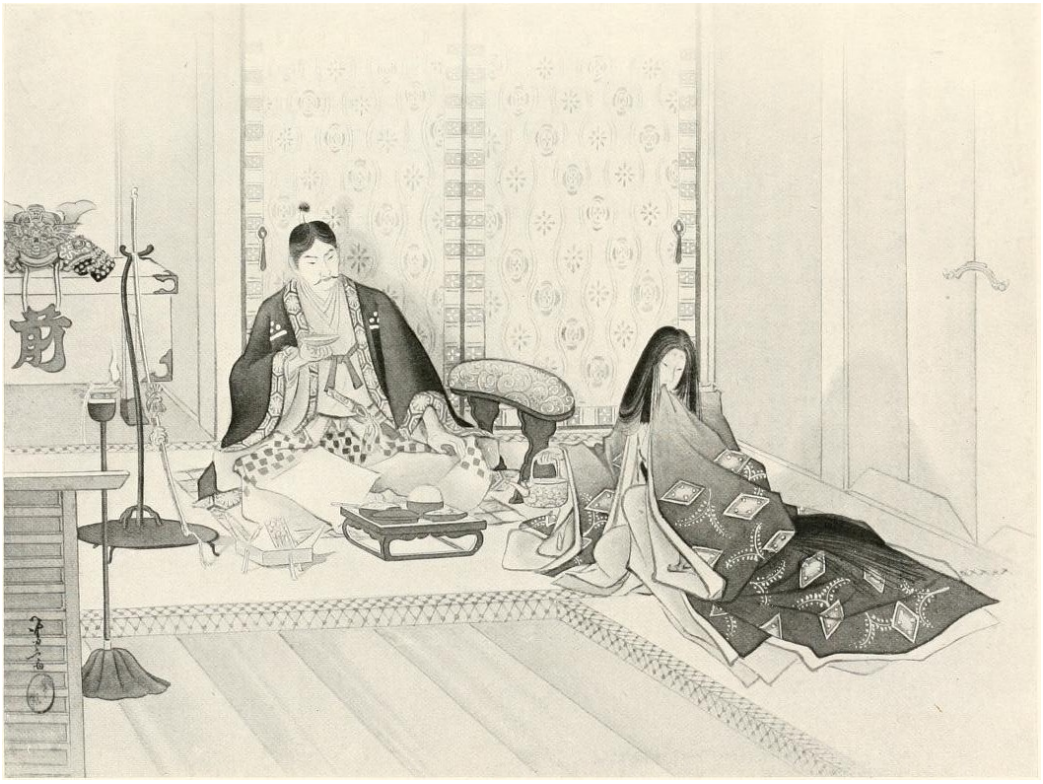
"Come to-morrow night and steal into the bedroom of my husband. I shall make him drunk with wine. You can identify him by touching his hair, for I shall induce him to wash it before retiring, and you will find the locks wet."

As Kesa whispers her plan the tense figure of the desperate knight relaxes from its stern purpose of murder. Thrilling with hope and passion, he turns to her, and in the attitude of her abandonment and yielding to his will he sees the vision of their united happiness—the gratification of his passionate desires. Little does his wild and lawless nature dream of the escape which the noble woman will force out of the toils fast closing round her. The picture as the two stand together is intensely dramatic, and vibrates with the portent of a mighty crisis.

Act III opens upon the fine residence of Watanabe Wataru, the husband of Kesa. The gleaming cream wood of the veranda and the posts, the fineness of the matting, the dainty white and gold of the walls and screens are all part of the exquisite refinements of a wealthy Japanese home. Kesa and her husband are discovered sitting side by side in a room opening on the garden. A large slab of granite forms the stepping-stone from the veranda and a line of irregular slabs makes a pathway to the bamboo gate which shuts off the outer garden. The whole arrangement and the atmosphere are realistic of a Japanese home.

The young people, both magnificently robed, have only just retired to their sitting-room, for they have been entertaining guests at a banquet. The only furniture in the room is a sword-stand, on

which the knight places his long weapon, the insignia of *samurai* honour. Before them is a small low table[3] (*sambo*) of white wood, on which stands a white wine-jar and her husband's drinking-cup. Kesa dismisses the two servants in attendance, and then proceeds to pour out some wine for her husband. Wataru little dreams that it is the last cup his wife will ever drink with him, though to her, knowing her premeditated and self-arranged doom, the little ceremony has not only a sacrificial symbolism, but the appalling pathos and irrevocable pitilessness of a last love rite.



Wataru little dreams that it is the last cup his wife will ever drink with him.

Wataru drains the wine-cup and, handing it to Kesa, pours the wine out for her. Kesa drinks, and then, overcome at last by a sadness which her husband does not understand, turns away and weeps. She explains that her tears spring from the thought of the unchangeable love between husband and wife, which would last even after death. He replies that the knowledge of their mutual faithfulness should be a joy and not a grief. While thus conversing in the hush of night, the deep mellow tone of a temple bell announces the hour of midnight. Kesa persuades her husband to retire to her own bedroom this night. On her knees she pushes aside the screens leading to an inner room, and as he passes in she bows with her head to the floor, and then closes them after him. Never will she see her husband again, yet her self-control is so great that she gives no sign of the emotion which must have surged over her at that moment. She knows that it is an eternal farewell, yet she allows Wataru to pass from her sight with only the usual greeting.

For a little time she stands like one dazed; then, recollecting herself, she disappears for a few minutes and returns along the veranda. Now, for the first time, those that do not know the story divine the tragic end. Her long black hair streams, wet and heavy, over her shoulders, and she feels it as she moves along to make sure that it is quite wet. On her arm she carries one of her husband's *kimono* and his ceremonial cap, all necessary for the deception of Yendo. Her aspect expresses hopeless grief and resignation. Twice in her slow progress to the outer room she stops and weeps. She looks out upon the still garden, and the coolness of the fragrant air and the soothing silence of the autumn night must seem to mock her woe. At the second outburst of grief it seems for a moment as if her resolution has failed her. She lays her cheek, in a passion of yearning and tenderness, on the robe she carries, and her tears fall fast at the thought of her happy wedded life, so soon to be cut short by the lawless desire of another man. There will be no one to pray for her old mother when she dies—it should be a daughter's duty to offer the daily incense to a mother's departed spirit; she can never know the pride of bearing a son to preserve the name of her husband's family. Oh! the pity of it—the pity of it! These, and more than these, must have been her sad thoughts. That she was loth to leave the world we learn by the poem, written in these moments of anguish, which she left with her farewell letter to her mother. She raises her head at last and comes forward. Her husband's honour, her mother's life, and her own purity are at stake; the weakness of sorrow vanishes—there is no other way than this. Her beauty is the sin, for it has roused Yendo's passion: her beauty must pay the penalty—her life is the sacrifice.

To-night—as she planned when she rushed in upon the tumultuous scene between her mother and Yendo—she will sleep in her husband's room, and when Yendo her cousin comes, instead of killing her husband, his sword will cut off her own head. She lifts the bamboo curtain which hangs before the room at the end of the veranda and passes to her doom.

The stage is darkened and empty. An impressive interval of silence and inaction follows. The audience throbs with the sustained sense of impending catastrophe and fatality hanging over the house. The awful pregnancy of the situation is intensely realistic, and its contrasts are strikingly dramatic. In the inner room—his wife's room, their happy bridal chamber—lies the husband, wrapt in peaceful sleep, pitifully unconscious of the tragedy which is being enacted within a few feet of him. In the outer room the young wife lies waiting in the lonely dark for the sword of her lover. Who can realize the tension of those last minutes, stretched to eternity by the agony of suspense? If by any chance her plan fails, her husband or her cousin will be killed, or both. What if Wataru, roused by some slight noise, come out to find Yendo approaching the room where she has arranged to sleep; what construction must he put upon these circumstances. And then, her senses sharpened by suffering and by the unutterable loneliness of the awful situation, she thinks that she catches the first faint sound of Yendo's stealthy footsteps. She counts them as they draw near, and as the bamboo curtain is raised and the swish of the sword falls upon her in the dark, she smiles to think that the struggle is over, that she has triumphed, and thus she faces death with the magnificent courage with which she had planned it.

Yendo Morito arrives. His long sleeves are looped back, ready for his dreadful work, and in his hand he carries a drawn sword. Swiftly and noiselessly he moves along the veranda; pauses for a few moments outside the room where lies asleep, as he imagines, the only obstacle between him and the woman he loves—loves so passionately, madly, and blindly that he is willing to use the murder of his kinsman as a stepping-stone to reach her. He enters.

The stage revolves. The courtyard of a temple is the next scene, surrounded by a wall with stone steps leading up to the outer court. The murderer is seen coming out upon the top of the steps into the moonlight: he carries something covered under his arm. Turning towards the flood of moonlight with a fierce and unholy joy at the thought of gazing on his rival's head, he uncovers what he carries. To his unspeakable horror and amazement the moonlight reveals the head of Kesa—his love—not that of Wataru, whom it was his purpose to kill. Unable to believe his eyes, he raises the head by the wet hair once more into the full light of the moon. There is no mistake. He recoils in a great revulsion of feeling as the truth forces itself upon his unwilling, shrinking mind, all his strength goes from him, he reels and staggers like a drunken man, and gasping for breath, he falls upon the steps overcome with uttermost anguish and remorse. In that awful moment he sees the hideousness of his crime and the wickedness of his heart in its true light. The cloud of darkness, as the Japanese say, rolls back from his soul, and he is smitten to earth with the sense of his guilt and misery.

To his unspeakable horror and amazement the moonlight reveals the head of Kesa—his love!

The fourth scene of this Act represents the front gate of Wataru's house. It is the morning following the last scene. Outside stand numerous tradesmen—the rice-man, the fishmonger, and some *samurai*—all unable to effect an entrance, for, though late in the morning, the house is still closed. After repeated knocking, Kisoda and Otose appear and tell them that, on account of an unfortunate event which has occurred in the house, they must be asked to withdraw for the day. The tradesmen then go grumbling away.

The next scene represents the familiar chamber where Wataru and Kesa sat together the evening before. In the middle of the room lies an ominous pile of quilts covering the remains of Kesa, splendidly dead by her own will. Before the corpse of his young wife sits the husband, the picture of mute and stoic grief. Opposite him is Koromogawa. Behind her again are Tamakoto and Otose. Wataru tells them that last night he slept in his wife's room in compliance with her wish, while she retired to his room. That in the morning he found her killed and her head carried away, and that no clue or trace of the murderer can be discovered. He says he can hardly speak for grief at the loss of Kesa and the disgrace his knighthood has suffered.

An attendant here rushes in and says that Yendo insists on seeing Wataru. Wataru sends a message to say that he cannot receive him now. The servant returns to say that Yendo is forcing his way into the house, and that it is impossible to check him. Yendo rushes in like a whirlwind and seats himself outside the room, on the veranda. He lays the head down before them all and confesses his crime, with all the circumstances relating to it. Then comes the most heart-rending part of the tragedy. The old mother tenderly unwraps the head and, folding it to her bosom, gives way to a loud and long paroxysm of grief. Wail after wail bursts from her. She rocks herself in wild abandonment to the poignancy of an overwhelming and totally unexpected sorrow. The *samurai* stoicism of the husband avails him not in this hour of bitter trial. He wipes his slow tears furtively away. Tamakoto brings out a letter of Kesa's found in the room where she was killed. Yendo snatches up the letter, spreads it out before him, and reads it aloud. It is addressed to her mother, and may be rendered into English as follows:

"I have always heard [this is a humble form of expression which women are supposed to use—they must never assert a fact] that woman is a sinful creature [because of her beauty, which lures

men to sin]. I fear that many people [meaning her mother, husband, and admirer] are in danger of their lives because of me. Mother, I know that you will sorrow much if I die, and I am sorrowful, thinking of the grief which I must cause you. I intend to expiate my sin [meaning the sin of being beautiful, which has caused Yendo to love her] by death. Weep not for me, and though it should be my place to pray for you, I beseech you to pray for the rest of my soul when I have departed on the journey of death. I can understand your sorrow, and this is the only anxiety I feel at this moment."

Morito now presents his sword to Wataru and requests him to take life for life, and to behead him in order to avenge his wife's death. Wataru replies that he has no wish to kill him, since he has confessed and repented of his crime. "Let us forsake this worldly life and become followers of Buddha, and spend the rest of our lives in praying for Kesa."

Then and there the two knights, first Wataru and then Yendo, take their swords and cut off their queues of hair.[4] Tamakoto brings in a low table, and on this Koromogawa places the head of Kesa. A tray with an incense-burner is now placed before the ghastly presence. The stricken mother, having set the incense burning, takes her rosary and bows her head in prayer to the brave departed spirit. Wataru now moves towards the extempore shrine, and worships with his face hidden.

In the presence of transcendent virtue and sublimely unselfish heroism, the sinner is forgotten. The silent scene of woe and desolation is too much for the penitent Yendo; he rises, and with one last-lingering look turns to go into his lifelong retreat from the world. Thus the stupendous tragedy, from the pitch of distraction and calamity, is brought to a quiet and reconciling close.

NOTE.—The title of the play, *The Priest Mongaku at the Waterfall of Nachi*, is taken from the last scene, which represents the monk Mongaku undergoing his self-inflicted penance of sitting under this famous waterfall where he would have died had not two Buddhist deities descended from Heaven to rescue him. This I have omitted as I considered it an anti-climax. It is an historical fact, however, that Mongaku, to purge himself of his sins, did undergo these terrible austerities and sufferings.

His grandfather had been a retainer of Ota Dokan ... and had committed suicide when his lord fell in battle.

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[1] The writer's father traces his descent from Taira no Kiyomori, the clan's chieftain.

[2] This is the interpretation that the writer and her friend put upon the heroine's conduct.

[3] These simple white utensils are always used in Shinto ceremonies.

[4] Buddhist priests shave their heads.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LANTERN

Some three hundred years ago, in the province of Kai and the town of Aoyagi, there lived a man named Koharu Tomosaburo, of well-known ancestry. His grandfather had been a retainer of Ota Dokan,[1] the founder of Yedo, and had committed suicide when his lord fell in battle.

This brave clansman's grandson was Tomosaburo, who, when this story begins, had been happily

married for many years to a woman of the same province and was the proud father of a son some ten years of age.

At this time it happened, one day, that his wife fell suddenly ill and was unable to leave her bed. Physicians were called in but had to acknowledge themselves baffled by the curious symptoms of the patient: to relieve the paroxysms of pain from which she suffered, *Moxa* was applied and burned in certain spots down her back. But half a month passed by and the anxious household realized that there was no change for the better in the mysterious malady that was consuming her: day by day she seemed to lose ground and waste away.

Tomosaburo was a kind husband and scarcely left her bedside: day and night he tenderly ministered to his stricken wife, and did all in his power to alleviate her condition.

One evening, as he was sitting thus, worn out with the strain of nursing and anxiety, he fell into a doze. Suddenly there came a change in the light of the standing-lantern, it flushed a brilliant red, then flared up into the air to the height of at least three feet, and within the crimson pillar of flame there appeared the figure of a woman.

Tomosaburo gazed in astonishment at the apparition, who thus addressed him:

"Your anxiety concerning your wife's illness is well-known to me, therefore I have come to give you some good advice. The affliction with which she is visited is the punishment for some faults in her character. For this reason she is possessed of a devil. If you will worship me as a god, I will cast out the tormenting demon."

Now Tomosaburo was a brave, strong-minded *samurai*, to whom the sensation of fear was totally unknown.

He glared fiercely at the apparition, and then, half unconsciously, turned for the *samurai's* only safeguard, his sword, and drew it from its sheath. The sword is regarded as sacred by the Japanese knight and was supposed to possess the occult power assigned to the sign of the cross in mediæval Europe—that of exorcising evil.

The spirit laughed superciliously when she saw his action.

"No motive but the kindest of intentions brought me here to proffer you my assistance in your trouble, but without the least appreciation of my goodwill you show this enmity towards me. However, your wife's life shall pay the penalty," and with these malicious words the phantom disappeared.

From that hour the unhappy woman's sufferings increased, and to the distress of all about her, she seemed about to draw her last breath.

Her husband was beside himself with grief. He realized at once what a false move he had made in driving away the friendly spirit in such an uncouth and hostile manner, and, now thoroughly alarmed at his wife's desperate plight, he was willing to comply with any demand, however strange. He thereupon prostrated himself before the family shrine and addressed fervent prayers to the Spirit of the Lantern, humbly imploring her pardon for his thoughtless and discourteous behaviour.

From that very hour the invalid began to mend, and steadily improving day by day, her normal health was soon entirely regained, until it seemed to her as though her long and strange illness had been but an evil dream.

One evening after her recovery, when the husband and wife were sitting together and speaking joyfully of her unexpected and almost miraculous restoration to health, the lantern flared up as before and in the column of brilliant light the form of the spirit again appeared.

"Notwithstanding your unkind reception of me the last time I came, I have driven out the devil and saved your wife's life. In return for this service I have come to ask a favour of you, Tomosaburo San," said the spirit. "I have a daughter who is now of a marriageable age. The reason of my visit is to request you to find a suitable husband for her."

"But I am a human being," remonstrated the perplexed man, "and you are a spirit! We belong to different worlds, and a wide and impassable gulf separates us. How would it be possible for me to do as you wish?"

"It is an easier matter than you imagine," replied the spirit. "All you have to do is to take some blocks of *kiri*-wood [*Paulownia Imperialist*] and to carve out from them several little figures of men; when they are finished I will bestow upon one of them the hand of my daughter."

"If that is all, then it is not so difficult as I thought, and I will undertake to do as you wish," assented Tomosaburo, and no sooner had the spirit vanished than he opened his tool box and set to work upon the appointed task with such alacrity that in a few days he had fashioned out in miniature several very creditable effigies of the desired bridegroom, and when the wooden dolls were completed he laid them out in a row upon his desk.

The next morning, on awaking, he lost no time in ascertaining what had befallen the quaint little figures, but apparently they had found favour with the spirit, for all had disappeared during the night. He now hoped that the strange and supernatural visitant would trouble them no more, but the next night she again appeared:

"Owing to your kind assistance my daughter's future is settled. As a mark of our gratitude for the trouble you have taken, we earnestly desire the presence of both yourself and your wife at the marriage feast. When the time arrives promise to come without fail."

By this time Tomosaburo was thoroughly wearied of these ghostly visitations and considered it highly obnoxious to be in league with such weird and intangible beings, yet fully aware of their powers of working evil, he dared not offend them. He racked his brains for some way of escape from this uncanny invitation, but before he could frame any reply suitable to the emergency, and while he was hesitating, the spirit vanished.

Long did the perplexed man ponder over the strange situation, but the more he thought the more embarrassed he became: and there seemed no solution of his dilemma.

The next night the spirit again returned.

"As I had the honour to inform you, we have prepared an entertainment at which your presence is desired. All is now in readiness. The wedding ceremony has taken place and the assembled company await your arrival with impatience. Kindly follow me at once!" and the wraith made imperious gestures to Tomosaburo and his wife to accompany her. With a sudden movement she darted from the lantern flame and glided out of the room, now and again looking back with furtive glances to see that they were surely following—and thus they passed, the spirit guiding them, along the passage to the outer porch.

The idea of accepting the spirit's hospitality was highly repugnant to the astonished couple, but remembering the dire consequences of his first refusal to comply with the ghostly visitor's request, Tomosaburo thought it wiser to simulate acquiescence. He was well aware that in some strange and incomprehensible manner his wife owed her sudden recovery to the spirit's agency, and for this boon he felt it would be both unseemly and ungrateful—and possibly dangerous—to refuse. In great embarrassment, and at a loss for any plausible excuse, he felt half dazed, and as though all capacity for voluntary action was deserting him.

What was Tomosaburo's surprise on reaching the entrance to find stationed there a procession, like the train of some great personage, awaiting him. On their appearance the liveried bearers hastened to bring forward two magnificent palanquins of lacquer and gold, and at the same moment a tall man garbed in ceremonial robes advanced and with a deep obeisance requested them not to hesitate, saying:

"Honoured sir, these *kago*[2] are for your august conveyance—deign to enter so that we may

proceed to your destination."

At the same time the members of the procession and the bearers bowed low, and in curious high-pitched voices all repeated the invitation in a chorus:

"Please deign to enter the *kago!*"

Both Tomosaburo and his wife were not only amazed at the splendour of the escort which had been provided for them, but they realized that what was happening to them was most mysterious, and might have unexpected consequences. However, it was too late to draw back now, and all they could do was to fall in with the arrangement with as bold a front as they could muster. They both stepped valiantly into the elaborately decorated *kago*; thereupon the attendants surrounded the palanquins, the bearers raised the shafts shoulder high, and the procession formed in line and set out on its ghostly expedition.

The night was still and very dark. Thick masses of sable cloud obscured the heavens, with no friendly gleams of moon or stars to illumine their unknown path, and peering through the bamboo blinds nothing met Tomosaburo's anxious gaze but the impenetrable gloom of the inky sky.

Seated in the palanquins the adventurous couple were undergoing a strange experience. To their mystified senses it did not seem as if the *kago* was being borne along over the ground in the ordinary manner, but the sensation was as though they were being swiftly impelled by some mysterious unseen force, which caused them to skim through the air like the flight of birds. After some time had elapsed the sombre blackness of the night somewhat lifted, and they were dimly able to discern the curved outlines of a large mansion which they were now approaching, and which appeared to be situated in a spacious and thickly wooded park.

The bearers entered the large roofed gate and, crossing an intervening space of garden, carefully lowered their burdens before the main entrance of the house, where a body of servants and retainers were already waiting to welcome the expected guests with assiduous attentions. Tomosaburo and his wife alighted from their conveyances and were ushered into a reception room of great size and splendour, where, as soon as they were seated in the place of honour near the alcove, refreshments were served by a bevy of fair waiting-maids in ceremonial costumes. As soon as they were rested from the fatigues of their journey an usher appeared and bowing profoundly to the bewildered new-comers announced that the marriage feast was about to be celebrated and their presence was requested without delay.

Following this guide they proceeded through the various ante-rooms and along the corridors. The whole interior of the mansion, the sumptuousness of its appointments and the delicate beauty of its finishings, were such as to fill their hearts with wonder and admiration.

The floors of the passages shone like mirrors, so fine was the quality of the satiny woods, and the richly inlaid ceilings showed that no expense or trouble had been spared in the selection of all that was ancient and rare, both in materials and workmanship. Certain of the pillars were formed by the trunks of petrified trees, brought from great distances, and on every side perfect taste and limitless wealth were apparent in every detail of the scheme of decoration.

More and more deeply impressed with his surroundings, Tomosaburo obediently followed in the wake of the ushers. As they neared the stately guest-chamber an eerie and numbing sensation seemed to creep through his veins.

Observing more closely the surrounding figures that flitted to and fro, with a shock of horror he suddenly became aware that their faces were well known to him and of many in that shadowy throng he recognized the features and forms of friends and relatives long since dead. Along the corridors leading to the principal hall numerous attendants were gathered: all their features were familiar to Tomosaburo, but none of them betrayed the slightest sign of recognition. Gradually his dazed brain began to understand that he was visiting in the underworld, that everything about him was unreal—in fact, a dream of the past—and he feebly wondered of what hallucination he could be the victim to be thus abruptly bidden to such an illusory carnival, where all the wedding guests seemed to be denizens of the *Meido*, that dusky kingdom of departed spirits! But no time was left him for conjecture, for on reaching the ante-room they were immediately ushered into a magnificent hall where all preparations for the feast had been set out, and where the Elysian Strand[3] and the symbols of marriage were all duly arranged according to time-honoured custom.

Here the bridegroom and his bride were seated in state, both attired in elegant robes as befitting the occasion. Tomosaburo, who had acted such a strange and important part in providing the farcical groom for this unheard-of marriage, gazed searchingly at the newly wedded husband, whose mien was quite dignified and imposing, and whose thick dark locks were crowned with a nobleman's coronet. He wondered what part the wooden figures he had carved according to the spirit's behest had taken in the composition of the bridegroom he now saw before him. Strangely, indeed, his features bore a striking resemblance to the little puppets that Tomosaburo had fashioned from the *kiri*-wood some days before.

The nuptial couple were receiving the congratulations of the assembled guests, and no sooner had Tomosaburo and his wife entered the room than the wedding party all came forward in a body to greet them and to offer thanks for their condescension in gracing that happy occasion with their presence. They were ceremoniously conducted to seats in a place of honour, and invited with great cordiality to participate in the evening's entertainment.

Servants then entered bearing all sorts of tempting dainties piled on lacquer trays in the form of

large shells; the feast was spread before the whole assemblage; wine flowed in abundance, and by degrees conversation, laughter, and merriment became universal and the banquet-hall echoed with the carousal of the ghostly throng.

Under the influence of the good cheer Tomosaburo's apprehension and alarm of his weird environment gradually wore off, he partook freely of the refreshments, and associated himself more and more with the gaiety and joviality of the evening's revel.

The night wore on and when the hour of midnight struck the banquet was at its height.

In the mirth and glamour of that strange marriage feast Tomosaburo had lost all track of time, when suddenly the clear sound of a cock's crow penetrated his clouded brain and, looking up, the transparency of the *shoji*[4] of the room began to slowly whiten in the grey of dawn. Like a flash of lightning Tomosaburo and his wife found themselves transported back, safe and sound, into their own room.

On reflection he found his better nature more and more troubled by such an uncanny experience, and he spent much time pondering over the matter, which seemed to require such delicate handling. He determined that at all costs communications must be broken off with the importunate spirit.

A few days passed and Tomosaburo began to cherish the hope that he had seen the last of the Spirit of the Lantern, but his congratulations on escaping her unwelcome attentions proved premature. That very night, no sooner had he laid himself down to rest, than lo! and behold, the lantern shot up in the familiar shaft of light, and there in the lurid glow appeared the spirit, looking more than ever bent on mischief. Tomosaburo lost all patience. Glaring savagely at the unwelcome visitant he seized his wooden pillow[5] and, determining to rid himself of her persecutions once and for all, he exerted his whole strength and hurled it straight at the intruder. His aim was true, and the missile struck the goblin squarely on the forehead, overturning the lantern and plunging the room into black darkness. "Wa, Wa!" wailed the spirit in a thin haunting cry, that gradually grew fainter and fainter till she finally disappeared like a luminous trail of vanishing blue smoke.

From that very hour Tomosaburo's wife was again stricken with her former malady, and no remedies being of any avail, within two days it took a turn for the worse and she died.

The sorrow-stricken husband bitterly regretted his impetuous action in giving way to that fatal fit of anger and, moreover, in appearing so forgetful of the past favour he had received from the spirit. He therefore prayed earnestly to the offended apparition, apologizing with humble contrition for his cruelty and ingratitude.

But the Spirit of the Lantern had been too deeply outraged to return, and Tomosaburo's repentance for his rash impulse proved all in vain.

These melancholy events caused the unhappy husband to take a strong aversion to the house, which he felt sure must be haunted, and he decided to leave that neighbourhood with as little delay as possible.

As soon as a suitable dwelling was found and the details of his migration arranged, the carriers were summoned to transport his household goods to the new abode, but to the alarm and consternation of every one, when the servants attempted to move the furniture, the whole contents of the house by some unseen power adhered fast to the floor, and no human power was available to dislodge them.

Then Tomosaburo's little son fell ill and died. Such was the revenge of the Spirit of the Lantern.

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[1] 1513, date of Ota Dokan's death.

[2] *Kago* = palanquins.

[3] *Horai Dai*, the Eastern fairyland, where death and sickness never come, and where the fabulous old couple of Takasayo, paragons of conjugal felicity and constancy, live for ever in the shade of the evergreen pines, while storks and green-tailed tortoises, emblems of prosperity and ten thousand years of life, keep them company.

[4] *Shoji*, the sliding screens which takes the place of doors and windows in a Japanese house—the framework is of a fine lattice-work of wood, covered with white paper sufficiently transparent to let in the light.

[5] The old Japanese pillow was a wooden stand, on the top of which was a groove; in this was placed a small roll of cotton-wool covered with silk or *crêpe*, etc.

THE REINCARNATION OF TAMA

"Felt within themselves the sacred
passion of the second life.
Hope the best, but hold the Present

fatal daughter of the Past.
Love will conquer at the last."
TENNYSON

N.B.—It is a common Japanese belief that the soul may be re-born more than once into this world. A Buddhist proverb says:

Oya-ko, is-sé
Fufu wa, ni-sé,
Shu ju wa, sansé.

Parent and child for one life;
Husband and wife for two lives;
Master and servant for three lives.

Under the strong provocation of the passions of love, loyalty and patriotism, the soul may be reincarnated as many as seven times. The hero Hirose, before Port Arthur in 1904, wrote a poem during the last moments of his life saying that he would return seven times to work for his country.

THE REINCARNATION OF TAMA

Many years ago in Yedo,[1] in the district of Fukagawa, there lived a rich timber merchant. He and his wife dwelt together in perfect accord, but though their business prospered and their wealth increased as the years went by, they were a disappointed couple, for by the time they had reached middle age they were still unblessed with children. This was a great grief to them, for the one desire of their lives was to have a child.

The merchant at last determined to make a pilgrimage to several temples in company with his wife, and to supplicate the gods for the long yearned-for joy of offspring. When the arduous tour was over they both went to a resort in the hills noted for its mineral springs, the woman hoping earnestly that the medicinal waters would improve her health and bring about the desired result.

A year passed and the merchant's wife at last gave birth to a daughter. Both parents rejoiced that the Gods had answered their prayers. They reared the child with great care, likening her to a precious gem held tenderly in both hands, and they named her Tama, the Jewel.

As an infant Tama gave promise of great beauty, and when she grew into girlhood she more than fulfilled that promise. Their friends all declared that they had never seen such loveliness, and people compared her to a morning-glory, besprinkled with dew and glowing with the freshness of a summer dawn.

She had a tiny mole on the side of her snowy neck. This was her sole and distinguishing blemish.

Tama, the Jewel, proved a gifted child. She acquired reading and the writing of hieroglyphics with remarkable facility, and in all her studies was in advance of girls of her own age. She danced with grace, and sang and played the *koto* enchantingly, and she was also accomplished in the arts of flower-arrangement and the tea-ceremony.

When she reached the age of sixteen her parents thought it was time to seek a suitable bridegroom for her. Very early marriages were the custom of the day, and besides that her parents wished to see her happily established in life before they grew older. As she was the only child, her husband would become the adopted son, and thus the succession to the family would be secured. However, it proved exceedingly difficult to find anyone who would meet all their requirements.

Now it happened that near-by in a small house there lived a man by the name of Hayashi. He was a provincial *samurai*, but for some reason or other had left his Daimio's domain and settled in Yedo. His wife was long since dead, but he had an only son whom he educated in the refinements of the military class. The family was a poor one, for all *samurai* were trained to hold poverty in high esteem; and to despise trade and money-making.

Both father and son led simple lives and eked out their small patrimony by giving lessons in the reading of the classics and in calligraphy, and by telling fortunes according to the Confucian system of divination. Both were respected by all who knew them for their learning and upright lives.

At the time this story opens the elder Hayashi had just died and the son, though only nineteen years of age, carried on his father's work.

The young man was strikingly handsome. Of the aristocratic type, with long dark eyes, aquiline features and a pale, cream-like complexion, he attracted notice wheresoever he went, and though shabbily dressed he always bore himself with great dignity. He was a musician and played the flute with unusual skill, and the game of *go*[2] was his favourite pastime, a taste which made him very popular with older men.

He often passed the rich merchant's house and Tama, the Jewel, noticed the young man coming and going with his flute. Questioning her nurse, she learned all there was to know about his history, his poverty, his scholarly attainments, his skill as a musician and the recent sorrow he had sustained in the death of his father.

Besides being attracted by his good looks, the beautiful Tama's heart went out in sympathy to the young man in his misfortune and loneliness, and she asked her mother to invite him to the house as her music-master, so that they might play duets together—he performing on the flute to her accompaniment on the *koto*.

The mother consented, thinking the plan an excellent one, and the young *samurai* became a frequent visitor in the merchant's house. Tama's father was delighted when Hayashi proved to be an expert at *go*, and often asked him to come and spend the evening. As soon as dinner was over the merchant would order the chequer-board to be brought and Hayashi was then invited to try his hand at a game.

In this way the intimacy deepened till by degrees the young man was treated like a trusted member of the family.

The young master and pupil thus meeting day by day, presently fell in love, for heart calls to heart when both are young and handsome and the bond of similar tastes cements the friendship. Choosing themes and songs expressive of love they communicated their sentiments to one another through the romantic medium of music, and the two instruments blended in perfect harmony, the *koto's* accompaniment giving an ardent response to the plaintive melody of the young man's flute, which wailed forth the hopeless passion consuming his soul for the lovely maiden.

Tama's father was delighted when Hayashi proved to be an expert at *go,* and often asked him to come and spend the evening

Tama's parents were totally unaware of all that was happening, but her nurse soon guessed the secret of the young couple. The woman, who loved her charge faithfully and devotedly, could not bear to see her unhappy, and foolishly helped the lovers to meet each other in secret. With these unexpected opportunities they pledged themselves to each other for all their lives to come, and tried to think of some way by which they could obtain the old people's consent to their marriage. But Hayashi guessed that the merchant was ambitious for his daughter, and knew that it was improbable that he would accept a son-in-law as poor and obscure as himself. So he postponed asking for her hand until it was too late.

At this time a rich man whom Tama's parents deemed a suitable match for their daughter presented his proposals, and Tama was suddenly told that they approved of the marriage and that she must prepare for the bridal.

Tama was overwhelmed with despair. That day Hayashi had promised to come and play his favourite game with her father. The nurse contrived that the lovers should meet first, and then Tama told Hayashi of the alliance which had been arranged. Weeping, she insisted that an elopement was the only solution to their difficulties. He consented to escape to some distant place with her that very night. Gathering her in his arms he tried to still her sobbing, and Tama clung to him, declaring that she would die rather than be separated from him.

They were thus surprised by her mother, and their secret could no longer be concealed. Tama

was taken from him gently but firmly and shut up like a prisoner in one room. The vigilance of the parents being in this manner rudely awakened, the mother never allowed the girl out of her sight, and Hayashi was peremptorily forbidden the house.

The young man, fearing the wrath of her parents, went to live in another part of the city, telling no one of his whereabouts.

Tama was inconsolable. She pined for her lover and soon fell ill. Her elaborate trousseau and the outfit for the bridal household was complete but the wedding ceremony had to be postponed.

Both parents became very anxious for, as the days went by, instead of getting better their daughter visibly wasted away and sometimes could not leave her bed, so weak did she become. To distract her mind they took her to places of amusement like the theatre, or to gardens noted for the blossoming of trees and flowers. Then finally they carried her to places like Hakone and Atami, hoping that the mineral baths and the change of air and scene would cure her. But it was all to no purpose, Tama grew worse in spite of the devotion lavished upon her. Seriously alarmed, the parents called in a doctor. He declared Tama's malady to be love-sickness, and said that unless she were united to the man she pined for that she might die.

Her mother now begged the father to allow the marriage with Hayashi to take place. Though he was not the man of their choice in worldly position, yet if their daughter loved him, it were better that she should marry him than that she should die.

But now arose a difficulty of which they had not dreamed. Hayashi had moved away no one knew whither, and all their frantic efforts to trace him were fruitless.

A year passed slowly by. When Tama was told that her parents had consented to her marrying her beloved, she brightened up with the hope of seeing him again, and appeared to regain her health for a short time. But as month followed month and he never came, the waiting and the sickening disappointment proved too much for the already weakened frame of the young girl. She drooped and died just as she had attained her seventeenth birthday.

It was springtime when the sad event occurred. Hayashi had never forgotten the beautiful girl nor the vows they had mutually plighted, and he swore never to accept another woman as his wife. He longed for news of Tama, but he realized how imprudent and blameable his conduct had been in entering into a secret love-affair with a young girl, and he feared that her father might kill him were he to return even for a single day to the vicinity. Weakly he told himself that she had in all probability forgotten him by this time and was surely married to the man of her parents' choice.

One fine morning he went fishing on the Sumida river. When evening began to fall he turned homewards. As he sauntered along the river embankment, the water lapping softly and dreamily at his feet, he was suddenly startled to see a girlish form coming towards him in the wavering shadows of declining day. Light as a summer zephyr she glided from under the arches of the blossom laden cherry-trees with the sunset flaming behind her. He remembered long afterward that she had seemed rather to float over the ground than to walk.

To his utter astonishment he at once recognized Tama, and his heart leapt with joy at sight of her. After the first salutations he looked at her closely and congratulated her on her good health and ever-increasing beauty. He then asked her to tell him all that had happened since they were cruelly parted.

In the saddest of tremulous voices Jewel answered: "After you left the house my old and devoted nurse was dismissed for having helped us to meet in secret. From that day to this I have never seen her, but she sent me word that she had returned to her old home."

"Then you are not married yet?" asked Hayashi, his heart beating wildly with hope as he interrupted her.

"Oh, no," replied Tama, looking at him strangely, "do you think that I could ever forget you? You are my betrothed forever, even after death. Do you not know that the dread of that marriage being forced upon me and my pining for you made me ill for a long time. Sympathizing with my unhappiness, my parents broke off my engagement and then tried to find you. But you had entirely disappeared leaving no trace behind. To-day I started out, resolved to find you with the help of my old nurse. I am on my way to her now. How happy I am to find you thus. Will you not take me to your house and show me where you live?"

He was suddenly startled to see a girlish form coming towards him in the wavering shadows

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She then turned and walked with him as he led the way to their humble dwelling. Now that her parents had consented to her marrying him they need not wait long, he told himself. How fortunate he was that he should have gained such faithful and unchanging love as that of his beautiful Tama.

As they went along exchanging blissful confidences as to their undying love for one another, he told her of his oath never to wed another woman for her dear sake.

They entered the house together, the nearness of her sweet presence thrilling him to his finger-tips. Impatiently he knelt to light the lamp, placed ready on his low writing table, then with joy inexpressible at the anticipation of all that the future held for them, he turned to speak to her.

But to his utter bewilderment Tama was gone. He searched the house and garden, and with a lantern went and peered down the road, but she was nowhere to be seen. She had vanished as suddenly and mysteriously as she had appeared.

Hayashi thought the incident more than strange; it was eerie in the extreme. Returning alone to his empty room, he shivered as a chill of foreboding seemed to penetrate his whole being, withering as with an icy breath the newly awakened impulses of hope and longing. A thousand recollections of his love crowded upon him, and kept him tossing uneasily upon his pillow all through the night. With the first break of dawn he was no longer able to control his feverish anxiety for news of her, and rising hurriedly, he at once set out for Fukagawa.

Eagerly he hastened to the house of an old friend to make inquiries regarding the merchant's family and especially about Tama. To his dismay he learned that she had passed away but a few days before, and listened with an aching heart to the account of her long illness. And he knew that she had died for love of him.

He returned to his home stupefied with grief and tormented with self-reproach.

"Oh, Tama! Tama! My love!" he cried aloud in his anguish, as he threw himself down in his room and gave way to his despair. "Had I but known of your illness I would have come to you. It was your spirit that appeared to me yesterday. Oh! come to me again! Tama! Tama!"

For weeks he was ill, but when he recovered and was able to think collectedly, he could not endure to live longer in such a world of misery. He felt that he was responsible for the untimely death of the young girl. To escape from the insupportable sorrows of life he decided to enter a Buddhist monastery, and joined the order of itinerant monks called *Komuso*.[3]

Like the monks in the middle ages in Europe the *Komuso* enjoyed sanctuary. They were chiefly *samurai* who wished to hide their identity. Sometimes a breach of the law, such as the killing of a friend, obliged the *samurai* to cut the ties which bound him to his Daimio; sometimes a family blood-feud forced him to spend his years in tracking down his enemy; sometimes it was disgust of the world, sorrow or disappointment, as in the case of Hayashi: these various reasons often caused men to bury themselves out of remembrance in the remote life of these wandering monks.

The *Komuso* were always treated with great respect, they enjoyed the hospitality of inns and ships, and a free pass unquestioned across all government barriers.

They wore the stole but not the cassock, and they did not shave their heads like the priesthood. They were distinguished by their strange headgear, which was a wicker basket worn upside

down, reaching as far as the chin and completely hiding the face. The rules of their order forbade them to marry, to eat meat, or to drink more than three cups of wine, and when on duty they might not take off their hats or bow to anyone, even to their parents. Outside these restrictions, though nominally priests, their lives were practically those of laymen, and when not on service they spent their time much as they liked in practising the military arts or in study.

As a mental discipline the *Komuso* were under obligation to go out daily to beg for alms, holding a bowl to receive whatever was bestowed upon them. They affected flute playing. This instrument was cut from the stem nearest the root, the strongest part of the bamboo, and was thus able to serve a double purpose. It gave the monk, who carried nothing with him, the means of earning his daily food, and when necessary was used as a weapon in self-defence.

Hayashi, being skilful with his flute, chose the life of the *Komuso* as being the best suited to him.

Before leaving Tokyo he visited the temple where his lost love was buried and knelt before her tomb. He dedicated his whole life to praying for the repose of her soul and for a happier rebirth. Her *kaimyo* (death-name) he inscribed on heavy paper, and wheresoever he went he carried this in a fold of his robe where it crossed his breast. It was, and still is, the custom of the *Komuso* to perform upon the flute as a devotional exercise at religious services.

As each year came round he always made his way to some tranquil spot and rested from his penitential wanderings on the anniversary of the death of Tama.

Staying in an isolated room he then set up her *kaimyo* in the alcove, and placing an incense burner before it, kindled the fragrant sticks and kept them alight from sunrise to sunset. Kneeling before this temporary altar he took out his flute, and pouring the passionate breath of his soul into the plaintive, quivering notes, he reverently offered the music to her sweet and tender spirit, remembering the delight she had always taken in those melodies before the blossom of their love had been defrauded of its fruit of consummation by the blighting blast of interference.

Hayashi visits the temple where his lost love was buried, and dedicates his whole life to praying for the repose of her soul.

And gradually, as time went by, the burden of sorrow and the tumult of remorse slipped from his soul, and peace and serenity, the aftermath of suffering, came to him at last.

He roamed all over the country for many years, and finally his journeyings brought him to the mountainous province of Koshu. It was nightfall when he reached the district and he lost his way in the darkness. Worn out with fatigue, he began to wonder where he should pass the night, for no houses were to be seen far or near, and everywhere about him there was nothing but a heaping of hills and a wild loneliness.

For hours he strayed about, when at last, peering into the gloom far up on the mountain side, a solitary light gleamed through the heavy mists. Greatly relieved he hastened towards it.

As soon as he knocked at the outer door of the cottage a ferocious looking man appeared. When the stranger asked for a night's shelter he morosely and silently showed him into the single room which, flanked by a small kitchen, comprised the whole dwelling. Hayashi, furtively gazing round him, noticed that there were no industrial implements to be seen, but that in one corner were standing a sword and a gun.

The host clapped his hands. In answer to the call a young girl of about fifteen years of age appeared. He ordered her to bring the brazier and some food for the guest. Then arming himself with his weapons, he left the house.

The damsel waited on Hayashi attentively, and as she went to and fro from the kitchen she often glanced appealingly at him. Her attitude was that of one frightened in submission, and Hayashi wondered how she came to be there, for, though begrimed with work, he could see that she was fair and comely, and her deportment was superior to her surroundings.

When they were left alone the girl came and knelt before him, and bursting into tears sobbed out "Whoever you may be I warn you to escape while there is yet time. That man whose hospitality you have accepted is a brigand and he will probably kill you in the hope of plunder."

Hayashi, with his heart full of compassion for the young girl, asked her how it was that she came to be living in so wild and desolate a place, and the tale she told him was a pitiful one of wrong.

"My home is in the next province," she said, as she wiped away the tears with her sleeve. "Just after my father's death this robber entered our house and demanded money of my mother. As she had none to give him he carried me away, intending to sell me into slavery. Soon after he brought me to this house, he was wounded on a marauding expedition, and has since been confined to the house for a month. Thus it is that you find me here still. But he is now recovered and able to go out once more. I implore you to take me with you, otherwise I shall never see my mother again and my fate will be unendurable."

Being of a chivalrous nature Hayashi's heart burned within him at the sad plight of the little maid, and catching her up he fled out of the robber's den into the night.

After some time, when well away from the place, he set her down and they walked steadily all night. By dawn they had crossed the boundary of Koshu and entered the neighbouring province. Once on the high road the district was familiar to the girl and she gladly led the way to her own home.

The delight of the sorrowing mother on finding her kidnapped child restored to her was great and unrestrained. She fell at his feet in a passion of gratitude and thanked him again and again.

In the meantime the rescued girl came to thank her deliverer. Hayashi gazed at her in astonishment. Her appearance had undergone an extraordinary transformation. No longer the forlorn, neglected drudge of the day before, a beautiful girl stood before him. And wonder of wonders! She was the living image of what his lost Tama had been years ago. The tide of the past swept over him with its bitter-sweet memories, leaving him speechless and racked with the storm of his feelings. Not only was the likeness forcibly striking, but he also beheld a little mark, the exact replica of the one he so well remembered on Tama's snowy neck.

He had thought that in the long years of hardship and renunciation of the joys of life the tragic love of his youth lay buried, but the shock of the unmistakable resemblance left him trembling.

In a few minutes he was able to control his emotion and the power of speech returned to him.

"Tell me," he said, turning to the mother, "have you not some relatives in Tokyo? Your daughter is like one whom I knew many years ago, but who is now dead."

The woman regarded him searchingly and after a few moments of this close scrutiny, she inquired:

"Are you not Hayashi who lived in Fukagawa fifteen years ago?"

He was startled by the suddenness of the question, which showed that his identity was revealed and that she knew of his past. He did not answer but searched his brain, wondering who the woman could possibly be.

Seeing his embarrassment she continued, now and again wiping the tears from her eyes: "When you came to the house I thought that your voice was in some way quite familiar to me, but you are so disguised in your present garb that at first I could not recall who you were.

"Fifteen years ago I served in the house of the rich timber merchant in Fukagawa and often helped O Tama San[4] to meet you in secret, for I felt great sympathy with you both, and if a day passed without her being able to see you, Oh! she was very unhappy. Her parents were furious at the unwise part I had played and I was summarily dismissed. I returned home and was almost immediately married. Within a year I gave birth to a little daughter. The child bore a striking resemblance to my late mistress and I gave her the name of Jewel in remembrance of the beloved charge I had nursed and tended for so many years. As she grew older not only her face and figure, but her voice and her movements all vividly recalled O Tama San. Is not this an affinity of a previous existence that my child should be saved by you who loved the first Tama?"

Then Hayashi, who had listened with rapt attention to the woman's strange story, asked her the date of the infant's birth.

Marvellous to relate it was the very day and hour, for ever indelibly engraven on his memory, that Tama, his first love, had appeared to him on the bank of the Sumida river in the springtide fifteen years ago.

When he told her of this uncanny meeting the woman said that she believed her daughter, the second Tama, to be the re-incarnation of the first Tama. The apparition he had seen was the spirit of his love who had thus announced her rebirth into the world to him. There could be no doubt of this, for had not Tama told him herself that she was on her way to her old nurse. So strong was

the affinity that bound them to each other that it had drawn Tama from the spirit-land back to this earth.

"Remember the old proverb, *the karma-relation is deep*," she added in conclusion.

Later on she besought Hayashi to marry the second Tama, for she believed that only in this way would the soul of the first Tama find rest.

But Hayashi, thinking that the great difference in their present ages was an obstacle to a happy union, refused on the score that he was too old and sad a man to make such a young bride happy. He decided, however, to stay on in the little household for a while, and to give any possible comfort and help to the old nurse whose loyal devotion to her mistress had figured so prominently and fatefully in his past.

Thus several months elapsed, bringing with them great and radical changes in the land. The Restoration came to pass, and the new regime was established with the Emperor instead of the Shogun at the helm of State. Schools were founded all over the country, and amongst many other old institutions the order of the *Komuso* monks, to which Hayashi belonged, was abolished by an edict of State.

Hayashi, during his stay in the village, had won his way into the hearts of the people and they now begged him to remain as teacher in the new school, a position for which he was peculiarly fitted by the classical education he had received from his father. He consented to the proposition which solved the problem of his future, for under the new laws it was forbidden him to return to his old life.

The mayor of the place was also much attracted by Hayashi's superior character and dignity, and learning of the sad and romantic history of his past, and believing, as all Japanese do, in predestined affinities, persuaded him that it was his fate, nay more, a debt he owed to the past, to marry Tama, the second, the re-incarnation of his first love.

The marriage proved a blessed one. The house of Hayashi prospered from that day forth and as children were born to them the joy of their lives was complete.

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[1] The old name for Tokyo.

[2] *Go*, a game played with black and white counters—more complicated than chess.

[3] The sect was introduced from China in the Kamakura epoch (1200-1400), but it never became popular in the land of its adoption. Under the Tokugawa Government (1700-1850) the *Komuso* were used as national detectives, but the privileges they enjoyed led to the abuse of the order by bad men, and it was abolished at the time of the Restoration. Later on the edict was rescinded, and these men in their strange headgear may be seen to this day fluting their way about the old city of Kyoto.

[4] In speaking women use the polite forms of speech, whereas men drop them. The "O" is the honorific prefix to a woman's name and "San" or "Sama" is the equivalent of Mr. Mrs. or Miss according to the gender of the name. Nowadays high-class women drop the "O" before their individual names, but add "Ko" after them. For instance, the name O Tama San would now be Tama-Ko San.

THE LADY OF THE PICTURE

Many years ago, long before the present prosaic era, there lived in Yedo a young man named Toshika. His family belonged to the aristocratic rank of the *hatamoto samurai*, those knights who possessed the right to march to battle directly under the Shogun's flag (*hata*), and his father was a high official in the Tokugawa Shogunate.

Toshika, whose disposition was of a dreamy and indolent nature with scholarly tastes, had no occupation. He took life easily, and when his studies were finished, he went to live at the family villa situated in the suburb of Aoyama.

Toshika was not interested in society, and except for an occasional visit to his home or to his favourite friend, he never went anywhere. Far from the world he spent his days quietly and pleasantly, reading books, tending and watering his flowers, practising the tea-ceremony, and composing poetry and playing on the flute. He was a young man of many accomplishments and studied art. He collected curios and specimens of well-known calligraphy, which all Japanese prize greatly, and he particularly delighted in pictures.

One day a certain friend whom Toshika had not seen for several months, came to call upon him. He had just returned from a visit to the seaport of Nagasaki and knowing the young man's tastes had brought with him, as a present, a Chinese drawing of a beautiful woman, which he begged Toshika to accept.

Toshika was very pleased with this acquisition to his treasures. He examined the painting carefully, and though he could find no signature of the artist, his knowledge of the subject told him that it was probably drawn by the well-known Chinese painter of the *Shin* era.

It was the portrait of a young woman in the prime of youth, and Toshika felt intuitively that it was a real likeness. The face was one of radiant loveliness, and the longer he gazed at it, the more the charm and fascination of it grew upon him. He carried it to his own room and hung it up in the

alcove. Whenever he felt lonely he retired to the solitude of his chamber, and sat for hours before the drawing, looking at it and even addressing it. As the days went by, gradually the picture seemed to glow with life and Toshika began to think of it as a person. He wondered who the original of the portrait could have been, and said that he envied the artist who had been granted the happiness of looking upon her beauty.

Daily the figure seemed more alive and the face more exquisite, and Toshika, as he gazed in rapture upon it, longed to know its history. The haunting pathos of the expression and the speaking wistfulness of the dark soft eyes called to his heart like music and gave him no peace.

Toshika, in fact, became enamoured of the lovely image suspended in the alcove, and as the infatuation grew upon him he placed fresh flowers before it, changing them daily. At night he had his quilts[1] so arranged that the last thing he looked upon before closing his eyes in sleep was the lady of the picture.

Toshika had read many strange stories of the supernatural power of great artists. He knew that they were able to paint the minds of the originals into their portraits, whether of human beings or of creatures, so that through the spiritual force of the merit of their skill the pictures became endowed with life.

As the passion grew upon him the young lover believed that the spirit of the woman whom the portrait represented actually lived in the picture. As this thought formed itself in his mind he fancied that he could see the gentle rise and fall of her breast in breathing, and that her pretty lips, bright as the scarlet pomegranate bud, appeared to move as if about to speak to him.

One evening he was so filled with the sense of the reality of her presence that he sat down and composed a Chinese poem in praise of her beauty.

And the meaning of the high-flown diction ran something like this:

Thy beauty, sweet, is like the sun-flower.[2]
The crescent moon of three nights old thy arched brows:
Thy lips the cherry's dewy petals at flush of dawn:
Twin flakes of fresh-fallen snow thy dainty hands.
Blue-black, as raven's wing, thy clustering hair:
And as the sun half peers through rifts of cloud,
Gleams through thy robes the wonder of thy form..
Thy cheeks' dear freshness do bewilder me,
So pure, so delicate, rose-misted ivory:
And, like a sharp sword, pierce my breast
The glamour of thy dark eyes' messages.

Ah, as I gaze upon thy pictured form
I feel therein thy spirit is enshrined,
Surely thou liv'st and know'st my love for thee!
The one who unawares so dear a gift bestowed
Was verily the gods' own messenger
And sent by Heaven to link our souls in one.

'Tis sad that thou wert borne from thine own distant land
Far from thy race, and all who cherished thee;
Thy heart must lonely pine so far away,
In sooth thou need'st a mate to love and cherish thee.

But sorrow not, my picture love,
For Time's care-laden wings will never dim thy brow
From poisoned darts of Fate so placidly immune;
Anguish and grief will ne'er corrode thy heart,
And never will thy beauty suffer change:
While earthly beings wither and decay
Sickness and care will ever pass thee by,
For Art can grant where Love is impotent,
And dowers thee with immortality.

Ah me! could the high gods but grant the prayer
Of my wild heart, and passionate desire!
Step down from out thy cloistered niche,
Step down from out thy picture on the wall!
My soul is thirsting for thy presence fair
To crown my days with rapture—be my wife!
How swift the winged hours would then pass by
In bliss complete, and lovers' ecstasy:
My life, dear queen, I dedicate to thee,
Ah! make it thus a thousand lives to me![3]

Toshika smiled to himself at the wild impossibility of his own chimera. Such a hope as he had breathed to her and to himself belonged to the realm of reverie, and not to the hard world of

everyday life. Supposing that beautiful creature to have ever lived and the portrait to be a true likeness of her, she must have died ages ago, long before ever he was born.

However, having written the poem carefully, he placed it above the scroll and read it aloud, apostrophizing the lady of the picture.

It was the delicious season of spring, and Toshika sat with the sliding screens open to the garden. The fragrance of peach blossoms was wafted into the room by the breath of a gentle wind, and as the light of day faded into a soft twilight, over the quiet and secluded scene a crescent moon shed her tender jewel-bright radiance.

Toshika felt unaccountably happy, he could not tell why and sat alone, reading and thinking deep into the night.

Suddenly, in the stillness of the midnight, a rustle behind him in the alcove caused him to turn round quickly.

What was his breathless amazement to see that the picture had actually taken life. The beautiful woman he so much admired detached herself from the paper on which she was depicted, stepped down on to the mats, and came gliding lightly towards him. He scarcely dared to breathe. Nearer and nearer she approached till she knelt opposite to where he sat by his desk. Saluting him she bowed profoundly.

The ravishment of her beauty and her charm held him speechless. He could not but look at her, for she was lovelier than anyone he had ever seen.

At last she spoke, and her voice sounded to him like the low, clear notes of the nightingale warbling in the plum-blossom groves at twilight.

"I have come to thank you for your love and devotion. Such a useless, ugly[4] creature as myself ought not to be so audacious as to appear before you, but the virtue of your poem was irresistible and drew me forth. I was so moved by your sympathy that I felt I must tell you in person of my gratitude for all your care and thought of me. If you really think of me as you have written, let me stay with you always."

Toshika rejoiced greatly when he heard these words. He put out his hand and taking hers said, "Ever since you came here I have loved you dearly. Consent to be my wife and we shall be happy evermore. Tell me your name and who you are and where you come from."

She answered with a smile inexpressibly sweet, while the tears glistened in her eyes.

"My name is Shorei (Little Beauty). My father's name is Sai. He was descended from the famous Kinkei. We lived in China at a place called Kinyo. One day, when I was eighteen years of age, bandits came and made a raid on our village and, with other fair women, carried me away. Thus I was separated from my parents and never saw them more. For many months I was carried from place to place and led a wandering life. Then, alas! who could have foretold it, I was seized by bad men and sold into slavery. The sorrow, the anguish and the horror I suffered in my helpless misery and homesickness you can never know. I longed every hour of the day for some tidings of my parents, for even now, I do not know what became of them. One day an artist came to the house of my captivity and looking at all the women there, he praised my face and described me as the Moon among the Stars. And he painted my picture and showed it to all his friends. In that way I became famous, for everyone talked of my beauty and came to see me. But I could not bear my life, and being delicate, my unhappy lot and the uncertainty of my father's and mother's fate preyed upon my mind, so that I sickened and died in six months. This is the whole of my sad history. And now I have come to your country and to you. This must be because of a predestined affinity between us."

The young man's heart was filled with compassion as he listened to the sorrowful tale of the unfortunate woman, who had told him all her woes.

He felt that he loved her more than ever and that he must make up with his devotion for all the wretchedness she had suffered in the past.

They then began to compose poems together, and Toshika found that Shorei had had a literary education, that she was an adept in calligraphy and every kind of poetical composition. And his heart was filled with a great gladness that he had found a companion after his own heart.

They both became intensely interested in their poetical contest and as they composed they read their compositions aloud in turn, comparing and criticizing each other. At last, while Toshika was in the act of reciting a poem to Shorei, he suddenly awoke and found that he had been dreaming.

Unable to believe that his delightful experiences were but the memories of sleep he turned to the alcove. His cherished picture was hanging there and the lovely figure was limned as usual in living lines upon the paper. Was it all a delusion? As he watched the exquisite face before him, recalling with questioning wonder the events of the evening before, behold! the sweet mouth smiled at him, just as Shorei had smiled in his vision. Impatiently he waited for the darkness, hoping that sleep would again bring Shorei to his side. Night after night she came to him in his dreams, but of his happy adventure he spoke to none. He believed that in some miraculous way the power of poetry had evoked the spirit of the portrait. Centuries ago this ill-fated woman had lived and died an untimely death, and his love led her back to earth through the medium of an artist's skill and his own verse. Six months passed and Toshika desired nothing more in life than to possess Shorei as his bride for all the years to come.

When I was eighteen years of age, bandits ... made a raid on one village and ... carried me away.

He never dreamed of change, but at last, one night, Shorei came looking very sad. She sat by his desk as was her wont, but instead of conversing or composing she began to weep.

Toshika was very troubled, for he had never seen her in such a mood.

"Tell me," he said anxiously, "What is the matter? Are you not happy with me?"

"Ah, it is not that," answered Shorei, hiding her face in her sleeve and sobbing; "never have I dreamed of such happiness as you have given me. It is because we are so happy that I cannot bear the pain of separation for a single night. But I must now leave you, alas! Our affinity in this world has come to an end."

Toshika could hardly believe her words. He looked at her in great distress as he asked:

"Why must we part? You are my wife and I will never marry any other woman. Tell me why you speak of parting?"

"To-morrow you will understand," she answered mysteriously. "We may meet no more now, but if you do not forget me I may see you again ere long."

Toshika had put out a hand and made as if to detain her, but she had risen and was gliding towards the alcove, and while he imploringly gazed at her she gradually faded from his sight and was gone.

Words cannot describe Toshika's despair. He felt that all the joy of life went with Shorei, and he could not endure the idea of living without her.

Slowly he opened his eyes and looked round the room. He heard the sparrows twittering on the roof, and in the light of dawn, as he thought, the night-lantern's flame dwindled to a fire-fly's spark.

He rose and rolled back the wooden storm-doors which shut the house in completely at night, and found that he had slept late, that the sun was already high in the heavens.

Listlessly he performed his toilet, listlessly he took his meal, and his old servants anxiously went about their work, fearing that their master was ill.

In the afternoon a friend came to call on Toshika. After exchanging the usual formalities on meeting, the visitor suddenly said:

"You are now of an age to marry. Will you not take a bride? I know of a lovely girl who would just suit you, and I have come to consult with you on the matter."

Toshika politely but firmly excused himself. "Do not trouble yourself on my account, I pray you! I have not the slightest intention of marrying any woman at present, thank you," and he shook his head with determination.

The would-be go-between saw from the expression of Toshika's face that there was little hope in pressing his suit that day, so after a few commonplace remarks he took his leave and went home.

No sooner had the friend departed than Toshika's mother arrived. She, as usual, brought many gifts of things that she knew he liked, boxes of his favourite cakes and silk clothes for the spring season. Grateful for all her love and care, he thanked her affectionately and tried to appear bright and cheerful during her visit. But his heart was aching, and he could think of nothing but

of the loss of Shorei, wondering if her farewell was final, or whether, as she vaguely hinted, she would come to him again. He said to himself that to hold her in his arms but once again he would gladly give the rest of his life.

His mother noticed his preoccupation and looked at him anxiously many times. At last she dropped her voice and said:

"Toshika, listen to me! Your father and I both think that you have arrived at an age when you ought to marry. You are our eldest son, and before we die we wish to see your son, and to feel sure that the family name will be carried on as it should be. We know of a beautiful girl who will make a perfect wife for you. She is the daughter of an old friend, and her parents are willing to give her to you. We only want your consent to the arrangement of the marriage."

Toshika, as his mother unfolded the object of her visit, understood the meaning of Shorei's warning, and said to himself:

"Ah, this is what Shorei meant—she foresaw my marriage, for she said that to-day I should understand; but she pledged herself at the same time to see me again—it is all very strange!"

Feeling that his fate was come upon him he consented to his mother's proposal.

She returned home delighted. She had had little doubt of her son's conformance to his parents' wishes, for he had always been of a tractable disposition. In anticipation, therefore, of his consent to the marriage, she had already bought the necessary betrothal presents, and the very next day these were exchanged between the two families.

Toshika, in the meantime, watched the picture day by day. This was his only consolation, for Shorei, his beloved, visited him no more in his dreams. His life was desolate without her and his heart yearned for her sweet presence. Had it not been for her promise to come to him again he knew that he would not care to live. He felt, however, that she still loved him and in some way or other would keep her promise to him, and for this waited. Of his approaching marriage he did not dare to think. He was a filial son, and knew that he must fulfil his duty to his parents and to the family.

When the bride was led into the room and seated opposite Toshika, what was his bewildering delight to see that she was ... the lady-love of his picture

As the days went by Toshika noticed that the picture lost by degrees its wonderful vitality. Slowly from the face the winning expression and from the figure the tints of life faded out, till at last the drawing became just like an ordinary picture. But he was left no time to pine over the mystery of the change, for a summons from his mother called him home to prepare for the marriage. He found the whole household teeming with the importance of the approaching event. At last the momentous day dawned.

His mother, proud of the product of her looms, set out in array his wedding robes, handwoven by herself. He donned them as in a dream, and then received the congratulations of his relatives and retainers and servants.

In those old days the bride and bridegroom never saw each other till the wedding ceremony. When the bride was led into the room and seated opposite Toshika, what was his bewildering delight to see that she was no stranger but the lady-love of his picture, the very same woman he had already taken to wife in his dream life.

And yet she was not quite the same, for when Toshika, a few days later, joyfully led her to his own home and compared her with the portrait, she was even ten times more beautiful.

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[1] The floor of the Japanese room is padded with special grass mats over two inches thick. On these the bed quilts are laid out at night and packed away in cupboards in the daytime.

[2] *Prumus Umé*, or Plum blossom, the Japanese symbol of womanly virtue and beauty.

[3] Rendered into English verse by my friend, Countess Iso-ko-Mutsu.

[4] It is a Japanese custom for a woman to speak thus depreciatingly of herself.

Urasato's escape from the Yamana-Ya

URSATO, OR THE CROWN OF DAWN

THE POSITION AT THE OPENING OF THE STORY

Urasato and Tokijiro are lovers. The child, Midori, is born of this *liaison*. Tokijiro is a *samurai* in the service of a Daimyo, and has charge of his lord's treasure department. He is a careless young man of a wild-oat-sowing disposition, and while entirely absorbed in this love affair with Urasato, a valuable *kakemono*, one of the Daimyo's heirlooms, is stolen. The loss is discovered and Tokijiro, who is held responsible, dismissed.

To give Tokijiro the means of livelihood so that he may pursue the quest of the lost treasure, Urasato sells herself to a house of ill-fame, the Yamana-Ya by name, taking with her the child Midori, who is ignorant of her parentage. Kambei, the knave of a proprietor, is evidently a curio collector, and it is to be gathered from the context that the unfortunate young couple have some suspicion—afterwards justified—that by some means or other he has obtained possession of the *kakemono*—hence Urasato's choice of that particular house.

Tokijiro's one idea is to rescue Urasato, to whom he is devoted, but for lack of money he cannot visit her openly, and Kambei, seeing in him an unprofitable customer, and uneasy about the picture, for which he knows Tokijiro to be searching, forbade him the house, and persecutes Urasato and Midori to find out his whereabouts, in order, probably, that he may have him quietly put out of the way.

As in all these old love stories the hero is depicted as a weak character, for love of women was supposed to have an effeminizing and debasing effect on men and was greatly discouraged among the *samurai* by the feudal Daimyo of the martial provinces. On the other hand, the woman, though lost, having cast herself on the altar of what she considers her duty—the Moloch of Japan—often rises to sublime heights of heroism and self-abnegation, a paradox only found, it is said, in these social conditions of Japan. Urasato reminds one of the beautiful simile of the lotus that raises its head of dazzling bloom out of the slime of the pond—so tender are her sentiments, so strong and so faithful in character is she, in the midst of misery and horror.

This recitation, freely rendered into English from the chanted drama, tells the story of Urasato's incarceration, of the lover's stolen interviews, of the inadvertent finding of the picture, and of Urasato's and Midori's final escape from the dread Yamana-Ya.

URSATO, OR THE CROW OF DAWN[1]

The darkness was falling with the tender luminosity of an eastern twilight over the house; the sky was softly clouding, and a gentle wind sprang up and sighed through the pine-trees like a lullaby—the hush that comes at the end of the day with its promise of rest was over all the world, but in spite of the peaceful aspect of nature and of her surroundings, Urasato, as she came from her bath robed in *crêpe* and silken daintiness, felt very unhappy. To her world the night brought no peace or rest, only accumulated wretchedness and woe.

Midori, her little handmaid, followed her fair mistress upstairs, and as Urasato languidly pushed open the sliding screens of her room and sank upon the mats, Midori fetched the tobacco tray with its tiny lacquer chest and miniature brazier all aglow, and placed it by her side.

Urasato took up her little pipe, and with the weed of forgetfulness lulled for a while the pain of longing and loneliness which filled her heart. As she put the tobacco in the tiny pipe-bowl and smoked it in one or two whiffs and then refilled it again, the tap, tap of the pipe on the tray as she emptied the ashes were the only sounds, interluded with sighs that broke the stillness. "Kachi," "Kachi," "Kachi" sounded the little pipe.

Tokijiro, waiting hopelessly outside the fence in the cold, could not so forget his misery. He kept in the shadow so as not to be seen by the other inmates of the house, for if he were discovered he would lose all chance of seeing Urasato that evening and, perhaps, for ever. What might happen if these secret visits were discovered he dared not think. To catch one glimpse of her he loved he had come far through the snow, and after losing his way and wandering about for hours, he now found himself outside the house, and waited, tired and cold and miserable, by the bamboo fence.

"Life," said Tokijiro, speaking to himself, "is full of change like a running stream. Some time ago I lost one of my lord's treasures, an old and valuable *kakemono* of a drawing of a *garyobai* (a plum-tree trained in the shape of a dragon). I ought to have taken more care of the property entrusted to me. I was accused of carelessness and dismissed. Secretly I am searching for it, but till now I have found no clue of the picture. I have even brought my troubles to Urasato, and made her unhappy about the lost treasure. Alas! I cannot bear to live longer. If I cannot see Urasato I will at least look upon little Midori's face once more and then take leave of this life for ever. The more I think, the more our mutual vows seem hopeless. My love for this imprisoned flower has become deeper and deeper, and now, alas! I cannot see her more. Such is this world of pain!"

While Tokijiro thus soliloquized outside in the snow, Urasato in the room was speaking to her child-attendant, Midori.

"Midori, tell me, are you sure no one saw my letter to Toki Sama yesterday?"

"You need have no anxiety about that, I gave it myself to Toki Sama,"[2] answered Midori.

"Hush," said Urasato, "you must not talk so loudly—some one might overhear you!"

"All right," whispered the little girl, obediently. Leaving Urasato's side she walked over to the balcony and looking down into the garden she caught sight of Tokijiro standing outside the fence.

"There, there!" exclaimed Midori, "there is Toki Sama outside the fence."

When Urasato heard these words joy filled her breast, a smile spread over her sad face, her languor vanished, and rising quickly from her seat on the mats, she glided to the balcony and placing her hands on the rail leaned far out so that she could see Tokijiro.

"Oh! Tokijiro San," she exclaimed, "you have come again at last, how glad I am to see you!"

Tokijiro, on hearing her voice calling him, looked up through the pine branches and the tears sprang to his eyes at sight of her, for into the depths of love their hearts sank always deeper and the two were fettered each to each with that bond of illusion which is stronger than the threat of hell or the promise of heaven.

"Oh!" said Urasato, sadly, "what can I have done in a former life that this should be insupportable

without the sight of you? The desire to see you only increases in the darkness of love. At first, a tenderness, it spread through my whole being, and now I love—I love. The things I would tell you are as great in number as the teeth of my comb, but I cannot say them to you at this distance. When you are absent I must sleep alone, instead of your arm my hand the only pillow, while my pillow is wet with tears longing for you,—if only it were the pillow of *Kantan*[3] I could at least dream that you were by my side. Poor comfort 'tis for love to live on dreams!"

As she spoke, Urasato leaned far out over the balcony, the picture of youth, grace and beauty, her figure supple and fragile as a willow branch wafted to and fro by a summer breeze, and about her an air of the wistful sadness of the rains of early spring.

As she spoke, Urasato leaned far out over the balcony, the picture of youth, grace and beauty.

"Oh! Urasato!" said Tokijiro, sadly, "the longer I stay here the worse it will be for you. If we are discovered not only you, but Midori also will be punished, and as she does not know all how unhappy she will be, and what will you do then. Oh! misery!"

Urasato, overcome with the bitterness of their troubles and the hopelessness of their situation, and as if to shield Midori, impulsively drew the child to her and, embracing her with tenderness, burst into tears.

The sound of footsteps suddenly startled them both. Urasato straightened herself quickly, pushed the child from her, and wiped away her tears. Midori, always clever and quick-witted, rolled a piece of paper into a ball and threw it quickly over the fence. It was a pre-arranged signal of danger. Tokijiro understood and hid himself out of sight. The screen of the room was pushed aside and not the dreaded proprietor nor his shrew of a wife, but the kindly and indispensable hair-dresser, O[4] Tatsu, appeared.

"Oh, courtezan," said the woman, "I fear that I have kept you waiting. I wanted to come earlier, but I had so many customers that I could not get away before. As soon as I could do so I left and came to you ... but, Urasato Sama, what is the matter? You have a very troubled face and your eyes are wet with tears ... are you ill? Look here, Midori, you must take better care of her and give her some medicine."

"I wanted her to take some medicine," said Midori, "but she said she would not."

"I have always disliked medicine and, as Midori tells you, I refused to take any. I don't feel well

to-day, O Tatsu. I don't know why, but I don't even wish to have the comb put through my hair—so I won't have my hair dressed now, O Tatsu, thank you."

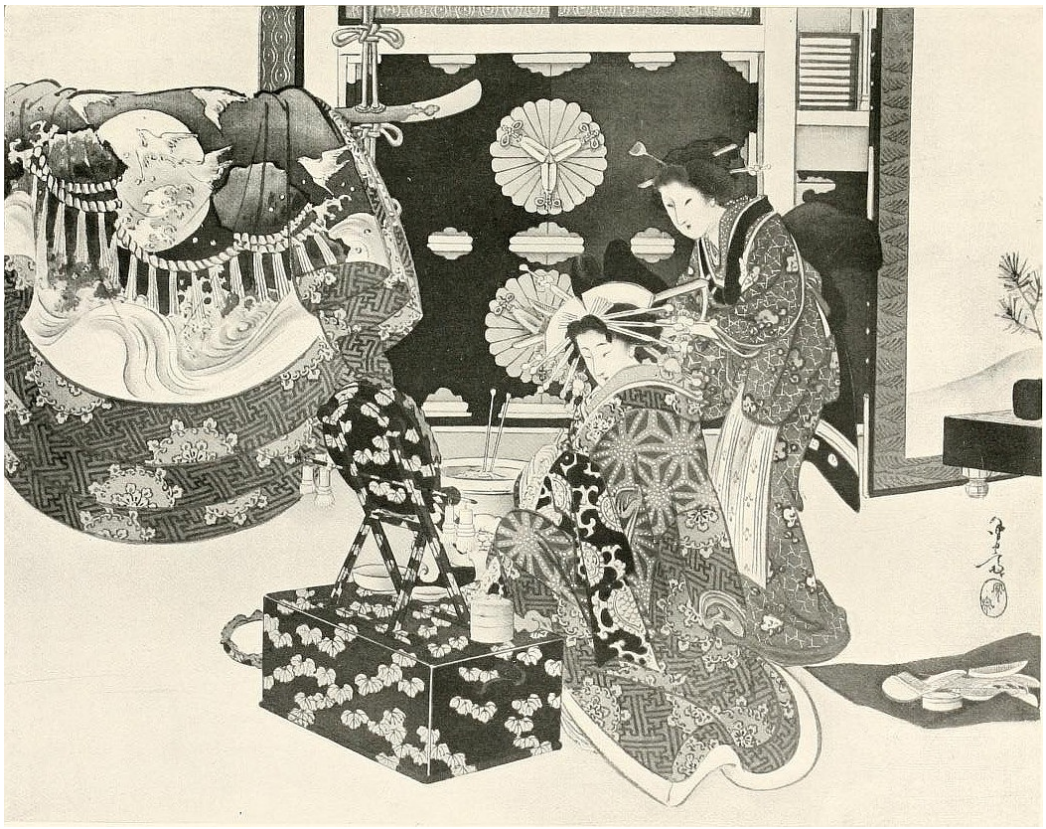
"Oh," answered O Tatsu, "that is a pity—your hair needs putting straight—it is very untidy at the sides; let me comb it back and you will then feel better yourself, too—"

"O Tatsu," said Urasato, hopelessly; "you say so, but—even if the gloom that weighs down my spirit were lifted and my hair done up and put straight both would fall again, and knowing this, I am unhappy."

"Oh," replied O Tatsu, "the loosened hair-knot which troubles you is my work—come to the dressing-table ... come!"

Urasato could not well refuse the kindly woman and reluctantly allowed herself to be persuaded. She sat down in front of the mirror, but her heart was outside the fence with Tokijiro, and to wait till the woman had done her work was a torture to her.

"Listen to me," said O Tatsu, as she took her stand behind Urasato and with deft fingers put the disordered coiffure to rights, "people cannot understand the feelings of others unless they have themselves suffered the same conditions. Even I, in past times, was not quite as I am now. It seems foolish to speak of it, but I always feel for you. If you deign to listen to me I will tell you my story. Even such an ugly woman as I am—there is a proverb you know, that says 'Even a devil at eighteen is fascinating' (*oni mo juhachi*)—has had her day, and so there was someone who loved even me, and he is now my husband," and O Tatsu laughed softly, "ho-ho-ho." "Well, we plighted our vows and loved more and more deeply. At last he was in need of money and came to borrow of me, saying 'Lend me two *bu!*'[5] or 'Lend me three *bu!*' using me in those days only as his money-box. It must have been because our fate was determined in our previous life that I did not give him up. I let things go because I loved him. Youth does not come twice in a life-time. He was in great distress and I sold all my clothes to help him till my *tansu*[6] were empty, and then I filled them with his love letters. Things came to such a pass that we thought of committing suicide together. But a friend who knew what we were about to do stopped us, and so we are alive to this day. But things have changed since then, and now, when there is some small trouble, my husband tells me he will divorce me, and there are times when I feel I hate him and don't want to work for him any more. There is a proverb that 'the love of a thousand years can grow cold,' and it is true. Experience has taught me this."



O Tatsu ... took her stand behind Urasato and with deft fingers put the disordered coiffure to rights

"O Tatsu Sama," answered Urasato, "in spite of all you say, I have no one to love me in this wide world, such an unfortunate creature as I am, so devotedly as you loved him."

"You may think thus now," said O Tatsu, "for you have reached the age of love's prime. I know that people in love's despair often cut short their own lives, but while you have Midori to think of you cannot, you must not, commit suicide. Duty and love exist only while there is life. Oh dear, I have talked so much and so earnestly that I have forgotten to put in the *tsuto-naoshi*," and with the last finishing touches O Tatsu put in the pincer-like clasp which holds together the stray hair at the nape of the neck.

Urasato's eyes were dry, though her heart was full of sympathy and sorrow as she listened to O Tatsu's kind words of sympathy, and as a bedimmed mirror so was her soul clouded with grief. Midori, touched by the sad conversation, dropped tears as she flitted about over the mats, putting away the comb box here and a cushion straight there.

"Well," said O Tatsu, as she bowed to the ground and took her leave, "I am going yonder to the house of Adzumaya, good-bye!" and with these words she glided down the stairs and went out by the side door. Looking back as she did so, she called to Midori:

"Look here, Midori, I am going out by the side gate instead of by the kitchen—will you please fasten it after me." With these words she seized the astonished Tokijiro, who was hiding in the shadow, pushed him inside and shut the gate (*pattari*) with a snap. With an unmoved face as if nothing unusual had occurred, O Tatsu put up her umbrella, for snow had begun to fall, lighted her little lantern and pattered away across the grounds without once looking back.

Thus, through the compassionate help of another, Tokijiro was at last enabled to enter the house. He ran upstairs quickly, and entering the room, caught hold of Urasato's hand.

"Urasato! I cannot bear our lot any longer. I cannot bear to live away from you—at last I am able to tell you how I long to die with you since we cannot belong to each other any longer. But if we die together thus, what will become of poor little Midori. What misery—oh, what misery! No—no—I have it; you shall not die—I alone will die; but oh! Urasato, pray for the repose of my soul!"

"That would be too pitiless," said Urasato, while the tears fell like rain from her eyes, "if you die to-night what will become of our faithful little Midori and myself left behind? Let parents and child take hands to-night and cross the river of death together. We will not separate now, oh, no—no! Oh! Tokijiro San! you are too cruel to leave us behind."

Some one was now heard calling from below.

"Urasato Sama! Urasato Sama!" said a loud harsh voice, "come downstairs—you are wanted quickly, quickly—come!"

Then the sound of a woman's feet as she began to ascend the stairs reached the three inmates of the room.

Urasato's heart beat wildly and then seemed to stop with fright. Quick as a flash of lightning she hid Tokijiro in the *kotatsu*[7] and Midori, with her usual quick-wittedness, fetched the quilt and covered him over. Then she glided to the other side of the room. All this was the work of a moment.

"O Kaya San," said Urasato, "what is the matter? What are you making such a fuss about? What do you want with me now?"

"Oh! Urasato," answered the woman as she entered the room, "you pretend not to know why I call you. The master has sent for you—Midori is to come with you—such is his order!"

Urasato made no answer, but followed O Kaya, who had come to fetch her. Anxiety for Tokijiro hidden in the *kotatsu*, and fear concerning what the sudden summons might mean made her heart beat so that she knew not what to do. Both she and Midori felt that the woman was like a torturing devil driving them along so much against their will—they seemed to feel her fierce eyes piercing them through from behind.

O Kaya led them across the garden to another part of the house. The soft twilight had been succeeded by a dreary night. It was February and the night wind blew sharp and chill—the last snow of winter weighed down the bamboos; while, like an emblem of courage and strength in the midst of adversity, the odour of early plum blossoms hung upon the air. Overcome with anxiety, Urasato felt only the chill, and fear of the night spread through her whole being. She started and shivered when behind her Midori's clogs began to echo shrilly, like the voices of malicious wood-sprites in the trees laughing in derision at her plight. Her heart grew thin with pain and foreboding. "Karakong," "karakong," sounded the clogs, as they scraped along. "Ho, ho, ho!" mocked the echoing sprites from the bamboo wood.

They reached the veranda of the house on the other side of the quadrangle. O Kaya pushed open the *shoji* disclosing the grizzled-headed master, Kambei, seated beside the charcoal brazier looking fierce and angry. When Urasato and Midori saw him, their heart and soul went out with fear as a light in a sudden blast.

Urasato, however, calmed herself, and sitting down outside the room on the veranda, put her hands to the floor and bowed over them. The master turned and glared at her.

"Look here, Urasato," said he, "I have nothing but this to ask you. Has that young rascal Tokijiro asked you for anything out of this house—tell me at once—is such the case? I have heard so—tell me the truth!"

Urasato, frightened as she was, controlled herself and answered quietly:

"Such are the master's honourable words, but I have no remembrance of anyone asking me for anything whatsoever."

"Um," said the master, "I shan't get it out of you so easily I see," then turning to O Kaya, he said, "Here, O Kaya, do as I told you—tie her up to the tree in the garden and beat her till she confesses."

O Kaya rose from the mats and catching hold of the weeping Urasato dragged her up and untied and pulled off her girdle. The woman then carried the slender girl into the garden and bound her

up with rope to a rough-barked, snow-covered pine-tree, which happened to be just opposite Urasato's room. O Kaya, lifting a bamboo broom threateningly, said, "Sa! Urasato, you won't be able to endure this—therefore make a true confession and save yourself. How can you be faithful to such a ghost of a rascal as Tokijiro? I have warned you many times, but in spite of all advice you still continue to meet him in secret. Your punishment has come at last—but it is not my fault, so please do not bear me any resentment. I have constantly asked the master to pardon you. To-night, out of pity, I begged him to let you off, but he would not listen. There is no help for it, I must obey my orders. Come, confess before you are beaten!"

So O Kaya scolded and entreated Urasato; but Urasato made no reply—she only wept and sobbed in silence.

"You are an obstinate girl!" said O Kaya, and she lifted the broom to strike.

Midori now rushed forward in an agony of distress and tried to ward off the blow about to fall on her beloved mistress. O Kaya flung the child away with her left arm, and bringing the broom down, began to beat Urasato mercilessly till her dress was disarranged and her hair fell down in disorder about her shoulders.

Midori could bear the sight no longer. She became frantic, and running to the wretched Kambei, lifted praying hands to him: then back again she darted to catch hold of O Kaya's dress, crying out to both: "Please, forgive her; oh, please, forgive her! Don't beat her so, I implore you!"

O Kaya, now fully exasperated, seized the sobbing child.

"I will punish you too," and tied Midori's hands behind her back.

Tokijiro, looking down from the balcony of Urasato's room, had been a distraught and helpless spectator of the whole scene of cruelty in the garden. He could now no longer restrain himself and was about to jump over the balcony to the rescue. But Urasato happened at that moment to look up and saw what he intended doing. She shook her head and managed to say, unheard by the others:

"Ah! this, for you to come out, no, no, no!"

Then, as O Kaya came back from tying up Midori, she quickly added to her, "No, I mean you who have tied up Midori, you must be pitying her, you must be, O Kaya San—but in the presence of the master for that reason it won't do! It won't do!" and here she spoke, purposely, incoherently to O Kaya, while she signed to Tokijiro with her eyes that he must not come out—that her words were meant for him under cover of being addressed to O Kaya.

Tokijiro knew that he could do nothing—he was utterly powerless to help Urasato, and if he obeyed his first impulse and jumped down into the garden he would only make matters a thousand times worse than they were, so he went back to the *kotatsu*, and bit the quilt and wept with impotent rage.

"She is suffering all this for my sake—oh! Urasato! oh! oh! oh!"

Kambei had now reached Urasato's side, and catching hold of her by the hair, said in a big voice, "Does not your heart tell you why you are so chastized? It is ridiculous that Tokijiro should come in search of the *kakemono* that was entrusted to me. Ha! you look surprised. You see I know all. Look! Isn't the picture hanging there in my room? I allow no one so much as to point a finger at it—Sa! Urasato, I am sure Tokijiro asked you to get him that—come—speak the truth now?"

"I have never been asked to steal any such thing," answered Urasato, sobbing.

"Oh, you obstinate woman—will nothing make you confess? Here, Midori—where is Tokijiro? Tell me that first?"

"I don't know," answered Midori.

"There is no reason why Midori should know what you ask," said Urasato, trying to shield the child.

"Midori is always with you," said Kambei—"and she must know," and turning to Midori he struck her, saying: "Now confess—where is Tokijiro hiding now?"

"Oh, oh, you hurt me," cried the child.

"Well, confess then," said the cruel man, "then I won't hurt you any more!"

"Oh ... Urasato," cried Midori, turning to her—"entreat the master to pardon me—if he kills me, before I die I can never meet my father whom I have never seen."

Tokijiro, upstairs in the balcony, heard all that was going on and murmured:

"That is, indeed, natural, poor child."

But Kambei, unaware that he was heard and seen, beat the child again and again.

"I can't make out what you say, little creature," he screamed with rage. "You shall feel the weight of this *tekki*[8] then we shall see if you will still not answer what is asked you."

Under this hell-like torture Midori could scarcely breathe. The poor child tried to crawl away, but as she was bound with rope, she was unable to do so.

The cruel man once more caught hold of her roughly by the shoulder and began to beat her again. At last the child gave a great cry of pain, lost consciousness, and fell back as though dead.

Kambei was now alarmed at what he had done, for he had no intention of killing the child—only

of making her tell him where Tokijiro was living or hiding. He stopped beating her and stood on one side, angry enough at being thwarted by Urasato and Midori.

Urasato raised her head and moaned to herself as she looked at the prostrate child.

"I am really responsible for the child's suffering," she said to herself—"my sin is the cause of it all; forgive me, my child—you know it not, but I am your mother; and although you are only a child you have understood and helped me. You saw that I was in love and always anxious about my lover. This is from a fault in your former life that you have such a mother—ah! this is all, alas, fruit of our sins in another existence," and Urasato's tears flowed so fast that, like spring rain, they melted the snow upon which they fell.

O Kaya now came up to her, saying,

"What an obstinate creature you are! If you don't confess you shall wander in company with your child to the *Meido*,"[9] and with these words she raised her broom to strike.

Hikoroku, the clerk of the house, now came running upon the scene. He had fallen in love with Urasato and had often pressed his suit in vain. When he saw how matters stood he pushed O Kaya away.

"You are not to help Urasato!" screamed O Kaya, angrily.

"Go away, go away," said Hikoroku, "this punishment is the clerk's work—though I am only a humble servant, however humble I am I don't need your interference."

Then Hikoroku turned to Kambei and said apologetically.

"Excuse me, master, I have something to say to you; the matter is this—that dear Urasato—no, I mean Midori and Urasato—I never forget them, oh, no, no! I know their characters—they are good-hearted. This punishment is the clerk's work. If you will only leave Urasato to me I shall be able to make her confess. I am sure I can manage her. If you will make me responsible for making Urasato confess, I shall be grateful."

Kambei nodded his head, he was already tired, and said:

"Um—I would not allow anyone else to do this, but as I trust you Hikoroku, I will let you do it for a while; without fail you must make her confess, I will rest,"—and with these words he went into the house, intending to put the blame on Hikoroku if his regulation suffered because of his treatment of Urasato.

Hikoroku accompanied his master to the house and bowed low as he entered. He then came back to Urasato.

"Did you hear what the master said? Did he not say that he would not entrust this to anyone else but *me*—only to me—Hikoroku—don't you see what a fine fellow I am? If only you had listened to me before you need never have suffered so—I would have helped you, Urasato San! Perhaps you suspect me as being to blame for all this; but no—indeed, I am not—you and I are living in another world. Will you not listen to me—Urasato San?—but oh!—you have a different heart—oh! what am I to do?" and he placed his hands palm to palm and lifted them despairingly upwards to Urasato, shaking them up and down in supplication.

O Kaya had been listening to Hikoroku, for she was in love with him herself and was always jealous of the attention he paid to Urasato. She now came up and said, as she shrugged her shoulders from side to side: "Now Hikoroku Sama—what are you doing? What are you saying? Notwithstanding your promise to the master to make Urasato confess, you are now talking to her in this way. Whenever you see Urasato you always act like this without thinking of me or my feelings for you. I am offended—I can't help it! You will probably not get her to confess after all. Well—I will take your place, so go away!"

As O Kaya came up to Hikoroku he pushed her away, saying:

"No, never! You shall not hurt her—this is not your business—the master has entrusted it to me. As for you, it is ridiculous that you should love me. How ugly you are! Ugh!—your face is like a lion's. Are you not ashamed. Before the master I have no countenance left when I think of what you say to me. Now then—go away O Kaya—I am going to untie poor Urasato!"

O Kaya tried to push Hikoroku away. Hikoroku took up the broom and beat her without caring how much he hurt her. Mercilessly did he continue to beat her till she was overcome and, falling down on the snow, lay stunned for some time to come.

Having thus got rid of O Kaya, Hikoroku quickly released Urasato and Midori. As he lifted the child up she opened her eyes.

"Ya, ya! Are you still there, mother?"

Did Midori know that Urasato was her mother, or on returning to consciousness was it instinct or affection that made her use the tender name?

When she heard Midori's voice, Urasato felt that she must be in a dream, for she had feared that the child had been killed by Kambei's beating.

"Are you still alive?" she exclaimed, and caught the child in her arms while tears of joy fell down her pale cheeks.

Hikoroku looked on with a triumphant face, for he was pleased at what he had done.

"Urasato Sama, you must run away, and now that I have saved you both I can't stay here. I, too,

shall be tied up and punished for this. I shall run away, too! Well, it is certainly better to escape with you than to remain here. Let us flee together now. Come with me. I must get my purse, however, before I go. Please wait here till I come back with my small savings—then I can help you; don't let anyone find you," and without waiting for Urasato's answer Hikoroku ran into the house.

Urasato and Midori stood clasping each other under the pine tree. They were shaking with cold and fatigue and pain. Suddenly a sound made them look up. Tokijiro suddenly stood before them. He had climbed out on to the roof, and walking round the quadrangle, had reached the spot where they stood and then let himself down by the pine-tree. When the two saw him they started for joy.

"Oh," said Urasato, scarcely able to make herself heard, "how did you get here, Tokijiro?"

"Hush," said Tokijiro, "don't speak so loudly. I have heard and seen all—oh! my poor Urasato, it has caused me much pain to think that you have suffered so much because of me; but in the midst of all this misery there is one thing over which we can rejoice. As soon as I heard what Kambei said about the *kakemono* I crept downstairs and into the room he pointed out, and there I found my lord's long-lost picture. Look, here it is! I have it safe at last. The very one drawn by Kanaoka. Someone must have stolen it. I am saved at last—I am thankful. I shall be received back into my lord's service—I owe this to you, and I shall never forget it as long as I live."

Footsteps were heard approaching, Tokijiro hid himself behind a post of the gate. He was only just in time.

Hikoroku came stumbling along across the garden from the other side of the house.

"Here, here, Urasato San, we can now fly together—I have got my money—we can get out by the gate. Wait another moment, I will steal in and get the picture for you."

As soon as Hikoroku had gone again Tokijiro rushed forward, and seizing Urasato and Midori by the hand, hurried them out of the garden. Once outside they felt that they had escaped from the horror and death of the tiger's mouth.

Hikoroku, not being able to find the picture, hastened back to the spot where he had left Urasato, when he ran into O Kaya, who had recovered consciousness, and now picked herself up from the ground somewhat bewildered and wondering what had happened.

"Are you Hikoroku? Are you Hikoroku?" she exclaimed, and caught him in her arms.

Catching sight of her face, Hikoroku cried out with disgust and horror.

"Ya! Avaunt evil! Avaunt devil!"

The three fugitives outside the gate heard Hikoroku's exclamation. Tokijiro caught up Midori and put her on his back. Then he and Urasato taking each other by the hand ran away as fast as they could. The dawn began to break and the birds to sing as they left the dread place behind them. From far and near the crows began to wing their way across the morning sky.

Hitherto *the crow of dawn* had parted them—it now united them. Thinking of this, Tokijiro and Urasato looked at each other with eyes brimming over with tears, yet shining with the light of new-born hope.

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[1] The Crow of Dawn, or *Akegarasu*, another name for the story of *Urasato*. *Akegarasu*, literally rendered means "Dawn-Crow." It is an expression which typifies the wrench of parting at daybreak which lovers like Tokijiro and Urasato experience, when dawn comes heralded by the croak of a crow (*karasu*) flying across the half-lit sky—a sign that the time for the two to separate has come.

This story is taken from the *Gidayu* or musical drama, in which the chanter mimes the voices and actions of the many different characters to an accompaniment on the *samisen* (guitar or banjo).

[2] Sama, a title equivalent to Mr. It is a polite term used for both men and women.

[3] This is an allusion to a Chinese story, related in the musical drama, where a poor man of Kantan fell asleep and dreamed that he became Emperor and had all that he could desire.

[4] O is the honorific placed before female names of not more than two syllables.

[5] One *bu* was about twenty-five sen in those days, but the equivalent of more than a yen in the present currency.

[6] *Tansu*, Japanese chest of drawers.

[7] A hearth sunk in the floor, covered with a grating and framework over which is thrown a quilt under which people sit to warm themselves.

[8] *Tekki*, the tiny metal bars which form the top of the andirons in a brazier.

[9] *Meido*, Hades—the abode of the dead.

TSUBOSAKA

A story of Faith in Kwannon, the Manifestation of

Mercy (popularly known as the Goddess of Mercy)

N.B.—The Amida Buddha of the Shinshu sects of Japanese Buddhism is the only Deity, and the Original and the Unoriginated Buddha, Lord of Boundless Life and Light. Amida promises to all, who with full trust and confidence draw near and invoke His name, the safe Heaven of freedom from sin and evil.

KWANNON is the Embodiment of Amida's Compassion, capable of manifestation in many shapes for purposes of practical succour. He is never manifested except for a suffering creation.

The late Professor Lloyd says that it is a mistake to speak of Kwannon as a female deity, that he is the son of Amida, capable of appearing in many forms, male or female, human or animal, according to circumstances.

See "*Shinran and his Work*" (Lloyd, p. 21).

TSUBOSAKA

The shrine of Tsubosaka, where this popular story is placed, has been celebrated for answers to prayers from ancient times. Tradition relates that when the fiftieth Emperor Kwammu lived in the capital of Nara, he was smitten with eye trouble. The head priest, Doki Shonin, of the Tsubosaka shrine offered up prayers to Kwannon, the Manifestation of Mercy, for one hundred and seven days for the Emperor's recovery. The prayer was efficacious and His Majesty's sight was restored. Since that time Tsubosaka has been known as a holy place to which pilgrims journey to pray for blessings and especially for health in time of illness.

In a certain village in the province of Yamato in Japan, close by the hill of Tsubo, there lived a blind man named Sawaichi and his wife, O Sato.

Sawaichi was a honest, good-natured fellow, who earned a bare living by giving lessons on the *koto*[1] and *samisen*.[2]

O Sato was a faithful loving woman, who by washing and sewing, and such odd work, earned many an honest penny towards the maintenance of their poor little home.

For some time things had not gone well with the couple; they were growing poorer and poorer, and even the joyful singing of birds, and the sound of the temple bell, near by, emphazised their own wretchedness, and filled their souls with melancholy.

One morning Sawaichi got out his *samisen*, and striking some chords, began to play.

"Oh, Sawaichi San, what are you doing?" said O Sato, "I am glad to see that you feel in better spirits to-day. It is good to hear you play the *samisen* again," and she laughed as cheerfully as she could.

"Oh, oh, O Sato, do I look as if I were playing the *samisen* for amusement? Indeed, I am in no such mood. I am so depressed that I wish I could die. Nay, I am so choked with trouble that I feel as if I were going to die. Now, O Sato, I have something to say that I have been brooding over for a long time, so please sit down and listen to me."

O Sato sank softly on the mats near Sawaichi, and as she looked at the blind man, trying tenderly and carefully to divine what was troubling him, she saw that he was unusually moved, and the tears of pity rose to her eyes.

Sawaichi cleared his throat, after waiting for a moment, and then went on:

"How rapid is the passing of time. The proverb is true that 'Time flies like an arrow.' Three years have passed since our marriage, and I have meant to ask you this many times, O Sato! Why do you hide your secret from me so long? We have been betrothed since our youth upward, and we know each other well. There is no need of secrecy between us. Why not tell me your secret frankly?"

O Sato stared at him helplessly. She could not in the least understand what was the meaning of these mysterious words. At last she said, hesitatingly:

"Whatever is the matter with you to-day, Sawaichi San? What are you talking about? I don't in the least understand. In the whole of our married life I have never had any secret to keep from you. If you find anything in me that does not please you, tell me, and I will try to mend. Is not this the way between husband and wife?"

"Well, then," said Sawaichi, "I will tell you all since you ask me."

"Tell me everything," said O Sato, "whatever it is that is troubling you. I cannot bear to think that you are unhappy," and she drew closer to her poor blind husband.

"Oh, oh, O Sato, I will tell you all—I cannot bear it longer. It hurts me. Listen carefully! We have been married just three years now. Every night between three and four o'clock I awake, and stretch out my arms to you as you lie in your bed, but I have never been able to find you, not even once. I am only a poor blind fellow and smallpox has disfigured me hopelessly. It is quite natural that you cannot love such an ugly creature as myself. I do not blame you for this. But if you will only tell me plainly that you love another, I will not be angry with you, only tell me! I have often heard people say, 'O Sato is a beautiful woman!' It is, therefore, natural that you should have a lover. I am resigned to my fate and shall not be jealous, therefore tell me the truth—it will be a relief to know it."

It was a pitiful sight to see the afflicted man, for though he spoke quietly and with evident resignation, yet the despair in his heart caused the tears to overflow his sightless eyes.

O Sato could not bear to see her husband racked by these terrible doubts. His words pierced her heart with pain. She clung to him sorrowfully.

"Oh, Sawaichi San! how cruel your suspicions are'! However low and mean I may be, do you think that I am the kind of woman to leave you for another man? You are too unjust to say such things. As you know, my father and mother died when I was a child, and my uncle, your father, brought us up together. You were just three years older than I. While we were thus growing up as boy and girl together, you took smallpox and became blind, alas! and your misfortunes accumulating, you were reduced to poverty. But even so, once betrothed, I will go through fire and water with you, and nothing shall ever part us. Not only do I feel that we are united till death, but it has been my one great hope to cure your blindness. To this end, ever since we were wedded, I have risen with the dawn and left the room stealthily, not wishing to disturb you. Thinking nothing of the steep mountain road, I have climbed to the top of Tsubosaka every morning before it was light to pray to Kwannon Sama to restore your sight. Lately I have felt disappointed with Kwannon Sama, for my prayer is never answered, though I have prayed earnestly for three years, rising before the dawn to climb to her temple on the hill. Knowing nothing of all this you condemn me as being faithless to you. It makes me angry, Sawaichi San!" and here poor O Sato burst into tears and sobbed aloud.

Sawaichi realized how false his suspicions had been, and how unworthy they were of his devoted wife. At first he could not speak but stammered pitifully. At last he found his voice and burst out:

"Oh, my wife, my wife! I will say nothing more. I have talked nonsense like the poor blind fellow that I am. Forgive me, forgive me! How could I know what was in your heart?" and here he joined his hands together, raising them in a gesture of entreaty, and then, with his sleeve, wiped away the tears from his eyes.

"Ah—no, no—not this! Do not ask pardon of your own wife, it is too much!" said O Sato, in distress. "I can face even death if your doubts are dispelled."

"The more you say, the more I am ashamed before you. Though you pray so earnestly, O Sato, my eyes will never recover their sight."

"What are you saying? Oh! what are you saying?" exclaimed O Sato. "It is only for you that I have borne all this, walking barefoot to the Shrine of Kwannon Sama every day for three years, thinking nothing of the wind or snow or frosts these wintry dawns."

"I am, indeed, grateful to you for your devotion. But as I harboured suspicions of you for a long time, thinking evil of your good, even if I pray, my prayers to Kwannon can only be rewarded by punishment, and my eyesight will never be restored."

"No, no, Sawaichi San, do not say such things," answered O Sato. "My body is the same as your body. Talk nonsense no more, but control your mind with firmness and come with me to Kwannon Sama and let us pray together."

Sawaichi rose from the mats, the tears falling from his eyes.

"Oh, my good wife, I am indeed grateful to you. If you are so determined I will follow. It is said that the grace of Buddha can make a dead tree to blossom. My eyes are like a dead tree ... oh, oh, if only they might blossom into sight! But though I am a great sinner ... who knows? Perhaps in the next world? .. Now my wife, lead me as ever by the hand!"

O Sato busied herself opening the *tansu* and getting out Sawaichi's best clothes. She helped him to change, speaking encouraging words the while. Then they set out together and climbed the steep ascent of Tsubosaka, Sawaichi leaning on the staff in his right hand.

The couple at last reached the temple, breathless after the hard climb.

"Here we are, Sawaichi San," said O Sato, "we have come to the temple, we are now before the gate ... though prayer and devotion are important in the recovery of health, they say illness is often due to nerves. If you allow yourself to be so low-spirited, your eyes will only grow worse. Therefore, at such a time, how would it be for you to sing some song to cheer yourself?"

"Yes, yes, O Sato, as you say, anxious brooding over my troubles is not good for my eyes. I will sing some song."

Then beating time with his stick tapping the ground, he began to hum:

"Chin—chin—tsu: chin—chin: tsu—chin—chin—tsu," tinkling in imitation of the *samisen*.

Sawaichi cleared his throat and began to sing:

Is suffering the cause of love?
Or love the cause of suffering?
My love must vanish like the dew ...

Aita ... ta ... ta ...

The words of the song were suddenly broken by a cry of pain as Sawaichi entered the gate of the temple and tripped on a stone.

"Oh, dear, I nearly fell over that stone ... I have forgotten the rest of the song ... what does it matter now ... ho—ho—ho," and he laughed to himself strangely and softly.

They had by this time come to the main temple and stood outside, O Sato gazing at the altar where Amida Buddha and Kwannon, the Manifestation of Mercy, reigned above the lotus flowers in the fragrant mists of incense.

"Sawaichi San, we have now come to Kwannon Sama."

"Oh, indeed! Are we already there?" answered Sawaichi, "how grateful I am!" then turning his sightless face towards the altar he lifted beseeching hands, and bowing his head reverently, he repeated the Buddhist invocation:

"*Namu Amida Butsu! Namu Amida Dai Butsu!*" (All hail, Great Buddha!)

"Listen, Sawaichi," said O Sato, earnestly, "this night let us stay together here and pray through the night without ceasing."

Then they both began to pray. The chanting of their supplication rose up clearly in the stillness of the evening hour, and it seemed as if the sand of Tsubosaka might become the golden streets of Paradise.

Suddenly Sawaichi stopped and clutched hold of his wife.

"O Sato," he said, "I must tell you the truth. I cannot believe. I came simply because it was your wish. But I shall never recover my sight, of that I feel sure."

"Why do you say such sad things?" answered O Sato, clasping her hands. "Listen! When the Emperor Kwammu was in Nara, the ancient capital, he suffered with his eyes as you do. Then he prayed to Kwannon Sama and in a short time he was healed. Therefore, pray without ceasing. Kwannon will make no difference between the Emperor and ourselves, though we are as poor as worms. Believers must be patient and go forward slowly, and with quiet minds trust devoutly in the mercy of Kwannon. So great is his benevolence that He hears all prayers. Worship! Pray! Sawaichi San! Pray! instead of wasting time in vain talk."

Sawaichi, turning his sightless face towards the altar, repeated the Buddhist invocation "*Namu Amida Butsu.*"

Thus did O Sato encourage her husband. Sawaichi nodded his head and replied:

"What you say is convincing. From to-night I will fast for three days. You must return home, shut up the house and come again. The next three days will decide my fate, whether I recover or not."

"Oh," said O Sato, joyfully, "now you speak wisely. I will go back at once and arrange everything for a three days' absence. But," she added anxiously, "Sawaichi San, remember that this mountain is very steep, and higher up one comes to the top, which falls on the right into a deep precipice. On no account must you leave the temple!"

"Oh, no, never fear, I will put my arms round Kwannon to-night—ho, ho, ho!" and he laughed to himself.

O Sato, never dreaming of what was in her husband's mind, hurried homewards, blissfully content, thinking that her yearning hopes were realized and that he at last believed.

Sawaichi listened to her retreating footsteps. When he could hear them no more, he knew himself to be alone. He fell flat to the earth and cried aloud in the bitterness and darkness of his soul.

"Oh! my wife, you will never know how grateful I am to you for all your devotion to me these long years. Though gradually reduced to the straits of poverty, you have never once lost sympathy with me. You have faithfully loved such a miserable blind wretch as myself. Alas! knowing nothing of what was in your heart I even doubted your fidelity. Forgive me, O Sato. Forgive me! If we part now we may never meet again. Oh, the pity of it!"

Sawaichi lay on the ground and gave vent to the pent-up misery in his heart. After a few minutes he raised a despairing face and said aloud:

"I will not grieve any more. O Sato has prayed devoutly for three years, and yet Kwannon gives no sign of hearing her supplication. What is the use of living any longer? There is only one thing I can do to show my gratitude to you, O Sato! and that is to die and set you free. May you live long, O Sato! and make a happy second marriage! Now, I remember that O Sato told me that there was

a deep precipice on the right at the top of the hill. That is the best place for me to die. If I die in this holy place, I may hope to be saved in the next world. Lucky it is that the night is far gone, and that there is no one about ... oh, oh!"

With these words Sawaichi rose to his feet. The temple bell, the last before the dawn, rang out in the silence. Sawaichi knew that there was no time to lose. Groping his way with his stick he hastened to the top of the hill. Stopping to listen, he heard the sound of distant water flowing in the valley beneath. In his distraught state of mind it sounded to him like a call from Buddha. With the prayer "*Namu Amida Butsu!*" on his lips, he planted his stick on the edge of the hill, and with a desperate leap threw himself out as far as he could over the side of the abyss. For a few moments the sound of the body crashing through the trees and undergrowth was heard as it fell in its progress of increasing impetus down the precipice: gradually growing fainter and fainter, the noise at last altogether ceased; then all was still on the lonely mountain side.

Knowing nothing of all this, O Sato was hurrying back to her husband, slipping and stumbling along the familiar road in her anxiety to get to him quickly. At last she reached the temple and looked round eagerly. Sawaichi was nowhere to be seen.

"Sawaichi San!" she called again and again. "Sawaichi San!"

Receiving no answer to her repeated cries she hunted round the temple courtyard, but with no result. Becoming fearful of what might have befallen him, she called louder than before:

"Sawaichi San! Sawaichi San!"

Running distractedly from the temple precincts, she hastened to the crest of the hill, and there she tripped over her husband's stick. She now knew what he had done. Frantically she rushed to the precipice and gazed far down into the abyss beneath. There in the grey light of the breaking dawn she could see the lifeless form of her husband stretched upon the ground.

"Oh! what shall I do? This is too dreadful!" she cried aloud in her anguish. Her body trembled in a paroxysm of pain. She called to her husband, but only the mountain echoes answered her.

"Oh, my husband, my husband! You are too cruel—too cruel! Only with the hope of saving you from blindness did I persevere in prayer for so long to Kwannon Sama. Alas! what will become of me, now that you have left me alone? Now I remember there was something strange in your manner when you sang that sad song coming up the hill. It may be that you had already made up your mind to die. But how could I know? Oh! Sawaichi San, if only I had known I would never have persuaded you to come to this place. Forgive me, oh, forgive me! There is no such miserable woman in the world as myself. No one but God could know that Death would separate us now. Blind man as you are, who cannot see in this world, how will you travel alone amidst the dark shadows down the road of Death? Who will lead you by the hand now? I feel as if I could see you wandering and groping there all by yourself."

Heartbrokenly she sobbed for some time. At last she shook herself with resolution; then raised her tear-stained face to the seemingly unresponsive heaven above.

There in the grey light of the breaking dawn she could see the lifeless form of her husband stretched upon the ground

"Oh, oh, I will lament no more. Everything that happens in this life is the result of sin and affinity in our previous state of existence. I will die too, and join Sawaichi in death."

With clasped hands she repeated the Buddhist prayer, "*Namu Amida Butsu*," and then, gathering all her strength for the fatal leap, sprang over the precipice and was gone.

The February morning broke clear and bright. Nor in the temple nor on the hillside was there any trace of the pitiful tragedy that had taken place during the night. The mists in the valley and over the mountains dispersed as the sun's rays, advancing swiftly from the east, touched the world with the transforming magic of splendour of day. Then suddenly a strange thing happened. In the rose and golden glory of the unfolding pageant of the early rushing morning, there was wafted over the Tsubosaka valley the most wonderful and uplifting strains of music, and above the bodies of Sawaichi and O Sato appeared the holy and yearningly compassionate form of Kwannon shining in a great, all-space-illuminating radiance.

"Listen, Sawaichi!" said the Heavenly Voice, "Your blindness is the result of sin in your former life. The end of this life had come for you both, but through the faith of your wife and the merits of her accumulated prayers, your lives shall be prolonged. Therefore believe and devote your lives to prayer, and make a pilgrimage to the thirty-three holy places, where you must offer up thanks for the grace of Buddha. Awake, O Sato! O Sato! Sawaichi! Sawaichi!"

With these words the divine vision disappeared; the temple bell pealed forth the hour of morning prayer, the birds began to sing, the priests to beat their gongs and drums, and to chant their orisons, and over the hillside villages and in the temple the world woke once more to life and work.

The two bodies lying in the valley rose up, wondering whether the vision which had restored them to life were a dream.

Vaguely they remembered the events of the night. O Sato gazed at Sawaichi:

"Sawaichi San! My husband! Your eyes are open!"

"Yes, yes, my eyes are open indeed! Oh, oh, my eyes are open, open, open! My eyes are open at last! I can hardly believe it," cried Sawaichi, joyfully.

"Remember that it is due to the mercy of Kwannon Sama," said O Sato.

"I am thankful, thankful, thankful!" exclaimed Sawaichi. Then looking at his wife, he asked:

"But who are you?"

"Why, I am your wife O Sato, of course!" answered O Sato.

"Listen Saiwachi!" said the Heavenly Voice, "Through the faith of your wife and the merits of her accumulated prayers, your lives shall be prolonged.

"Oh, you are my wife, are you? How happy I am! This is the first time I see you. But how wonderful it all is. When I threw myself over the precipice, I knew nothing more till Kwannon appeared to me in a great and marvellous light and told me that my blindness was the result of misdeeds in a former life."

"I, too," said O Sato, "followed you to death and leaped into the valley where I saw you lying all alone. I, too, knew nothing till Kwannon Sama called me. Your eyes are really open, Sawaichi San! Does it not seem a dream!"

"No, no," said Sawaichi, "it is no dream. The most merciful Kwannon called me back to life and by a miracle restored my sight. Ha, ha, ha! As deep as the sea is my gratitude to Kwannon."

Taking each other by the hand and smiling happily, they climbed to the temple where they had prayed so despairingly the night before. As they went along Sawaichi raised his hands in worship towards the sunlight.

To this poor couple, now so happily restored to life and joy and hope, the hill of Tsubosaka did indeed seem Paradise through the mercy of KWANNON, the Embodiment of Amida's Compassion.

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[1] The Japanese harp.

[2] The Japanese banjo.

LOYAL, EVEN UNTO DEATH

Or The Sugawara Tragedy

NOTE.—For many centuries the Fujiwara nobles (the Empresses were always chosen from this family) had secured for themselves supreme control and influence over the Mikados in Kyoto. In the ninth century another family of courtiers came into prominence, namely the Sugawara, who eventually gained sufficient power with the Emperor to be a serious menace to the schemes of the Fujiwara. At the end of the ninth century there arose one especially, Lord Michizane Suguwara, brilliant statesman, scholar, high-souled patriot and poet.

The Emperor Uda held him in high esteem and promoted him from the position of his tutor to that of Minister of the Right.[1] In 898 the Fujiwara succeeded in compelling Uda to abdicate in favour of his son, a child of twelve years of age, expecting him to be a more pliant tool in their hands. This boy became the 60th Emperor, Daigo, who, by the advice of his Imperial father, planned to give Michizane absolute authority in state affairs. The jealousy of the vigilant Fujiwara courtiers was fully aroused, and through the machinations of Lord Tokihira (Fujiwara), Minister of the Left, his rival, Michizane, was falsely accused of high treason and banished to Kiushiu where, in the horrors of poverty and exile, he died in 903. Michizane is now known by the posthumous title of Tenjin. Many Shinto temples have been erected in his honour, and students still worship his spirit as the patron god of letters and literature.

The following drama, one of the most popular in Japanese literature, tells the story of one heroic incident in the scattering of the Sugawara family, and of the rescue of Lady Sugawara, and the loyalty of Matsuo and O Chiyo, his wife, vassals of the Sugawara.

Matsuo, the better to serve his lord's cause, feigns to be unfaithful to him and to go over to the enemy—in fact, he acts the dangerous part of a spy. The Fujiwara Minister is completely deceived and, enlisting his aid, reveals to Matsuo his secret plans for the final overthrow of the exiled Sugawara and the murder of his son. So clever and thorough is Matsuo's dissimulation that even his own father and his brothers are deluded, and Matsuo is calumniated by all who know him, accused of disloyalty to his lord (an unpardonable offence in old Japan) and disinherited by his family. Finally, in a crowning act of transcendent devotion to the Sugawara House, Matsuo and O Chiyo, to save their young lord from death, willingly substitute their own child, Kotaro, in his place. In the feudal days loyalty was the one great social obligation of the *samurai* to his lord. And this spirit of loyalty often involved painful self-sacrifice. "Life was freely offered, not only by him who was bound by fealty to his lord, but by his children."

The following is a typical tragedy of its kind.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

LADY SUGAWARA, wife of the exiled Prime Minister or "Minister of the Right"—hiding from the enemy in Matsuo's house.

MATSUO, a devoted vassal of Lord Michizane Sugawara.

O CHIYO, wife of Matsuo.

KOTARO, the little son of Matsuo and O Chiyo.

SHUNDO GEMBA, the emissary of Lord Fujiwara Tokihira, triumphant enemy of Sugawara.

TAKEBE GENZO, a schoolmaster in the suburbs of Kyoto, also vassal of the Sugawara.

TONAMI, wife of the schoolmaster.

KANSHUSAI, Lord Sugawara's son, a handsome clever boy, eight years of age.

Several village school children and their parents.

SCENE I. Matsuo's cottage in Kyoto. Night.

Lanterns lighted in the room.

LOYAL EVEN UNTO DEATH

Or The Sugawara Tragedy

In the old capital of Kyoto, not far from the Imperial Palace, there lived a *samurai* named Matsuo with his wife O Chiyo, and their little son Kotaro, eight years of age.

With Kotaro by her side, O Chiyo reverently on her knees pushed aside the sliding screens of an inner room, and disclosed the Lady Sugawara seated on the mats, bending forward with her face buried in her hands, her whole attitude expressive of grief and despair.

O Chiyo bowed low and said with a voice hushed in sympathy:

"It is terrible to me to think that such a great lady as you cannot go even to the veranda in the daytime for fear of being seen by your enemies. You must, indeed, feel like a prisoner—and above all, the separation from the Prime Minister, and your son and daughter. How despondent you must feel! While you were hiding in the capital the secret of your whereabouts leaked out, and you were in danger of being caught—at that crisis my husband saved you and brought you here. You must be sadly ill at ease confined in this poor house, and after what you have been accustomed to the loneliness must be very depressing. But do not despair! You may yet join your husband and son sooner than you think. Till that time comes patiently endure all hardships, hoping for happier days."

"Oh!" answered the Lady Sugawara in melancholy tones, "you are so sympathetic and good, I shall never forget your kindness, even after death. Through the malice of a bad man[2] my husband was banished to a distant place, and my poor boy and myself are refugees. The thought of them haunts me from morning till night. There is nothing but misery in dragging out my existence from day to day in this state—but I will, at least, wait till I can see them again, if but for a moment, and then die, especially as your little Kotaro reminds me vividly of my own son, to whom he bears a great resemblance. My longing to see him again grows ever more and more intense."

With these sad words the unfortunate lady burst into tears; O Chiyo, deeply affected by her sorrowful plight, wept with her, and the silence of the room was only broken by the sobs of the two women.

Suddenly, some one from outside announced in a loud voice that an emissary from an exalted personage had arrived.

Both women started to their feet. O Chiyo barely had time to conceal Lady Sugawara in an inner room, when, preceded by several attendants carrying lanterns, the emissary, Shundo Gemba, arrived in full state as befitting the bearer of an important message—he pompously entered the room and seated himself in the place of honour before the alcove.

O Chiyo's husband, Matsuo, who had secluded himself and was resting in an inner room, overhearing the commotion, came out to welcome the visitor.

"As I am suffering from illness I must beg you to overlook my lack of ceremony in not receiving you in official dress," and he bowed to the ground in a respectful manner.

Gemba replied haughtily:

"However ill you may be you must listen to the command of Lord Tokihira (the new Prime Minister who had supplanted Sugawara). Sugawara's son, whose hiding-place was hitherto unknown, has at last been discovered by some one who has revealed the secret. The boy is now in the house of Takebe Genzo, by profession a teacher of Chinese writing, but in reality a secret and staunch supporter of Michizane. This man passes the young lord off as his own son. There is no one on our side who knows Kanshusai except yourself, so you are commanded to identify the head as soon as it is cut off, and to bring it as a trophy to Lord Tokihira. By way of reward for this service sick leave will be granted you, and on your recovery you will be created Lord of Harima. There is no time to be lost, so you must make preparations at once."

O Chiyo, who was listening with a beating heart in the next room, felt keenly apprehensive, for her husband had been extra moody and reticent of late, and she could neither fathom what was in his mind, nor what answer he would make to the dreadful proposition of this man straight from the enemy's camp.

To her utter consternation Matsuo replied:

"What kindness on the part of our lord! No greater honour could be conferred upon our house. I

will obey the command at once. But owing to my illness matters cannot be arranged as speedily as I could wish. If that man Genzo should happen to hear that I am going to attack him and wrest his prize from him, he may escape with the young Sugawara."

"Do not trouble yourself about that," returned Gemba, "it is only a *ronin's*[3] hut, and need not even be surrounded."

"But Takebe, knowing that Lord Tokihira is instituting a search for the boy, still boldly harbours him—it is certain that the schoolmaster can be no common man—we must be very cautious in dealing with him," objected Matsuo.

"You are quite right," replied the envoy, "if they should manage to escape both of us will be blamed."

"Yes, indeed," Matsuo agreed; and then as if suddenly struck by the thought, "I am sorry to trouble you, but do not fail to let your men keep a sharp watch on every exit of the village during the night."

"All right," responded the other, "you need not trouble on that score, every necessary precaution will be taken."

"Well, then at an early hour to-morrow I will accompany you to Takebe's house," said Matsuo.

"Thank you for your trouble," and the two men took leave of each other, Gemba departing from the house in the same haughty style as he had entered it.

Matsuo, with a troubled heart, watched until the emissary's procession had disappeared in the distance. Before he could carry out his intended plan he must first sound his wife.

During the interview O Chiyo had waited in the next room, a silent witness of all that had taken place between her husband and Lord Tokihira's messenger. As soon as Gemba's party had taken their departure she opened the sliding screens and with some trepidation confronted her husband.

"It seems," said the wife, "by what Gemba had to communicate, that the hiding-place of our young lord is at last discovered. Before the assassin has had time to carry out his murderous work let us send for him here, and try to rescue the poor child before he falls into the hands of the enemy. There is no time to lose."

As Matsuo made no response, O Chiyo pressed him again and again not to delay.

At last he laughed cynically.

"You do not seem to have the slightest idea of what is in my mind! I brought Lady Sugawara here from Kita's house so that I might deliver her up together with her son's head at the same time—that is why I have hidden her here."

"What are you saying?" gasped O Chiyo. "Can it be your real intention to betray them to Tokihira?"

"Yes," answered her husband, calmly looking her in the face, "now is the time to grasp my long-wished for ambition—my fortune has come at last," and he smiled as if well pleased with himself.

This was the first time that Matsuo had given any hint of his sinister intention towards the innocent Lady Sugawara and her son, and O Chiyo was so startled and horrified that for a few moments she was choked for utterance. She had hitherto felt convinced that he was devoted, heart, soul, and body, to the cause of their beloved ex-Prime Minister. Bitter tears fell from her eyes, and she moved nearer to him on the mats; in the earnestness of her appeal she stretched out a hand and laid it on his arm, till she could find words to falter out:

"Oh, my husband, since when has this dreadful scheme taken possession of your heart? For the Sugawara family I have been quite resigned to your being misunderstood and disinherited by your father's house, and the severance of all relationship with your brothers—indeed, so staunch and whole-hearted has been your devotion to this cause that I always intended to apologize and explain matters to your family when the time came. Now suddenly, without the least warning, your lifelong fidelity has been perverted into treachery. However great your ambition for promotion may be, to betray the wife and child of our Lord Sugawara into the hands of Tokihira is impossible. Are you a devil or a dragon? The punishment for such baseness will fall not only on yourself, but on your child. Oh! purify your heart from this evil intention, and conduct the Lady Sugawara and her son safely to the ex-Prime Minister in Tsukushi,[4] I implore you!" and the distraught woman lifted her hands in an attitude of prayer to her husband, while the tears coursed down her cheeks.

But, unmoved by her appeal, Matsuo still laughed contemptuously.

"What silly woman's talk! I have now no parents or brothers—they are strangers to me! It would be foolish to forget our own child's welfare for the sake of exiles banished by the State. You may say it is against reason and righteousness, but I do it for the sake of my boy—there is no treasure more precious than a son."

"Oh! oh!" sobbed O Chiyo, "how heartless you are! If you think so much of your own boy, Lady Sugawara's feelings must be the same for her son. To attain your ambition at the expense of others, sorrow can bring you no good. Your life will end in sorrow and misery as the result of such a deed."

Matsuo became more incensed, and sternly bade his wife be silent.

"If the Lady Sugawara overhear you and escape, everything will be lost, you foolish woman!" and with these words Matsuo turned to leave the room. His wife seized the edge of his robe and tried to hold him back.

"Do not hinder me, whatever you do!" he said, angrily, and pushing her aside, he disappeared in the direction of Lady Sugawara's room.

O Chiyo fell as her husband tore himself from her detaining grasp, and lay prostrate on the mats, stunned with the horror of what he was about to do. After a few minutes she collected herself.

"Oh, oh! it seems like some dreadful dream," she murmured in acute distress. "I have lived happily with Matsuo for so many years, and surely he cannot be such a bad man. For the sake of our boy he has lost his conscience. Poor lady! Poor lady! In total ignorance of his change of heart she has trusted to him as her chief staff and pillar of support. How can I look her in the face after this? To prove to her that I am not one with my husband it is better to kill myself and ask her pardon in another world."

The poor woman, in her grief and perplexity, wept and trembled by turns. After a few minutes she wiped away her tears and sat up with determination written on her face.

"It is now impossible to change my husband's cruel purpose," she said to herself aloud. "My innocent little Kotaro will be taught wrong ways, he will grow up a degraded man and come to a bad end. I foresee it all quite plainly. It is far better to kill him now and let his pure soul accompany me on my long journey to the next life. Besides, when Kotaro is no longer alive, Matsuo may return to his better nature and repent of his treacherous schemes, and the knowledge of it will reach me and I shall be glad, even after death."

At this moment her little son came gaily running to her. Knowing nothing of the tragic web of death, which Fate, like a grim spider, was weaving round him, he playfully caressed his mother, his bright eyes shining, his little face alight with smiles.

"Mother, Mother, the lady inside is calling you! Come, quick, quick!"

As O Chiyo looked at the child's innocent face the tears rose to her eyes.

"Oh! Kotaro, my little son, come here—here," she said with a sob, and drew him close to her side. "Oh! Kotaro, listen attentively to what I am going to say, like a good boy. The lady in the inner room is the wife of your father's and your mother's lord, and yours also, Kotaro. For many years we have received nothing but favours and kindness from them, therefore we owe them both a debt of great gratitude. Now, Kotaro, your father tells me that he intends to kill that good unfortunate lady, our own lord's wife—therefore, I, your mother, cannot remain alive any longer —I have decided that my spirit shall accompany her as an attendant to the other world. But you, Kotaro, are the favourite of your father—perhaps you would like to remain behind in this world with him?"

"Oh, no, no," answered the child, "I won't stay with such a cruel father. If you die, I want to die with you!"

"Oh, how sensible you are, Kotaro. Even if you had refused to die, I must have killed you for the sake of your father—you seem to understand that without being told. I have, therefore, the more pity for you as you are so intelligent and your wish is to die with me. When your father sees you lying dead, sorrow may make him repent of the evil path he has chosen. The other day I made a consecrated banner for the grave of little Sakura Maru, your uncle. How little did I dream, while making it, that I should ever use it for my own son."

With these words she drew out a dagger which had been concealed in her *obi*,[5] unsheathed it, and with raised hand was about to stab the child.

"Stay, stay, do not be too hasty!" the voice of Matsuo rang out sharply in the silence, as he suddenly appeared in the open *shoji*[6] leading Lady Sugawara by the hand. As they entered the room in front of the startled O Chiyo, whose hand, poised to strike the fatal blow, fell to her side, Matsuo made a gesture to Lady Sugawara to take the place of honour by the alcove.

Matsuo then seated himself opposite Sugawara's unhappy wife in the lowly seat near the exit of the room, prostrating himself before her.

"It is quite natural that your ladyship and my wife do not know my true heart: now let me speak the truth," he said, with quiet and impressive dignity. "After the overthrow of your house and the banishment of Lord Sugawara, when my brother became *ronin* and quarrelled with me, I served Prince Tokihira for some time. I was soon disgusted with his ways, and finding my situation untenable, asked for sick leave, with the purpose of finding your son so that I might do my best to restore your house to its former position. I did everything in my power to help you, but to my dismay nearly everyone was in league with the enemy. It was part of my plan, you must know, to throw our crafty enemy off the scent, and it was to this end that I entered his service and pretended to be one of his party. I played my part so well as to deceive my own father, who, despising me for a disloyal and faithless man, condemned my conduct and disinherited me, for he, too, was devoted to your cause. For this policy also I separated from my brothers. In thus misleading the enemy I felt sure that I could be of some use in saving you and your son at a critical moment. It was a drastic step to take, but Tokihira has been completely misled, and events have turned out just as I expected. This night, as you must have heard, I received strict orders to act as identifier of your son's head. As Takebe is a faithful man he will not kill our young lord, of that rest assured. But alas! he is one, while the enemy are many. 'If anything should happen to our lord's son, it can never be undone,' these were the thoughts that troubled

me this evening when I overhead what your ladyship said, that Kotaro bore a strong resemblance to our young lord; and the idea flashed into my brain that our boy can be used as a substitute to save him. At the same time it occurred to me, that if my wife's love for Kotaro obstruct my plans I should be powerless, so to prove what was in her heart I said cruel things that I did not mean—that, for the sake of my boy, I would betray you and your son. She did not understand me, and then and there decided to kill herself and Kotaro, and by thus removing the cause of my supposed temptation to induce my repentance. What a noble wife!"

O Chiyo, as she listened to this long explanation from her beloved husband, wept for joy, and Lady Sugawara was overcome with emotion at the surpassing loyalty of her retainers; they seemed to her to be exalted above ordinary human beings—and were as Gods in the pure sphere of a selfless world.

"For sake of loyalty you have become an outcast to your father's house, and now you would kill your son, your only son, for us—it distresses me too much—it is overwhelming. I cannot accept such a sacrifice! The punishment of Heaven may be visited upon me. No, no, no—you must not slay your little Kotaro even for your lord's sake. If everything should fail us, you must try to save both, my son and Kotaro," implored the hopeless wife of the exiled minister.

Matsuo, whose mind never wavered, prostrated himself before her.

"How grateful I am to you for your considerate thought for us, but as every exit in the village is carefully watched, there is no way of escape."

Then he turned to his wife.

"After your decision of an hour ago, I do not think you will now hesitate to sacrifice our boy."

He then leaned forward and looked at his son with a smile.

"Kotaro, you are too young to understand these things, but for the sake of your young lord and your parents, die without regret!"

As Matsuo spoke those tragic words, fixing his eyes upon the upturned face of his boy, whose bright eyes looked back at him trustingly and fearlessly, a shudder involuntarily passed through his frame in spite of the iron restraint he put upon himself. But loyalty demanded the sacrifice, and at all costs the house of Sugawara must be saved. To control himself he closed his eyes, to shut out the vision of his boy's smile. The moment of weakness passed, and Matsuo once more sat erect, gazing at his son with an unmoved face, white and set as a mask.

Lady Sugawara and O Chiyo dared not look at him. Both began to sob, covering their faces with their sleeves.

"Do not give way to weakness," at last Matsuo forced himself to say, sternly. "If we spend our time thus, everything will be lost. Look, the dawn is beginning to break. Get ready to take Kotaro to Takebe's house immediately. Quick, quick!"

"Yes, yes," assented the mother, with a sinking heart, and she slowly rose to her feet, taking Kotaro by the hand. She knew that this was the end. Her boy's doom was at hand and his hours were numbered.

"Have I to go now?" said Kotaro, bravely. "Father, will you not say farewell and call me your good boy for the last time?"

Thus the mother and her son set out for the sacrifice.

PART II

SCENE: A village school kept by Takebe Genzo and his wife Tonami, both devoted vassals of the exiled Prime Minister, Michizane Sugawara. Among Takebe's pupils is the young Sugawara. This boy they disguise and pass off as their own child. The little lord, though only eight years of age, excels in everything among the pupils and, inheriting the ability from his father, writes Chinese hieroglyphics with great skill. The senior pupil is a lazy, stupid, and incorrigibly mischievous fellow, fifteen years of age, who will not study at all.

"While our teacher is out it is a great waste of time to practise writing. Look! I have done all my writing on my head." and the lazy boy came forward and showed his school-fellows a shaved pate all blackened with Indian ink.

The little Sugawara looked at him and said:

"If you learn one new character every day you will acquire three hundred and sixty-five characters in a year. Instead of wasting your time playing like that, you must study."

But the older boy only laughed at him, and left his desk to prance about the room.

The other boys took the part of little Sugawara and, growing disgusted with the idle boy, wanted to punish him. There arose a great clamour in the school-room, all the boys shouting together and leaving their places to attack him.

Disturbed by the noise, the schoolmaster's wife came out from the inner room.

"What is the matter? Are you quarrelling again? To-day the master is away. He has been invited

by a friend, and I do not know when he will come back. As we are expecting a new pupil to-day I am anxious for his return. Now, if you are good boys and will work hard this morning, I will give all of you a half-holiday this afternoon."

The boys were delighted with this promise. All promptly returned to their seats, and opening their books and their inkstands, became diligently absorbed in their tasks of reading and writing.

Just then a sound at the porch made Tonami draw aside the screens. A gentle and aristocratic-looking woman was standing there with a pretty boy of about eight years of age by her side. A manservant, carrying a desk, was in attendance.

After an exchange of civilities, the visitor explained:

"Our home is at the other end of the village. The reason for my visit is to ask you to take this naughty boy into your care, as arranged the other day. I am told that you have a child of your own about his age. I should like to see him!"

Tonami beckoned to the little Sugawara.

"Why, certainly; this is our son and heir!"

"Oh, what a nice little fellow! And how clever he looks!" Then looking round the school-room, she added:

"How busy you must be with such a number of scholars in your care. They must be a great trouble and responsibility."

"Yes, you may imagine it is no easy work to look after them all. Is this the boy you wish us to take charge of? What is his name?"

"His name is Kotaro!" answered the mother.

"What an intelligent-looking child!" exclaimed Tonami.

"Unfortunately my husband has been obliged to keep an appointment with some friends. But if you are in a hurry and cannot wait, I will go and fetch him."

"No, no," protested Matsuo's wife, "as I have an errand elsewhere I will call in on my way back. He may have returned by then."

Then calling her servant, she ordered him to bring in the presents she had brought, one for the master, and some cakes to distribute amongst the schoolboys. In a few graceful words the gratified hostess acknowledged her visitor's kind thought.

"Oh, it is nothing—only a little token of thanks from my heart for all the trouble my boy is going to give you." Then turning to Kotaro, she added:

"I am going to the next village, so you must wait for me here like a good child—don't forget all I have told you!"

"Oh, mother, I want to come with you!" Kotaro suddenly cried, catching her by the sleeve as she was stepping into the porch.

"Now, do not be naughty!" remonstrated his mother, "a big boy like you ought not to run after your mother. Look, Tonami San, what a baby he is still!"

"Oh, it is quite natural, poor little fellow. Look here, Kotaro! Come with me and I will give you something nice." Then, turning to O Chiyo, she added "Try to come back as soon as possible."

"Yes, yes, I will come back at once, if you are a good boy, Kotaro."

Seizing the opportunity she slipped out through the porch gate, followed by her servant, who closed it after her, and the two briskly clattered away on their clogs. The poor mother yearned to turn back once more, for she knew that she would never see her little son again in this world; but she kept bravely on her way.

While Tonami was trying to console Kotaro, and to distract his attention by introducing him to the little Sugawara, her husband returned. His face was pale, and he was evidently profoundly agitated. As he entered the school-room he sharply scrutinized each of the boys in turn. His wife saw at a glance that something unusual must have occurred.

"Oh, what common fellows they are!" he muttered, crossly. "Such country-bred louts can never serve my purpose, however great the trouble I take with their education," and he gloomily regarded them with knitted brows, as though something was weighing heavily on his mind.

His wife approached him and anxiously inquired: "What is the matter? You seem unusually worried to-day. You knew from the first that those village lads can never become intellectual. People will not think well of you, if you speak against your own scholars in this way. Besides, we have another pupil to-day. Please try to recover your good temper and look at the new boy." With these words she brought forward Kotaro, but Takebe had become absorbed in his own preoccupation, and took no notice of the child.

Kotaro came forward, bowed respectfully, and said: "Please, sir, I look to you to teach me from now."

At these words, spoken in a clear, sweet treble, Takebe started from his reverie and fixed his eyes upon the new-comer; by degrees his face gradually brightened as though struck by a new train of thought.

"What a handsome and dignified boy. You might easily pass for the son of a nobleman or any

other exalted personage. Well, you are a fine fellow!"

"He is, indeed," responded Tonami, with a smile. "I thought you would be glad to see such a promising pupil."

"Yes, yes," assented the master—"nothing could be better," he muttered, in an undertone, as if speaking to himself; and then aloud, "where is the mother who brought him here?"

"As you were not at home, she went to the next village on an errand," replied his wife.

"That is capital!" said Takebe, growing more and more pleased. "Send this child with our boy to an inner room, and let them play together."

"Now," said Tonami, turning to the class of schoolboys, who had been more assiduous than ever since their master's return, "all of you may have a holiday. Run away and play in the garden!"

After sending her two special charges into the next room, and looking around with suspicious eyes that no eavesdropper was lingering behind, she lowered her voice and half-whispered to her husband:

"When you came in you looked so harassed and troubled, but since you have seen that boy, your demeanour has suddenly undergone a complete change. What can be the reason for this? Something unexpected must have happened! Won't you let me share the secret?"

"It is quite natural that I should have been so perplexed and dumbfounded," answered Takebe. "To deceive me they pretended to be giving a feast, and invited me to the residence of the village mayor, but when I arrived I soon found the feast was all a myth, and the house was in the occupation of Shundo Gemba, vassal of Tokihira, and another man, Matsuo by name, who is under great obligations of gratitude to the ex-Prime Minister, but who has deserted the house of Sugawara, and now shamefully serves the enemy, Tokihira. It seems as though he must have been appointed to examine the head of our young lord, for it has leaked out that he is here under our guardianship, and Tokihira has ordered him to be beheaded. These two men, with some hundred followers, surrounded me in a hostile manner, with this threat:

"We have received information that you are secreting the only son of the ex-Prime Minister in your house, disguised as your own child. Unless you kill him at once and bring his head to us, we will attack you and slay him ourselves.

"As no alternative was left me, I was compelled to pretend to assent to their proposal. I thought that amongst our pupils surely there would be one sufficiently like to be sacrificed in his stead, but when I came home and was confronted by all that row of plebian faces, it was an obvious fact that not a single one would answer the purpose. All those young boors are of a common and vulgar type, and as unlike as possible to the aristocratic face and noble bearing of our palace-reared boy. Despair seized me, but—when I saw the new pupil—it seemed as if he had been specially sent by Providence as a substitute. The difference between them is not so great as that between a crow and a white heron. If I can deceive them but for a short time with that boy's head, I intend to escape to Kawachi with the young prince."

His wife broke in:

"But that man, Matsuo, has known Kanshusai intimately since he was three years old. How could he be deceived?"

"There lies the difficulty," said Genzo, "but after death faces always change to some extent, and as Kotaro unmistakably bears some resemblance to our young master, even Matsuo may be deceived. At any rate we will risk it. In the event that the ruse is discovered, I am determined to kill Matsuo at once, and try to cut my way through the guards as best I can, but if they are too strong for me, I will die with the young prince. Such is my decision, but the chief anxiety at present is concerning the mother of that boy. If she should come back before this can be achieved, what course of action can we decide on?"

"Leave her to me! I will try to throw dust in her eyes!" suggested Tonami.

"No, no, that won't do—a great plan often fails through some small mistake." Then, after a moment's reflection, he added, "Oh, well—I suppose she must die, too!"

"What!" cried his wife, in alarm.

"Be quiet," admonished her husband. "For the young lord's sake we must stop at nothing. It is for our master's sake, remember that!"

"Yes, yes, if we are weak we shall fail in our great scheme. Let us become devils. There is not much difference between pupils and one's own children. That boy became our pupil at this critical moment—heaven must have delivered him into our hands as the result of his mother's sin in a former existence. Oh, well! the same fate may overtake us before long—" At this point their pent-up feelings gave way, and both of them shed tears.

Shortly afterwards Gemba and Matsuo arrived at the gate. They were closely followed by a number of villagers, the parents of the common pupils in the school. In great excitement, one and all were loudly clamouring for the safety of their own children.

Matsuo almost laughed. The situation was one of such grim comedy. Each peasant evidently thought his own son might easily pass for the young aristocrat!

"Oh, mine is a beautiful boy," shouted one man. "You mustn't make any mistake between my son and the real victim. Give me my boy—" he turned fiercely to Gemba.

"You need have no apprehension whatever regarding your children," said Gemba, calmly addressing the alarmed parents, who now squatted on the ground with their heads bowed in the dust, "if you want them, you are at liberty to take them away at once!"

Matsuo, who was in a *kago*,[7] here stepped out, using his long sword as a stick to lean upon. Both he and Gemba sat on stools, which their attendants placed ready.

"Just wait a little," said he—"we cannot be too careful even with these villagers. The reason why I accepted the office of examiner is because there is no one else who knows the young prince's head as well as I do. These people allowed the young Sugawara to live in this village, so very likely they may have sympathy with the ex-Prime Minister and may claim his son now, pretending that he is one of their own family, and so aid him to escape! Who knows?"

Then, turning to the agitated peasants, he said to them, "Now, my men, you may call out your children's names one by one. I will examine each face carefully. Your own boys shall be safely restored to you, rest assured of that!"

The schoolmaster and his wife, from the house, overheard all that was going on, and Matsuo's determined and arrogant demeanour only served to intensify their fears. It was going to be even more difficult than they had apprehended.

An elderly man came forward, and in a loud voice, called out:

"Chomatsu, Chomatsu!"

In answer, an ill-favoured, pock-marked boy ran out, his face covered with smudges of Indian ink.

Matsuo glanced at him.

"The difference is as great as between snow and charcoal. He may go!" In turn, all the rest of the pupils were searchingly inspected, but not one bore the slightest resemblance to the ill-fated Kanshusai. When the pacified villagers had carried away all their offspring in triumph, Gemba and Matsuo entered the schoolmaster's house.

"Genzo!" began Gemba, in tones of authority, "you promised to behead the young Sugawara—I will receive that head now!"

Without betraying the least sign of feeling, Genzo replied:

"Yes, but he is the son of the ex-Prime Minister. We cannot slaughter him like a common boy. Please wait for a short time!"

"Oh, you cannot deceive us," said Matsuo, quickly. "Dallying in this way is merely pretext for gaining time. But it is useless for you to attempt to disappear now, the rear of the house is guarded by some hundred men, and there is no room even for an ant to escape. You may produce a substitute head, with the explanation that a dead and a living face have a different appearance. I shall not be taken in by a subterfuge. Such tricks on your part will only lead to repentance!"

This last thrust hit Genzo hard, but he did not lose his self-possession and answered Matsuo quietly,

"What a far-fetched idea! Your eyes, after your long illness, may not be able to see things clearly, but I will surely give you the head of the young lord you demand."

"Before your tongue is dry," exclaimed Gemba, impatiently, "behead him at once!"

"It shall be done!" replied Takebe, and went into an inner room. His wife, who had listened to all that transpired, was in an agony of anxiety, pale and trembling. Matsuo, with sharp eyes, was looking round the room.

"It is rather mysterious," he said, suddenly, "eight pupils have gone home, and yet, there are nine desks. What has become of the owner of that extra desk?"

Tonami started. She began to explain that there was a new pupil. Matsuo saw her vacillation. In an undertone, he said: "What a fool you are! Keep quiet!" Then, realizing how fatal such a mistake would be—Tonami collected herself and managed to stammer out. "That is the young Sugawara's desk!"

But her confusion had been noticed by the enemy. Gemba started to his feet and shouted in furious tones,

"This trifling will cause the frustration of our plans!"

At that moment the sound of a sword broke the silence as it fell swishing through the air, the screens of the room shook, and before Matsuo and Gemba could reach the partition which separated the inner from the outer room, Takebe appeared, carrying a white wooden tray. A cover hid what was beneath, but a thin trail of crimson blood was ominously oozing from the edge. Kneeling on the mats before the two men, he placed his ghastly burden before them.

"There was no alternative, so I was forced to behead the young lord. May Heaven forgive me! As it is a matter of such importance that there should be no mistake—please examine it carefully."

With these words, Takebe's hand stealthily fell upon his sword-hilt. Every fibre was on the alert to cut down Matsuo the moment he realized the deception that had been practised on him.

"I will certainly do so," replied Matsuo, nonchalantly, then, addressing some of the soldiers who had followed him into the room, he peremptorily gave them the command:

"Now surround the Takebe couple!"

From the rear of the house several guards entered and took up their posts at the porch, and just behind Genzo and his wife.

The strain was almost too great for the poor woman, and she was well-nigh fainting with the sickening uncertainty of what might be the last act of that dreadful drama. Gemba, looking on, took note keenly of the proceedings.

Everything hung on Matsuo's decision. The suspense of the moment was agonizing in its intensity.

He slowly lifted the blood-rimmed cover from the wooden tray. A boy's decapitated head was exposed to view. It was the head of little Kotaro.

Takebe's eyes were riveted on Matsuo. Defiantly he swore that Matsuo should draw his last breath the moment he declared the head to be a subterfuge. As a tiger ready to spring on its prey, the desperate man watched the judge on whose next word hung all their lives.

Tonami was praying to the Gods in silent fervour that the truth might not be discovered, tremblingly she clutched a short sword hidden beneath her robe, which her husband had surreptitiously handed her, in preparation for the worst.

Matsuo deliberately examined the head of his own son—carefully and searchingly from every side he scrutinized the little face, now so still and pallid, sometimes his eyes blinked to hide the gathering tears, and once his face contracted with pain, but at last he loudly pronounced the momentous verdict:

"Oh, there can be no doubt that this is the head of Kanshusai, the son of the Lord Sugawara." Triumph, at the success of his loyal plot, conquered every other feeling and he slammed the lid back into place.

Gemba, delighted that there had been no mistake, and that the gruesome commission had been successfully carried out, accorded words of praise to Takebe for beheading the boy.

"As a reward for this deed, you will be pardoned for harbouring him so long! Let us hasten to take the head to Lord Tokihira," he said, turning to Matsuo.

"Yes, it is better that no time should be lost," responded the latter, "but as my duty is now finished, may I request to be discharged on sick leave?"

"Certainly," Gemba replied, "as your mission is satisfactorily concluded, you may go."

He then took up the tray with the bleeding head, strode to the door, and calling his attendants, pompously set out at once for Tokihira's palace. Outside the gate he stopped and mockingly addressed Takebe: "Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed, "though you take great care of the boy usually, when your own life is in danger you do not fail to cut off his head! ha, ha, ha!" and the cruel man, with this parting sneer, went on his ruthless way. Matsuo silently followed him out of the house and got into his *kago*.

The husband and wife, now that they were left alone, were quite exhausted from the emotion and stress of the past hour. They went out and closed the gates. Both were speechless with joy for some minutes. The master, sighing with relief, bowed his head and turned to the four points of the compass, silently returning thanks to the deities whose help he had invoked.

This is the head of Kanshusai, the son of the Lord Sugawara.

"Oh, Heaven be praised!" he exclaimed at last. "The Gods have accorded their mighty aid to our cause and mercifully caused Matsuo's eyes to be dimmed, so that he mistook the other boy's head for that of our young prince. Heaven has clearly interposed to help our lord. Let us rejoice, my wife!"

"Yes, yes," she answered, "what a terrible strain it has been! In some unfathomable way the spirit of our lord must have cast a veil over Matsuo's eyes, or that head may have become a golden Buddha to help our cause. Though there was a slight resemblance between the two boys, yet they differ in reality as much as brick from gold. I was so transported at the success of our plan, that I almost wept aloud with the poignancy of joy when I saw that Matsuo was deceived."

When the loyal couple had given vent to their feelings, simultaneously they rushed to the side-room, where they had concealed their precious charge. The one from the side and the other from the front pushed aside the screens. Genzo then raised one of the *tatami* (a padded mat three feet by six feet), disclosing a cavity in the floor, out of which rose up the aristocratic form of Kanshusai, safe and untouched by his enemies. They gazed at him in silence—overwhelmed.

Suddenly, a knocking at the gate and the voice of Kotaro's mother disturbed them.

"I am the mother of the new pupil. Let me in!"

Startled, they hastily closed the screens. At this turn of events Tonami was at her wits' end, and knew not what to do for the best. She ran to and fro across the room like one demented.

Seeing that Tonami was losing her self-control and was about to burst out into excited speech, her husband enveloped his hand in the sleeve of his robe and covered her mouth. He held her still with grim determination.

"Remember what I said a short time ago. It means simply this—nothing is so precious as our young lord. You weak creature!" he added, with disdain, as he saw his wife's trepidation. Then he turned and went to the entrance.

"I fear my naughty boy must be giving you a great deal of trouble," said the new-comer, as Takebe let her in, "but what has become of him now?"

To gain time, Takebe replied, little knowing that he was confronted by a soul as strong in loyalty to the Sugawara as his own:

"He is in the house playing with the other children—school is over for to-day, so you must take him back with you."

"Very well," she assented, and started towards the house.

Directly her back was turned, Takebe drew his sword and tried to cut her down from behind. O Chiyo, a *samurai* woman, was a trained fencer. She swiftly comprehended the meaning of Takebe's movement, even before he drew his sword, the sound, as it left its sheath, confirming what her alert senses divined. Quick as lightning she darted aside, barely escaping the deadly weapon as it tried to compass her destruction. Again and again the desperate man thrust at her. All would be lost even now, if this woman discovered that her boy had been slain to save their lord's son. With a box which she carried in her hand, O Chiyo skilfully parried the blows.

"Wait, wait! What is the matter?" she gasped out. But her frenzied antagonist was far too excited to listen, and he struck out with such good-will that the box, which served her as a shield, was speedily cut in two, and there appeared, unfolding and fluttering in the breeze as they fell, a little winding sheet, and a sacred banner used for the dead, bearing in black hieroglyphics, the inscription, "*Namu Amida Butsu*!" (All hail, Great Buddha!)

Takebe's hand was paralyzed by this unexpected apparition. Bewildered as to what this could mean, he glanced inquiringly at O Chiyo.

"Was my boy considered worthy to take the place of our young lord or not?" she asked, meeting his gaze steadily with her clear eyes. "Tell me the truth!"

At such totally unlooked-for words, Takebe was confounded more than ever. Was it possible that the enemy he was seeking to destroy had unexpectedly become a friend?

"Oh, oh!" he stammered, "Did you understand and anticipate all this?"

"Yes, of course," answered the brave mother. "As I anticipated everything, I prepared and brought these things in Kotaro's box."

"Whose wife are you?" cried the astonished man, as he sheathed his sword.

Before she could answer a voice from outside the gate chanted a poem:

Ume wa tobi
Sakura wa karuru
Yono naka ni
Nani tote Matsu[8] *wa*
Tsure na kakuran.

In my service
Plum blossom has fled
The Cherry has withered
How then can the Pine be
Heartless to me?

"Rejoice, my wife! Our boy has done his duty!" When these brief words conveyed to the heroic woman that the sacrifice had been consummated in the tragic fate of her cherished son, her brave spirit failed her, and she fell unconscious to the ground.

"What a poor creature you are!" exclaimed her husband, as he entered the room.

At the unexpected arrival of Matsuo, the schoolmaster and his wife were more confused than ever, but with an effort Takebe attempted to regain his self-possession.

The box, which served her as a shield, was speedily cut in two, and there appeared, unfolding and fluttering in the breeze, a little winding-sheet and a sacred banner for the dead

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"I will use more ceremonious speech afterwards. You Matsuo, whom we all believed a traitor to behave like this! What is the meaning of it all?"

"It is quite natural that you cannot understand. We were three brothers. All were faithful vassals of Michizane, the Minister of the Right, to whom my family was deeply indebted. I, Matsuo, latterly entered the service of Tokihira, and on this account I was disowned by my father. I dissimulated thus, the better to serve Lord Sugawara. However, the position proved intolerable, and to get my dismissal I feigned illness. It was at this juncture that the news of where Kanshusai was concealed reached the ears of Tokihira. A messenger informed me that I would be released from office if I would undertake the mission of securing the head of our young lord. I felt sure that you would never commit such a crime, but if no substitute could be procured I knew that you would be desperate. Thinking that the time had come to repay the debt of gratitude to our generous benefactor, I consulted with my wife, and we sent our own boy to take the place of his son. That is why I counted the number of desks, to see if he were already here or not. Lord Sugawara composed the poem I quoted just now, showing his discernment of my character. In that poem he asks, 'How can the pine be heartless towards me?' But the world, in general, interpreted those lines in a contrary sense, and everyone denounced me as a cowardly deserter. You may imagine, Genzo, how I resented this. If I had had no son, I must have passed as a traitor all my life. There is no possession so precious as a son."

O Chiyo, who had meanwhile recovered from her faint, was intently listening to her husband's explanations with a composed demeanour. But at these words she could restrain her emotion no longer, and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, how our Kotaro must rejoice although in another world, to hear such sentiments from his father. Those words are his best requiem. When I left him a short time ago, he looked unusually sad—for his childish mind understood that he was about to die. I intended to go home and deceive him, saying that I was going to the next village and would return soon. But I could not go home. Oh! the yearning to see even his dead face once more was so great that I came back. You may scoff at my weakness, but my sorrow is well-nigh unendurable. Had our Kotaro been born

ugly, and brought up as a common child, he might not have suffered such a death. But as he was beautiful, obedient, and good, he was chosen for the sacrifice. Could I have known his untimely fate I would never have found fault with him. Oh, my son, my little, little son!"

And the poor woman, overcome with the poignancy of her grief and the bitterness of her renunciation, fell with her face to the mats, trying to suppress the rending sobs which seemed to tear her breast asunder.

Here Tonami came close to the sorrowing mother and murmured in tones of sympathy:

"Only a short hour ago, when my husband had decided that he should be the substitute for the young prince, Kotaro came up to him and said, innocently, 'Master, please take care of me!' When I think of this, though I am but a stranger, I feel as if my heart would break. I can imagine how desolate his true mother must be to lose such a sweet child," and the tears fell from her eyes.

"No, no, Tonami! No, no, my wife! You must not weep. It was our own decision to let him die in the place of our young lord. You, O Chiyo, ought to be ashamed to give way like this before strangers. But," and Matsuo turned anxiously to Takebe, "although I carefully explained to my boy the reason for his fate, and how he should die with dignity, tell me, did he meet death in a miserable way, or did he die like a *samurai*?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" Takebe quickly replied. "When I told the brave boy that his head must be cut off to save our young lord, the child of his benefactor, he calmly and courageously, without a word, placed his neck in readiness for the sword—he did not attempt either to hide or to escape from his impending doom. You must have taught him well—he even smiled at the last—rest assured of that!"

The schoolmaster could say no more, with strong restraint he tried to hide his feelings and pretended to laugh, but the forced mirth ended with a choking sound in his throat.

At this point the stoic father broke down and wept, and as he wiped away the slow tears, he said, in a low voice: "He was both good and clever, was our little Kotaro. Even at the age of nine he takes the place of his parents to prove our gratitude to our lord. He is a filial child—a fortunate child to be able to do that I The more I think of it the more it recalls my brother, Sakura Maru. He died without being able to make any return for the obligation he was under to his lord. How he must envy our boy!"

"Oh, Kotaro soon followed him to another world!" wailed O Chiyo, and with these words she burst into another paroxysm of grief.

The young Sugawara, the innocent cause of this tragedy, overhearing the poor mother's heart-rending sobs, came out from an inner room, pale and awe-stricken:

"If I had only known that he was going to die for me, I would not have allowed it—oh—how sad! how sad!" he exclaimed, and with his long sleeve, he wiped away the tears from his eyes.

Matsuo and his wife turned and bowed to the little fellow while he spoke. For this boy's sake their family must sink into oblivion and nothingness, and be no longer remembered among the living; for his sake there would be no one to keep up the rites of the dead before their ancestors' tombs or their own, when they should be no more. On this altar of loyalty to his father's house they had offered all that this world held for them of joy, hope, and ambition. On this altar they had laid up for themselves a cheerless, desolate, childless old age. To this sublime ideal of duty, unhesitatingly, unflinchingly, regardless of themselves and the acuteness of their sufferings, these simple martyr-souls had made this great renunciation. That the young lord should realize this sacrifice they had not in the least expected. His words surprised them. It was balm to their stricken hearts, that even in some small measure he could appreciate what they had done for him.

Then Matsuo rose and went to the porch.

"I have brought a present for our young master," and with a whistle, he summoned a *kago* that had been waiting in the garden. As soon as the bearers set it down out stepped the Lady Sugawara.

"Oh, my mother! My mother!" almost shouted the boy, as she quickly entered the house, her long mantle of gold brocade and crimson linings flashing colour as she moved.

"Oh, my son, my beloved son!" cried the overjoyed mother, folding the child to her heart.

The schoolmaster and his wife exclaimed with joy when they realized the identity of the new-comer After their respectful greetings, Takebe said:

"I have been long striving to discover your hiding place. Where can your ladyship have taken refuge all this time?"

Matsuo answered for her:

"When her ladyship was hiding in the suburbs, Tokihira's retainers got scent of her retreat and nearly succeeded in taking her prisoner. Knowing her danger I disguised myself as a *yamabushi*[9] and managed to rescue her just in time, so she has been concealed in my house ever since. Without delay you must now escort her and Kanshusai to Kawachi,[10]—so that they may once more be a united family, safe from the pursuit of their enemies."

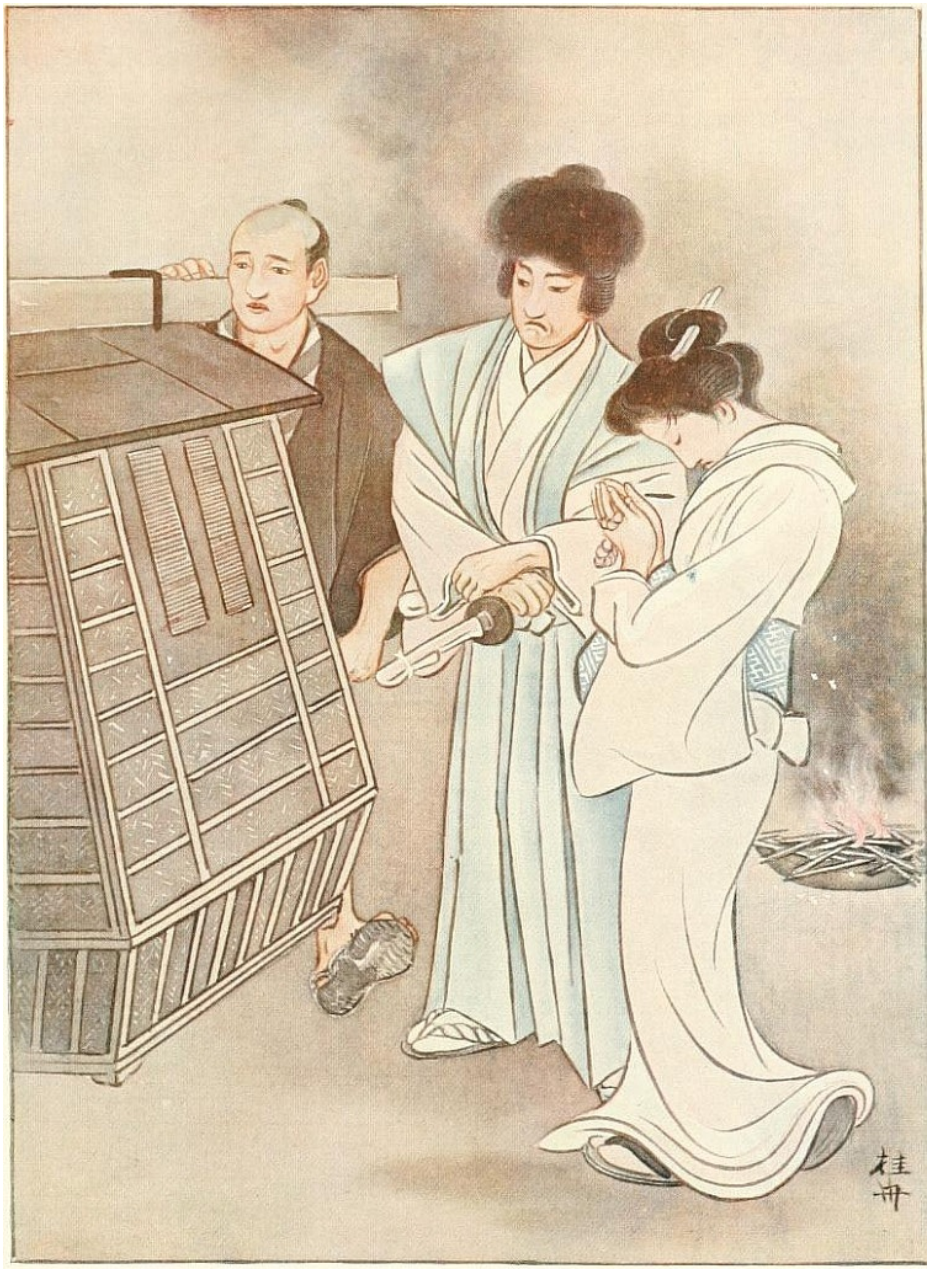
Then, turning to his wife, he added, "Now let us carry home the body of Kotaro and begin the preparations for his funeral rites."

But before O Chiyo could answer, Tonami reverently carried the headless body of the slain child to the *kago*. O Chiyo followed, and kneeling, placed over Kotaro the white shroud and the sacred banner.

Matsuo and his wife then took off their outer robes, revealing the white garments of ceremonial mourning in readiness for the obsequies. Takebe and his wife made a gesture of surprise and deprecation.

"It is against custom that parents should attend the funeral of their own son. Let us spare you this trial—we will do everything in your place!" they cried.

"No, no," said Matsuo, loyal unto death, even the death of his only son for the sake of his lord, "this is not the body of my boy. We are going to bury our young lord!"



"No, no," said Matsuo ... "this is not the body of my boy.... We are going to bury our young lord!"

With these words, Matsuo and his wife took their farewells. Then, turning in silence, they followed the impromptu bier which bore all that was left to them of their well-beloved child, and with bowed heads reverently wended their way towards their now desolate and empty home. Lady Sugawara, her son, Genzo and Tonami, with tears falling from their eyes, watched the little procession slowly disappear down the road into the deepening shadows of the night.

Note.—"The memory of the unfortunate statesman, Sugawara-no-Michizane, is surrounded by a halo of romance which affords an insight into Japanese character. He belonged to an ancient family of professional litterateurs, and had none of the titles which in that age were commonly considered essential to official preferment. By extraordinary scholarship, singular sweetness of disposition, and unswerving fidelity to justice and truth he won a high reputation, and had he been content with the fame his writings brought him, and with promoting the cause of scholarship, through the medium of a school which he endowed, he might have ended his days in peace. But, in an evil hour, he accepted office, and thus found himself required to discharge the duties of statesmanship at a time of extreme difficulty, when an immense interval separated the rich and the poor, when the arbitrariness and extortions of the local governors had become a

burning question, when the nobles and the princes were crushing the people with merciless taxes, and when the finances of the Court were in extreme disorder. Michizane, a gentle conservative, was not fitted to cope with these difficulties, and his situation at Court was complicated by the favour of an ex-Emperor (Uda) who had abdicated but still sought to take part in the administration, and by the jealousy of the Fujiwara representative, Tokihira, a young, impetuous, arrogant, but highly gifted nobleman. These two men, Michizane and Tokihira, became the central figures in a very unequal struggle, the forces on the one side being the whole Fujiwara clan, headed by the unscrupulously daring and ambitious Tokihira; those on the other, a few scholars, the love and respect of the lower orders, and the benevolent tolerance of the self-effacing Michizane. The end was inevitable. Michizane, falsely accused of conspiring to obtain the throne for his grandson—an Imperial prince had married his daughter—was banished to Dazaifu, and his family and friends were either killed or reduced to serfdom. The story is not remarkable. It contains no great crises or dazzling incidents. Yet if Michizane had been the most brilliant statesman and the most successful general ever possessed by Japan, his name could not have been handed down through all generations of his countrymen with greater veneration and affection."—BRINKLEY, "Japan: Its History Arts and Literature," p. 256.

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[1] In the ancient Imperial Court there were two supreme Ministers in the Council of State; first the Minister of the Left (*Sadaijin*—next in rank to the Prime Minister), and second, the Minister of the Right (*Udaijin*).

[2] The Fujiwara Minister.

[3] *Ronin*, a *samurai* who has severed relations with his lord for the sake, generally, of carrying out some plan which would entail disgrace if unsuccessful.

[4] Where Sugawara was exiled.

[5] *Obi*, the sash or girdle.

[6] *Shoji*, sliding paper door.

[7] *Kago*, a palanquin.

[8] *Matsu*, the first hieroglyphic of Matsuo's name. *Ume* (plum blossom), and *Sakura* (cherry), were the names of Matsuo's brothers.

[9] *Yamabushi*, a wandering priest.

[10] Kawachi: where the friends of Sugawara were the strongest.

HOW KINU RETURNED FROM THE GRAVE

In the good old days of long, long, ago, there lived in the city of Osaka a rich merchant. Fortune had smiled upon his enterprises, and his business prospered tenfold, until he possessed in abundance all that this world had to bestow: moreover, he was proud in the possession of a little daughter, named Kinu, beautiful as a *ten-no-tsukai*, one of the angels of the Buddhist heaven; her fame spread far and wide, and all who saw her marvelled at her exceeding loveliness.

In contrast to the opulence and grandeur of this wealthy man, next door, in a poor and mean house, there dwelt a humble vendor of tobacco, who was also blessed with an unusually handsome child, a boy named Kunizo, and who chanced to be of the same age as his little neighbour.

From earliest times Kinu and Kunizo were accustomed to play together almost daily, and shared all their childish joys and sorrows, so that gradually a deep and enduring affection sprang up between the two. All who saw them took great delight in watching the grace and beauty of the two children, who seemed so well suited to each other, and who made a perfect picture when seen together.

As, however, the little playfellows grew older, from motives of prudence, the rich merchant and his wife sought to discourage their intimacy, and their daughter was gradually removed as much as possible from the companionship of the lowly neighbour's son.

But although Kinu and Kunizo could no longer enter into each other's daily life and play as formerly, yet the strong bond of sympathy and affection that linked them together never grew less, and silently within their hearts they cherished the remembrance of all the happy days they had spent in each other's company.

At last, when Kinu reached the age of seventeen, her beauty and charm had become so celebrated, and the merchant's wealth and position so well established in the city, that she was sought in marriage by the son of a great nobleman. The parents, highly elated at the distinction of such a lofty alliance for their lovely daughter, immediately gave their consent, and all preliminaries were speedily arranged for the nuptials to take place at an early date.

Just at that time, Kinu, with some of her girl friends, and under the escort of her old nurse, paid a visit to the theatre. Her mother, expecting her to be the cynosure of all eyes as the bride-elect of the heir of a well-known noble family, attired her daughter in the most exquisite robes that could possibly be procured. The fashions of that period were brilliant in hue, and especially suited to Kinu's luxuriant beauty, so that when she appeared all eyes gazed with admiration and envy at the radiant vision; indeed, the audience gazed more at her than at the play.

From earliest times Kinu and Kunizo were accustomed to play together

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How inexorable are the decrees of Destiny! That day it happened that Kunizo also visited the same theatre.

From his humble seat in the pit, his eyes followed the direction where everyone else was turning, and he soon descried his former friend and playfellow, seated in a prominent place and surrounded by friends and attendants as befitting her approaching exalted position.

Kunizo felt a great impulse to go and speak to her, but dared not. His only solace was to gaze with ardent longing at the lovely apparition, that now seemed as far removed from him as the moth from the star.

Meanwhile, it was not long before Kinu singled out, from amongst the sea of faces, the familiar features of her dear comrade of earlier days, and their glances were soon exchanging reciprocally tender messages across the intervening space.

Memories of their childhood's friendship had long been secretly smouldering in their hearts, and opportunity alone was needed to fan the flame into unquenchable passion.

As the lovers gazed at each other in that crowded place, both their young hearts were carried away beyond the bounds of time and circumstances, and they realized, with an overwhelming conviction, how strong were the golden fetters of love that riveted their souls to each other for all eternity.

That night Kunizo returned to his humble home in a very sad and downcast frame of mind. His thoughts were busily contrasting the happy times of those bygone days, when he could frequently enjoy the society of his beloved Kinu, with now, when, as he bitterly reflected, a gulf yawned between them, as impassable as that which separates Heaven from Hell!

And, brooding over the miseries of an unjust world, poor Kunizo fell sick, and was confined for days to his room.

Meanwhile, the beautiful bride-elect returned to her father's mansion with her heart strangely agitated. The sight of his handsome face, so full of hopeless longing, when his eyes sought her in the theatre, had deeply affected her, and she could not forget him. At last she also fell ill, and after a time became too weak to leave her bed.

She felt like a poor insect caught in the entangling meshes of a cruel Fate. The mere thought of the brilliant marriage that had been arranged by her parents became detestable to her, and tossing on her fevered pillow, long and earnest were her daily supplications to the powers above to find her some means of escape.

To the faithful old nurse alone did Kinu dare to confide her tormenting troubles, and the old woman, sorely distressed at the constant fits of weeping and increasing melancholy of her stricken foster-child, at last promised to be the bearer of a message to Kunizo.

Then Kinu embodied her woes in a little poem to which she composed an accompaniment on the *koto*, and she found much solace singing it repeatedly to herself in the solitude of her chamber.

The nurse's sympathies being with the hapless pair, she soon found an opportunity to inform Kunizo of the love-poem that Kinu had dedicated to him, and the knowledge that his affection was requited brought such joy to his sad heart that all traces of sickness left him, and he was able to

resume his usual mode of life.

But not so with Kinu. Day and night the image of Kunizo alone filled her thoughts, and the more fervently she longed to see him the more her malady increased.

The merchant and his wife were plunged into deep distress and anxiety concerning the mysterious ailment that had so suddenly attacked their beloved daughter: the most skilful doctors were hastily summoned to her bedside, but all their ministrations proved of no avail, and the love-smitten patient, like a wilted flower, continued to fade and droop.

Now, although Kunizo had grown up amidst poor and obscure surroundings, yet he had received a good education, and had always cherished a great devotion to literature, and especially poetry, for the composition of which he had a natural gift. So when the news reached him that his lady-love was lying on a bed of sickness, he composed a little poem for her, revealing the state of his mind, and entrusted it to the care of the faithful nurse:

To O KINU SAMA

So near Belovèd, yet long leagues apart,
The ladder to thy Heaven so far and dim,
Its steps I dare not scale!
One night my soul a butterfly became:
Straight to its goal thy presence sweet,
It fluttered softly through the starlit dusk
Behind thy purple tasselled sudare[1].
What ecstasy was mine!

From KUNIZO

This message brought great comfort to Kinu's heart, for until then she had merely guessed Kunizo's affection for her, and had no certain proof of it. Joyfully she wrote a little stanza in response:

To KUNIZO SAMA

What matter that our weary feet
Tread thorny paths and wastes forlorn
If only we together climb?
What matter that a hermit's hut
Is all our shelter from the blast?
Beyond the mists one shining star,
Our heart's true guide bright beckons us!
Earth's dust shake off, and hand in hand
Set out in faith to Love's lone peak!

From KINU

From that time, day by day, the enamoured pair existed on the exchange of their love-tokens, while the happiness of being in such constant and intimate intercourse with her old friend led to Kinu's sudden and complete recovery.

In the meantime her parents, overjoyed at their daughter's restoration to health, and in total ignorance of all that was taking place, hastened to select an auspicious day for the marriage, and began with enthusiasm the elaborate preparations for the important event.

When the hapless Kinu realized that her destiny was irrevocably sealed, and that she was condemned to become the wife of another man, she became almost frantic.

Disobedience and defiance of her parent's wishes being out of the question, she pondered morning, noon, and night over the dreadful situation: but it seemed that nothing short of a miracle could prevent or even delay the marriage ceremony with the hated bridegroom.

After long days and nights of futile scheming, it seemed to her distraught brain that the only line of action left to her was this: once arrived at the nobleman's house she determined, on pretence of illness, to ask permission to isolate herself in her own apartments; but should he insist on her presence, there would be but one course left to her to follow, and since it was doomed that she should not be the Bride of Love, she would become the Bride of Death.

This desperate decision she communicated in her last farewell to the distracted Kunizo, and as a pledge of finality and her unshakeable resolve, she wrote the letter in blood, drawn from a self-inflicted wound on one of her fingers, and tied this ominous missive with a long tress of her silken, ebony hair.

The fateful day arrived. Passively the unwilling, shrinking bride submitted to the obsequious attendants, who robed her slender form in the gorgeous wedding-garments and applied the adornments of art to enhance her pale beauty, so that when she appeared before them, the relatives and friends, who had assembled for the occasion, were enchanted, and all were loud in praise of her surpassing loveliness.

At last the evening came and the hour of departure was at hand. Kinu took formal leave of her parents, and then, steeling her heart with the firm resolution to escape from the hateful bondage of this forced marriage, entered her *kago*, and was slowly borne to the house of the bridegroom, closely followed by a long procession of her parents, the go-between, and attendants.

Now, it happened that some years before the young nobleman had formed a liaison with a woman, a famous *danseuse* and singer, to whom he had been deeply attached. According to the custom of those times he had installed her in his house, and being of an ambitious nature, from

the first she had cherished the hope that in time her devotion would be rewarded by becoming his legal wife, and the mistress of that noble house. When, therefore, she learnt of the death-blow to her aspirations in her lover's approaching marriage to a young bride of peerless beauty, the shock was so great as to unhinge her reason.

Secretly she nursed her bitter feelings: vainly she hoped that her agonized prayers to the Gods might be heard, and that the dreaded marriage might yet be cancelled.

But when the evening of the wedding-day arrived, and the lights of the bridal procession had already come into view along the road, and were slowly nearing the house, her fury could no longer be restrained. Mad with jealousy and disappointment she rushed into the garden, stabbed herself through the breast, and in a last convulsive frenzy, cast her bleeding body down the well.

At that moment the massive gates were thrown open, and the bride's sumptuously lacquered *kago* appeared, surrounded by a numerous retinue, carrying lanterns and torches.

Suddenly, an unearthly gust of cold wind arose whirling wildly round the mansion, and all the lights were extinguished. In the dense gloom of that moonless night, what was the terror of everyone to behold in front of them, barring the way before the passage of the bride, the spectre of the deserted mistress! Shrouded in a cloud of pale-bluish mist, her ghastly face and blood-stained garments struck terror to the souls of the petrified spectators—her long dishevelled hair streamed behind her in the breeze, which was not of this world, and her hands were uplifted in menace towards the bride, from whose *kago* a wild and heartpiercing shriek was heard.

The bridegroom, who with a group of retainers had been impatiently awaiting the advent of Kinu at the entrance to the house, was a horrified spectator of the fearful scene. His wrath was uncontrollable. With drawn sword he rushed to the gate and made a wild attempt to cut down the wraith of his jealous paramour—but as his sword fell, in a flash the whole apparition vanished.

Great was the commotion that followed, but by degrees the alarmed servants and bearers recovered from their fright, the torches and lanterns were relighted, and the door of the palanquin was opened.

Alas! to all appearances the beautiful bride was dead. Like a white lily she lay back on her cushions, pale and still.

Physicians were summoned in all haste, but they declared that remedies were of no avail—life was extinct.

The hapless Kinu had perished. Coming as a climax to the mental anguish she had suffered, the horror of the ghastly welcome that had greeted her, was beyond the endurance of her frail spirit, and on the threshold of her new and dreaded home, it had taken wing.

Her ghastly face and blood-stained garments struck terror to the souls of the petrified spectators

The woe of that night was unutterable.

Amidst the general lamentations, Kinu's afflicted parents returned to their home, bearing with them the lifeless body of their beloved daughter: all their pride obliterated and their hopes in her brightly opening future swept away for ever by the tragedy of that fearful night.

Two days later, with poignant grief, the stricken couple laid in the tomb all that was left of their cherished child, so irrevocably and cruelly torn from them by a sudden unexpected doom, and they resolved to dedicate the remnant of their days to her memory.

Kunizo was the first to hear the dire news. With a breaking heart he had watched his love depart on her ill-starred journey, and, numbed with despair, from the same spot he witnessed the mournful return of the procession.

Stupefied at the turn events had taken, he at once determined that her spirit should not go forth on its way alone into the darkness of the Land of Shadows, and since their paths had been so ruthlessly parted in life, compassionate Death should unite them for many lives to come. However, before he made his final exit from this world of pain, he would at least gaze once again upon the beautiful face of his beloved Kinu.

With this resolve, on the night of her interment he found his way to the cemetery; the coffin was easily disinterred, and with the tools brought for that purpose, he soon succeeded in wrenching off the lid. No sooner had this been done than a miracle was wrought. Instead of lying there a pallid wraith of her former self, as Kunizo so fully expected to find the corpse of his lost love, with a faint sigh she raised herself in the narrow coffin, and turned her bewildered gaze upon her astounded deliverer.

It was indeed true, the sudden rush of cold air had brought back the wandering spirit of poor Kinu. The hideous events of her wedding night had completely suspended her animation, and she had fallen into a deep trance, which had deceived everyone by its faithful semblance of Death.

Who can depict the joy and transports of the young lovers, who after enduring such torments and vicissitudes, were thus miraculously restored to each other! Kunizo, almost beside himself with happiness, did his utmost to minister to his beloved lady, and when she had sufficiently recovered, he tenderly wrapped her in his outer garment and carried her in all haste to the house of an aunt, who lived at some distance, where she could be safely concealed.

This relative was considerably surprised at such a visitation in the dead of night, and still more so at the almost incredible narrative of the fugitive couple. However, clearly discerning the will of Heaven in all that had passed, she willingly afforded them a shelter, and did all in her power to aid them escape from that part of the country.

Under cover of the darkness they fled, and crossing the sea, arrived safely in the island of Shikoku. There, in a place called Marugame, they found another member of Kunizo's family, to whom they had been directed, who was the prosperous master of a *yadoya*, or inn, in the vicinity of the famous temple of Kompira,[2] for which that region had become famous.

Kunizo, almost beside himself with happiness, did his utmost to minister to his beloved lady.

The fugitives received a kindly welcome, and then after all their trials and sorrows, they made their home in that flourishing country town, annually visited by thousands of pilgrims, Kinu's beauty and accomplishments winning all hearts and proving of great assistance to their benefactor. In this way, far from their native place, the united lovers spent happy years in the joy of each other's company, secure in their deep affection, which, like the flower of the enchanted bowers of Horai, the Elysian Isle, fades not, but blooms on fragrant for all eternity.

Haunted by the fear that they might again be pitilessly separated from each other, and Kinu forced to fulfil her engagement to the luckless nobleman, who had been defrauded of his happiness in such a gruesome and unforeseen manner, they lived in the strictest retirement and

never dared to disclose to their respective sorrowing families the wonders that had been worked in their behalf.

However, some years later, Kinu's parents, who had all this time been mourning and inconsolable for their daughter's tragic end, undertook an extensive pilgrimage age to certain celebrated temples for requiem services and prayers for the repose and well-being of the soul of their lost child.

In the course of their journeying they arrived at Marugame, for the temple of Kompira was included in their tour, and by a strange coincidence they came to stay at the very inn presided over by Kunizo's uncle.

When they were shown into the room allotted them, the first object to meet their astonished gaze was a handsome screen on which was written a poem in skilled calligraphy. The characteristic handwriting was the facsimile of Kinu's, and the poem constantly and fondly read at home—they knew it by heart, for it was one of the treasured relics left to them by their beloved daughter.

Their imaginations were deeply stirred, and in a state of great emotion at this strange occurrence, they hastily summoned their host. In a long interview the astounding story of Kinu's resurrection from the tomb and the escape of the lovers was revealed to them.

Deep and boundless was their joy and gratitude to Providence at thus restoring to them, in such an amazing manner, their lost one, whom they never expected to meet again this side of the *Meido*[3] and at that happy reunion all shed tears of joy, and also of sorrow, in recalling the past.

Further separation being out of the question, the old couple insisted on carrying back with them to Osaka their newly restored son and daughter, and there they all lived together long and happily: the whole neighbourhood never ceasing to marvel at the wonderful history of "how Kinu returned from the grave."

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[1] *Sudáré*, a curtain of finely slatted bamboo pulled up and down by silken cords and tassels.

[2] *Kompira*, a deity claimed by both Shintoists and Buddhists: very popular with travellers and seamen.

[3] *Meido*, Hades.

A CHERRY-FLOWER IDYLL

About one hundred years ago, in the old capital of Kyoto, there lived a young man named Taira Shunko. At the time this story opens he was about twenty years of age, of pre-possessing appearance, amiable disposition, and refined tastes, his favourite pastime being the composition of poetry. His father decided that Shunko should finish his education in Yedo, the Eastern capital, where he was accordingly sent. He proved himself an apt scholar, more clever than his comrade-students, which won him the favour of the tutor in whose charge he had been placed.

Some months after his arrival in Yedo, he went to stay at his uncle's house during convalescence from a slight illness. By the time he was well again the spring had come, and the call of the cherry-flower season found a ready response in Shunko's heart, so he determined to visit Koganei, a place famous for its cherry trees.

One fine morning he arose at dawn, and, equipped with a small luncheon box and a gourd filled with sake, set out on his way.

In the good old days, as now, Koganei was celebrated for the beauty of its scenery in the springtime. Thousands of spreading trees formed a glorious avenue on either side the blue waters of the River Tama, and when these burst into clouds of diaphanous bloom, visitors from far and near came in crowds to join in the revel of the Queen of Flowers. Beneath the shade of the over-arching trees, tea-houses were dotted along the banks of the stream. Here, with the *shoji*[1] hospitably open on all sides, tempting meals of river-trout, bamboo shoots, and fern-curls, and sundry and manifold dainties were served to the pleasure-seeking traveller.

Shunko rested at one of these river-side hostelries, refreshing himself with generous draughts from his gourd, and then opened his tiny luncheon box, the contents of which he supplemented with the delicate river-trout, fresh from the pellucid waters of the stream and artistically prepared by the tea-house cuisine.

Under the influence of wine, the homesickness which had been oppressing his soul gradually took wings; he became merry, and felt as if he were at home in his own beautiful city of Kyoto. He sauntered along under the trees, singing snatches of songs in praise of this favourite flower. On every side the whole world was framed in softest clouds of ethereal bloom, which seemed to waft him along between earth and heaven.

Lost in admiration at the fairy like beauty of the scene, he wandered on and on, oblivious of time, till he suddenly realized that daylight was on the wane. A zephyr sprang up, scattering the petals of the blossoms like a fall of scented snow, and as Shunko gazed around, he became aware that the last visitors had gone, and that he was left alone with only the birds twittering on their way to their nests to remind him that he, too, like the rest of belated humanity, ought to be wending his

way home.

However, sinking down upon a mossy bank beneath a cherry-tree, he became lost in meditation. With the aid of a portable ink-box and brush he composed some stanzas, a rhapsody on the transcendent loveliness of the cherry flowers.

SONG TO THE SPIRIT OF THE CHERRY-BLOSSOM[2]

Throughout the land the Spring doth hold high Court,
Obedient to the call from far I come
To lay my tribute at thy matchless shrine,
To vow allegiance to the Queen of Flowers.

How can I praise aright thy perfume sweet,
The heavenly pureness of thy blossom's snow:
Spellbound I linger in thy Kingdom fair
That rivets me, love's prisoner!

Take this poor bud of poesy to thy fragrant breast,
There let it hang, symbol of homage true:
Ne'er can perfection be acclaimed right,
Much less thy beauties, which are infinite!
Thy by fragile petals fluttering on my robes
Pluck at my heart, and bind me to thy realm.
With fairy fetters—ne'er can I leave thy bowers
But worship thee for evermore, my peerless Queen of Flowers!

Having tied the slip of paper to a branch of the tree in whose shade he had been reclining, he turned to retrace his steps, but realized, with a start, that the twilight had merged into darkness, and the pale gleams of the crescent moon were already beginning to illumine the deep blue vault above him. During his abstraction he had wandered off the beaten-track, and was following a totally unknown path which grew more and more intricate among the hills. It had been a long day, and he was growing faint with hunger and weary from fatigue when, just as he was beginning to despair of ever finding an escape from such a labyrinth, suddenly a young girl appeared from the gloom as if by magic! By the fitful light of the lantern she was carrying, Shunko saw that she was very fair and dainty, and concluded that she was in the service of some household of rank. To his surprise she took his presence as a matter of course, and politely addressed him, with many bows:

"My mistress is awaiting you. Please come and I will show you the way."

Shunko was still more astonished at these words. He had never been in this wild and unknown place before, and could not imagine what human soul could know and summon him thus, at this late hour.

Suddenly a young girl appeared from the gloom as if by magic!

After a few moment's silence he inquired of the little messenger, "Who is your mistress?"

"You will understand when you see her," she replied. "My lady told me that as you had lost your way, I was to come and guide you to her house, so kindly follow me without delay."

Shunko's perplexity was only increased by these words, but after reflection, he told himself that probably one of his friends must be living in Koganei without his knowledge, and he decided to follow the fair messenger without further questioning.

Setting out at a swift pace, she guided him into a small valley, through which a mountain stream was murmuring in its rocky bed. It was a remote and sheltered spot. Presently a turn in the path led them to a tiny dwelling, completely surrounded and over-shadowed by a cluster of cherry-trees in full bloom. The girl stopped before the little bamboo gate. Shunko hesitated, but she turned to him with a smile.

"This is the house where my mistress dwells. Be so good as to enter!"

Shunko obeyed, and passed up a miniature garden to the entrance. Another little maiden appeared with a lighted candle, and ushered Shunko through several anterooms leading to a large guest-chamber, which seemed to be overhanging the crystal waters of a lake, in whose depth, like golden flowers, he could see the reflection of myriad stars. He noticed that the appointments were all of a most sumptuous description. Cherry-blossoms formed the keynote of the decorations; the screens were all planted with the flowering branches, clusters of them adorned the *tokonoma*; while the high-standing candlesticks were of massive silver, as were also the charcoal braziers, the glow of which drove out the chill of the spring evening. Beautiful *crêpe* cushions were placed beside the braziers, as if in expectation of a welcome guest; while the

perfume of rare incense, mingling with the delicious fragrance of cherry-blossom, floated through the room.

Shunko was too bewildered and too exhausted by his long wanderings to indulge in reflections. With the unreal sensations of an errant hero of a fairy tale, he sank upon the mats and waited, wondering what would happen next.

Suddenly, the rustle of silken garments arrested his attention; noiselessly the screens of the room slid back, and the apparition of a beautiful maiden appeared, exquisitely graceful in her trailing robes.

She was in the prime of youth, and could not have been more than seventeen years of age. Her dress, in which the skies of spring seemed to be reflected, was the hue of a rich azure blue, and the *crêpe* fabric was half concealed beneath sprays of cherry-bloom so deftly worked, and with such a moonlit sheen upon them, that Shunko thought that they must have been woven from the moonbeams of the serene far-off moon for the Goddess of Spring. Her face was so perfect that the wondering guest was speechless at the loveliness of the vision before him. Never had he dreamed of such beauty, although he came from Kyoto, the city of beautiful women.

The fair hostess, noting his embarrassment, laughed softly, as she took her seat beside one of the silver braziers, and with a gentle gesture of the hand assigned him the companion place opposite her.

Bowing to the ground, she said:

"Ever have I lived alone in this place with only the river and the hills for my friends. So that your coming is a great joy and consolation to me. It is my wish to prepare a feast of welcome for you, but alas! in the depths of the woods, there is nothing meet for an honoured guest, but, poor as our entertainment is, I beg you, not to despise it."

A servant then appeared bearing trays of delicious dishes, with a golden wine flagon and a crystal cup.

At the sound of her voice, enchantment seemed to weave a subtle net around the bewildered Shunko; a languorous feeling of delight stole over his senses, and he yielded himself to the mysterious charm of the hour.

His lovely hostess proffered to her guest the crystal winecup, and filled it to the brim with amber wine from the golden flask.

As Shunko quaffed it, he thought never had such delicious nectar been tasted by mortal man. He could not resist cup after cup, till gradually all apprehension of the unknown surroundings passed away, and a strange gladness filled his heart as he succumbed to the charm of the hour, while servants silently went to and fro bearing fresh and tempting dainties to lay before him.

While they were conversing happily together the lady left his side, and seating herself beside the *koto,* began to sing a wild and beautiful air. Strange and wonderful to relate, the song was none other than the self-same poem which Shunko had composed that very evening, and had left fluttering from the branch of the cherry-tree beneath whose canopy of bloom he had rested. Falling completely under the bewitchment of his surroundings, Shunko felt that he wished to stay there for evermore, and a pang smote his breast at the thought that he soon must separate, if only for a few hours, from his mystic lady of the vale of cherry-blossoms.

As the last plaintive chord throbbed into silence, a chime in the next room struck two in the morning.

Laying the instrument aside, she said:

"At this late hour it is impossible for you to return home to-night. Everything is prepared in the next room. Honourably deign to rest. Forgive me that I cannot entertain you in a more befitting manner, in this, our poor home."

Attendants then entering, the screens were drawn aside for their guest, and he passed into the adjoining chamber, which had been prepared as a sleeping apartment. Sinking to rest among the silken coverlets and luxurious quilts, he was soon lost in heavy slumber.

His beautiful hostess, seating herself beside the *koto* began to sing a wild and beautiful air.

Suddenly, in the morning, he was awakened by a cold wind blowing across his face. Day had broken, and the rosy dawn was flushing the horizon in the east. Slowly returning to his senses, he found himself lying on the ground beneath the very cherry-tree that had inspired his poem of the day before; but his wonderful adventure, his charming hostess, and her waiting maidens were no more! Shunko, lost in wonder, recalled over and over again the glowing memories of the preceding evening, but the vision had been so vivid that he felt assured it must have been something more than the mere phantoms of a dream. An overpowering conviction crept over him that the lovely maiden had her living counterpart in this world of realities.

From his earliest childhood he had always offered a special devotion to the cherry-flowers. Year after year, in the springtime, he had taken special joy in visiting some place noted for their blossoms. Could it be that the spirit of the cherry-tree, to whose beauty he had dedicated his poem, had appeared to him in human form to reward him for his life-long fidelity?

At last he rose and stretched his cramped limbs, and musing only on the vanished wonders of the night, wandered aimlessly along. At length he regained the main road and slowly turned his errant footsteps towards home.

Although he took up his usual life again, he could not forget his experiences in the cherry-blossom valley, they haunted him not only in the silent watches of the night, but in the bright noontide of day. Three days later he returned to Koganei, with the fond hope of evoking once again the longed-for vision of the lovely girl who had so bewitched him with her beauty and her charm.

But, alas for human hopes! In those short days all had changed. What so ephemeral as the reign of the cherry-flower in the spring! Grey were the skies that had been so blue and fair; bleak and deserted was the scene that had been so gay and full of life; bare of blossom, and stripped of their fairy beauty were the trees, whose petals of blushing-snow the relentless wind had scattered far and wide.

As before, he rested at the same little tea-house by the river and waited for the shades of evening to fall. Roaming about in the deepening twilight, he anxiously sought some sign or token, but vain were all his efforts to find the valley of dream again. Vanished was the little dwelling in the shadow of the cherry groves. Nowhere by unfamiliar paths could he find the fair messenger who had guided him to the bamboo gate. All had faded and suffered change.

Year after year, in the springtime, did Shunko make a pilgrimage of loving memory to the same spot, but though his faithfulness was never rewarded by a sight of her, who had so completely taken possession of his heart and soul, yet the flower of hope never faded, and firm was his resolution, that none other than the maiden of Koganei should ever be his wife.

About five years passed. Then a sudden summons from his home arrived, bearing the sorrowful tidings that his father had been stricken with severe illness, and begging him to return without delay.

That very day he made all arrangements, and disposed of his few student's belongings in readiness to set out at daybreak.

It happened to be the season of autumn when, in the Orient, the deer cries for its mate in the flaming maple glades of the forest, and a young man's heart[3] is filled with what the Japanese call *mono no aware wo shiru* ("the Ah-ness of things").

Shunko was sad. He yearned for the lovely girl who had so bewitched him, and in addition to this sorrow his heart was heavy at the thought of his father's illness.

As Shunko proceeded on his journey his depression increased, and sadly he repeated aloud the following lines:

Cold as the wind of early spring
Chilling the buds that still lie sheathed
In their brown armour with its sting,
And the bare branches withering—
So seems the human heart to me!
Cold as the March wind's bitterness;
I am alone, none comes to see
Or cheer me in these days of stress.

Now it chanced that an old man heard this mournful recital, and took pity on Shunko.

"Pray pardon a stranger intruding upon your privacy," said the old man, "but we sometimes take a gloomy view of life for want of good cheer. It may be that you have travelled far and are footsore and weary. If that is so, be honourably pleased to accept rest and refreshment in my humble house in yonder valley."

Shunko was pleased with the old man's kindly manner, and warmly accepted his hospitality.

After a hearty meal and a long chat with the old man, Shunko retired to bed.

The youth had no sooner closed his eyes than he found himself dreaming of Koganei and of the beautiful woman he had met there. A gentle breeze was full of the scent of flowers. He noticed a cloud of cherry-blossom falling like a little company of white butterflies to the ground. While watching so pleasing a scene he observed a strip of paper hanging to one of the lower branches. He advanced close to the tree to discover that some one had written a poem on the wind-blown paper.

A thrill passed through him as he read the words:

Lingers still the past within thy memory,
East of the Temple let thy footsteps stray
And there await thy destiny!

Earnestly he repeated the lines over and over again, and awoke to find himself still reciting the little verse that seemed so full of meaning. Deeply he pondered over his dream. How could he solve the enigmatic message it surely bore for him? What did it portend?

The next day he set out on his journey to the west. His father was in the last stages of his malady, and the doctors had given up all hope of his recovery. In a few weeks the old man died, and Shunko succeeded to the estate. It was a sad winter, and the young man with his widowed mother, were secluded in the house for some months, observing the strictest retirement during the period of mourning.

But youth soon recovers from its griefs, and by the time that April had come with the dear beguilement of her blue skies and flowering landscapes, Shunko, in company with an old friend, set out to assuage his sorrows in the viewing of his favourite cherry-trees, and to find balm for his soul in the golden sunshine of spring. His father's death, and the business of attending to the affairs of succession, had left him but little leisure for vain regrets, and the family upheaval he had experienced the last few months had somewhat dimmed the memory of the mysterious dream, which had come to him the night before his return home.

But now, with a strange and eerie sensation, he realized that, unwittingly, Fate had guided their footsteps to the Eastern Mountain, and that the way they had chosen was *East of the Temple* Chionin. The message on the scroll flashed into his mind as he sauntered along:

Lingers still the past within thy memory?
East of the Temple let thy footsteps stray,
And there await thy destiny!

By this time they had reached the famous avenue of cherry-trees, and the pearly mist of bloom, that seemed to envelope them like a fragrant cloud, at once recalled to Shunko's mind how striking was the resemblance this fairy-like spot bore to Koganei.

Just at that moment he espied a small glittering object lying on the ground at the root of one of the cherry-trees. It proved to be a golden ring, and engraven on it was the hieroglyphic "Hana," which may be interpreted as meaning either "Flower" or "Cherry-Blossom."

As the afternoon began to wane they came to a tea-house, which seemed to look especially inviting, and here they rested and refreshed their weariness as the shadows gradually lengthened into the twilight.

In the next room were two or three girls' voices talking gaily together, and their laughter sounded soft and musical as it floated out into the balmy air of that soft evening of spring.

By degrees Shunko found himself overhearing snatches of their conversation, and at length he distinctly caught the words:

"The day has been a perfect one except for one little cloud. O Hana San's ring...."

Then a silvery voice made answer: "The mere loss of the ring is nothing, but as it bears my name, it grieves me that it should fall into the hands of a stranger."

At these words Shunko impetuously rose and entered the adjoining chamber.

"Pardon me," he cried, "but can this be the lost ring?" and he held out to the little group the trinket which he had found beneath the cherry-tree that afternoon.

The youngest of the trio, a graceful girl of about seventeen or eighteen summers, bowed to the ground, murmuring her thanks, while an elderly woman, who was evidently her foster-nurse, came forward to receive the missing treasure.

As the young girl raised her head, Shunko felt a thrilling shock of recognition quiver through his frame. At last the gods had granted his fervent prayers. Before him, as a living and breathing reality, he beheld the long sought maiden of the vision at Koganei. The room, its occupants, and all around him faded away, and his soul was wafted back through the vista of years to the lonely valley of dreams, so far away.

This, then, was the significance of the mystic writing in the deserted house, that now he had served his term of probation and was at last deemed worthy of the beloved one for whom he had waited and longed for so many years.

The elderly nurse was aware of his embarrassment, and tactfully attempted to come to his aid. She proffered wine and refreshments, and made several inquiries as to where he had found the ring and where he lived.

After replying to these queries, Shunko, who was in no mood for talking, withdrew with deep obeisances, and slowly wended his way homewards, lost in abstraction.

Oh, the delight of it! To be alone with his reverie and thoughts of her, whom he had scarcely hoped to see again, the lady of his dreams! Both head and heart were in a whirl. And the wonder of his adventure kept him awake through the midnight darkness. Only at the break of dawn did he fall into a troubled sleep.

Towards noon his belated slumbers were disturbed by a servant, who came to announce the advent of a visitor, who urgently desired an interview. He arose in haste, and there awaiting him in the guest-room was the foster-nurse of the day before. Rich gifts of silk lay on the mats, and with the explanation that she had been sent by the parents of her young charge, she came to express their thanks for the incident of the day before.

When the formalities of greeting were exchanged, Shunko could no longer keep silence regarding the subject nearest his heart, and begged the nurse to tell him, in confidence, all she could concerning O Hana San.

"My young mistress belongs to a knightly family. There are three children in all, but she is the only girl, and the youngest child. She is just seventeen years of age, and is quite renowned for her beauty, which, as you have seen her, you may perhaps understand. Many have ardently desired her hand in marriage, but hitherto all have been declined. She cares nothing for worldly things and devotes herself to study."

"Why does she refuse to marry?" asked the young man, with a beating heart.

"Ah! there is a strange reason for that!" replied the nurse, and her voice dropped to a whisper. "Several years ago, when she was not much more than a child, her mother and I took her to visit the beautiful Kiyomidzu Temple in the springtime to see the cherry-flowers. As you know, Kwannon, the Goddess of Mercy of that temple, takes under her protection all lovers who pray to her for a happy union, and the railings round her shrine are white with the tying of paper-prayer love-knots innumerable. O Hana's mother told me afterwards that when we passed before Kwannon's altar, she had offered up a special prayer for her daughter's future happiness in marriage.

"While we were walking in the vicinity of the waterfall below the temple, we suddenly lost sight of Hana for a few minutes. It seems that, wrapt in wonder at the beauty of the blossoming trees, she had strayed away, and was listening to the foaming water as it dashed over the boulders of rock. Suddenly, a gust of wind blew over us. It was icy cold! We looked round for O Hana San, and you can imagine the fear that seized our hearts when we found that she had disappeared. In a frenzy of anxiety I ran hither and thither, and at last caught sight of her prostrate on the ground at some distance away. She had fallen into a deep faint near the cascade, and was lying there pale and senseless, and drenched with spray. We carried her to the nearest tea-house, and tried every means in our power to restore her to consciousness, but she remained sunk in a deep swoon all through that long, long day. Her mother wept, fearing that she was dead. When the sun set and no change took place, we were lost in the anguish of despair. All of a sudden an old priest appeared before us. Staff in hand, and clad in ancient and dilapidated garments, he seemed an apparition from some past and bygone age. He gazed long at the senseless girl, lying white and cold in the semblance of death, and then sank on his knees by her side, absorbed in silent prayer, now and again gently stroking her inanimate body with his rosary.

"All through the night we watched thus by O Hana San, and never did hours seem so interminable or so black. At last, towards the dawn, success crowned the old man's efforts; the spell that had so mysteriously changed her youth and bloom into a pallid mask, was gradually exorcised, her spirit returned, and with a gentle sigh, O Hana San was restored to life.

"Her mother was transported with joy. When she was able to speak, she murmured, 'Praise be to the mercy of the holy Kwannon of Kiyomidzu!' and again and again she expressed her fervent gratitude to the queer priest.

An old priest suddenly appeared ... staff in hand and clad in ancient and dilapidated garments.

"In answer he took from the folds of his robe a poem-card, which he handed to my mistress.

"'This,' said he, 'was written by your daughter's future bridegroom. In a few years he will come to claim her, therefore keep this poem as the token.'

"With these words he disappeared as unexpectedly and mysteriously as he had come. Great was our desire to know more of the meaning of those fateful words, but though we made inquiries of everyone in the temple grounds, not a soul had seen a trace of the ancient priest. O Hana San seemed none the worse for her long swoon, and we returned home, marvelling greatly at the extraordinary events that had happened to us that day and night in the temple of Kiyomidzu.

"From that time onwards I noticed a great change in O Hana San. She was no longer a child. Though only thirteen years of age, she grew serious and thoughtful, and studied her books with great diligence. In music she especially excelled, and all were astonished at her great talent. As she grew in years, her amiability and charm became quite noted in the neighbourhood: her mother realizes that she is at the zenith of her youth and beauty, and, many a time, has tried to find the author of the poem, but hitherto her efforts have been of no avail.

"Yesterday we had the good fortune to meet you, and if you will forgive my boldness, it seemed to me as though Fate had especially directed you to my foster-child. On our return home, we related all that had befallen us to my mistress. She listened to our recital with deep agitation, and then exclaimed, with joy: 'Thanks be to Heaven I At last the long-sought for one has come!'"

Shunko felt as if in a trance. Full well he knew that the Gods had guided his footsteps to their yearned-for goal, and the maiden to whom he had restored the little golden circlet, was none other than the one for whom his heart had hungered for many years.

It was, indeed, a supreme Fate that had linked their lives in one.

In taking farewell of the old nurse, Shunko entrusted to her his message to his bride-elect—the mysterious token of affinity composed beneath the cherry-tree five years ago.

There was no longer any doubt but that O Hana's destiny was indeed fulfilled. The bridegroom, foretold by the age-old priest, had come at last. Her mother's prayer offered up at the temple of the Kwannon of Kiyomidzu had been heard. Both parents rejoiced at the happy fate that the Powers above had vouchsafed to their beloved child, an eminent sooth-sayer was consulted, and a specially auspicious day was chosen for the wedding.

When the excitement of the bridal feast was over and Shunko was left alone with his lovely bride, he noticed that her wedding-robe of turquoise blue, scattered over with embroideries of her name-flower, was the self-same one that had been worn by his visionary hostess; and, moreover, comparisons proved that the date of her long trance at Kiyomidzu was identical with that of his prophetic vision at Koganei.

A great gladness filled the bridegroom's heart, for he felt that in some mystical way his bride and dream-love were one and the same incarnate. The spirit of the cherry-tree had surely entered into Hana when she had lost consciousness at the Kiyomidzu temple, and En-musubi no Kami, the God of Marriage, had assumed the disguise of the old priest, and with the magnetic threads of love, had woven their destinies together.

And Shunko tenderly caressed his bride, saying:

"I have known and loved and waited for you ever since your spirit came to me from the Kiyomidzu temple."

And he told her all that had befallen him at Koganei.

The young lovers thereupon pledged their love to each other for many lives to come, and lived blissfully to the end of their days.

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[1] *Shoji*, the sliding screens which take the place of doors in a Japanese house.

[2] Rendered into English verse by my friend, Countess Iso-ko-Mutsu.

[3] At this point there is a break in Madame Ozaki's MS., and the gap has been filled up by another hand. Madame Ozaki resumes her story with "A thrill passed through him....".

THE BADGER-HAUNTED TEMPLE[1]

Once long ago, in southern Japan, in the town of Kumamoto, there lived a young *samurai*, who had a great devotion to the sport of fishing. Armed with his large basket and tackle, he would often start out in the early morning and pass the whole day at his favourite pastime, returning home only at nightfall.

One fine day he had more than usual luck. In the late afternoon, when he examined his basket, he found it full to overflowing. Highly delighted at his success, he wended his way homewards with a light heart, singing snatches of merry songs as he went along.

It was already dusk when he happened to pass a deserted Buddhist temple. He noticed that the gate stood half open, and hung loosely on its rusty hinges, and the whole place had a dilapidated and tumbledown appearance.

What was the young man's astonishment to see, in striking contrast to such a forlorn environment, a pretty young girl standing just within the gate.

As he approached she came forward, and looking at him with a meaning glance, smiled, as if inviting him to enter into conversation. The *samurai* thought her manner somewhat strange, and at first was on his guard. Some mysterious influence, however, compelled him to stop, and he stood irresolutely admiring the fair young face, blooming like a flower in its sombre setting.

When she noticed his hesitation she made a sign to him to approach. Her charm was so great and the smile with which she accompanied the gesture so irresistible, that half-unconsciously, he went up the stone steps, passed through the semi-open portal, and entered the courtyard where she stood awaiting him.

The maiden bowed courteously, then turned and led the way up the stone-flagged pathway to the temple. The whole place was in the most woeful condition, and looked as if it had been abandoned for many years.

When they reached what had once been the priest's house, the *samurai* saw that the interior of the building was in a better state of preservation than the outside led one to suppose. Passing along the veranda into the front room, he noticed that the *tatami* were still presentable, and that a sixfold screen adorned the chamber.

The girl gracefully motioned her guest to sit down in the place of honour near the alcove.

"Does the priest of the temple live here?" asked the young man, seating himself.

"No," answered the girl, "there is no priest here now. My mother and I only came here yesterday. She has gone to the next village to buy some things and may not be able to come back to-night. But honourably rest awhile, and let me give you some refreshment."

What was the young man's astonishment to see a pretty young girl standing just within the gate

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The girl then went into the kitchen apparently to make the tea, but though the guest waited a long time, she never returned.

By this time the moon had risen, and shone so brightly into the room, that it was as light as day. The *samurai* began to wonder at the strange behaviour of the damsel, who had inveigled him into such a place only to disappear and leave him in solitude.

Suddenly he was startled by some one sneezing loudly behind the screen. He turned his head in the direction from whence the sound came. To his utter amazement, not the pretty girl whom he had expected, but a huge, red-faced, bald-headed priest stalked out. He must have been about seven feet in height, for his head towered nearly to the ceiling, and he carried an iron wand, which he raised in a threatening manner.

"How dare you enter my house without my permission?" shouted the fierce-looking giant. "Unless you go away at once I will beat you into dust."

Frightened out of his wits, the young man took to his heels, and rushed with all speed out of the temple.

As he fled across the courtyard he heard peals of loud laughter behind him. Once outside the gate he stopped to listen, and still the strident laugh continued. Suddenly it occurred to him, that in the alarm of his hasty exit, he had forgotten his basket of fish. It was left behind in the temple. Great was his chagrin, for never before had he caught so much fish in a single day; but lacking the courage to go back and demand it, there was no alternative but to return home empty-handed, before had he caught so much fish in a single day; but lacking the courage to go back and demand it, there was no alternative but to return home empty-handed.

The following day he related his strange experience to several of his friends. They were all highly amused at such an adventure, and some of them plainly intimated that the seductive maiden and the aggressive giant were merely hallucinations that owed their origin to the sake flask.

At last one man, who was a good fencer, said:

"Oh, you must have been deluded by a badger who coveted your fish. No one lives in that temple. It has been deserted ever since I can remember. I will go there this evening and put an end to his mischief."

He then went to a fishmonger, purchased a large basket of fish, and borrowed an angling rod. Thus equipped, he waited impatiently for the sun to set. When the dusk began to fall he buckled on his sword and set out for the temple, carefully shouldering his bait that was to lead to the undoing of the badger. He laughed confidently to himself as he said: "I will teach the old fellow a lesson!"

As he approached the ruin what was his surprise to see, not one, but three girls standing there.

"O, ho! that is the way the wind lies, is it, but the crafty old sinner won't find it such an easy matter to make a fool of me."

No sooner was he observed by the pretty trio than by gestures they invited him to enter. Without any hesitation, he followed them into the building, and boldly seated himself upon the mats. They

placed the customary tea and cakes before him, and then brought in a flagon of wine and an extraordinarily large cup.

The swordsman partook neither of the tea nor the sake, and shrewdly watched the demeanour of the three maidens.

Noticing his avoidance of the proffered refreshment, the prettiest of them artlessly inquired:

"Why don't you take some sake?"

"I dislike both tea and sake," replied the valiant guest, "but if you have some accomplishment to entertain me with, if you can dance or sing, I shall be delighted to see you perform."

"Oh, what an old-fashioned man of propriety you are! If you don't drink, you surely know nothing of love either. What a dull existence yours must be! But we can dance a little, so if you will condescend to look, we shall be very pleased to try to amuse you with our performance, poor as it is."

The maidens then opened their fans and began to posture and dance. They exhibited so much skill and grace, however, that the swordsman was astonished, for it was unusual that country girls should be so deft and well-trained. As he watched them he became more and more fascinated, and gradually lost sight of the object of his mission.

Lost in admiration, he followed their every step, their every movement, and as the Japanese storyteller says, he forgot himself entirely, entranced at the beauty of their dancing.

Suddenly he saw that the three performers had become *headless!* Utterly bewildered, he gazed at them intently to make sure that he was not dreaming. Lo! and behold! each was holding her own head in her hands. They then threw them up and caught them as they fell. Like children playing a game of ball, they tossed their heads from one to the other. At last the boldest of the three threw her head at the young fencer. It fell on his knees, looked up in his face, and laughed at him. Angered at the girl's impertinence, he cast the head back at her in disgust, and drawing his sword, made several attempts to cut down the goblin dancer as she glided to and fro playfully tossing up her head and catching it.

But she was too quick for him, and like lightning darted out of the reach of his sword.

"Why don't you catch me?" she jeered mockingly. Mortified at his failure, he made another desperate attempt, but once more she adroitly eluded him, and sprang up to the top of the screen.

"I am here! Can you not reach me this time?" and she laughed at him in derision.

Again he made a thrust at her, but she proved far too nimble for him, and again, for the third time, he was foiled.

Then the three girls tossed their heads on their respective necks, shook them at him, and with shouts of weird laughter they vanished from sight.

As the young man came to his senses he vaguely gazed around. Bright moonlight illumined the whole place, and the stillness of the midnight was unbroken save for the thin tinkling chirping of the insects. He shivered as he realized the lateness of the hour and the wild loneliness of that uncanny spot. His basket of fish was nowhere to be seen. He understood, that he, too, had come under the spell of the wizard-badger, and like his friend, at whom he had laughed so heartily the day before, he had been bewitched by the wily creature.

But, although deeply chagrined at having fallen such an easy dupe, he was powerless to take any sort of revenge. The best he could do was to accept his defeat and return home.

Among his friends there was a doctor, who was not only a brave man, but one full of resource. On hearing of the way the mortified swordsman had been bamboozled, he said:

"Now leave this to me. Within three days I will catch that old badger and punish him well for all his diabolical tricks."

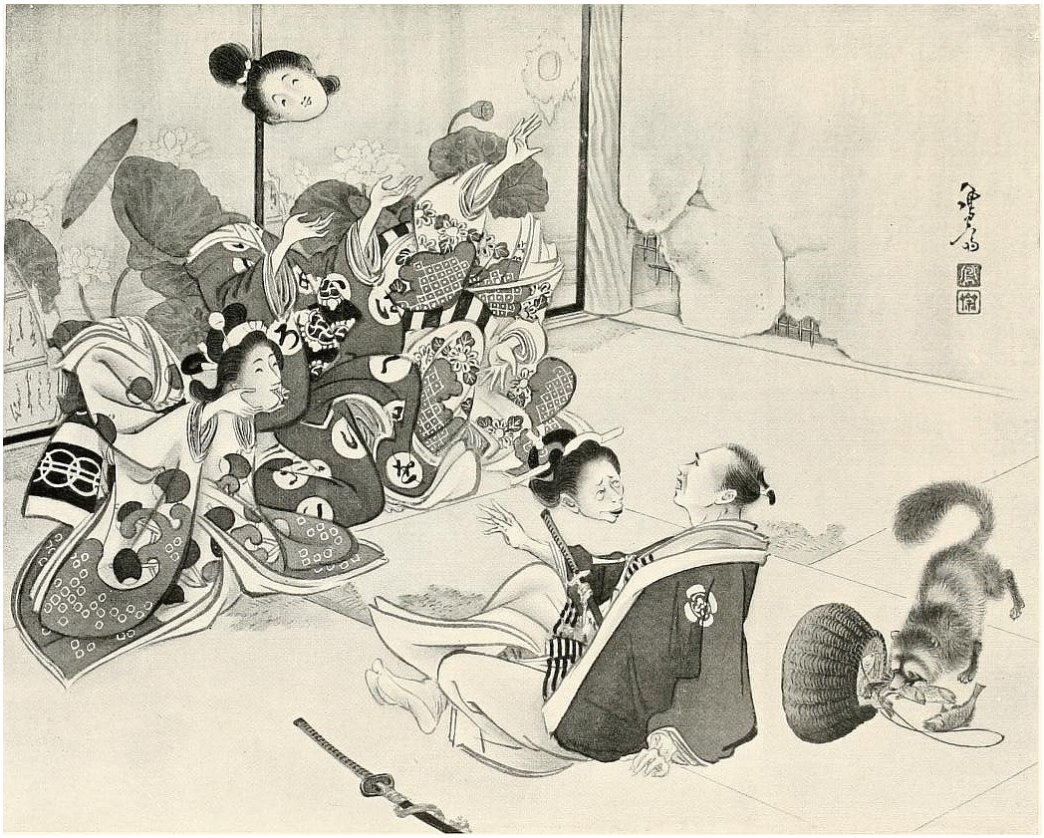
The doctor went home and prepared a savoury dish cooked with meat. Into this he mixed some deadly poison. He then cooked a second portion for himself. Taking these separate dishes and a bottle of sake with him, towards evening he set out for the ruined temple.

When he reached the mossy courtyard of the old building he found it solitary and deserted. Following the example of his friends, he made his way into the priest's room, intensely curious to see what might befall him, but, contrary to his expectation, all was empty and still. He knew that goblin-badgers were such crafty animals that it was almost impossible for anyone, however cautious, to be able to cope successfully with their snares and *Fata Morganas*. But he determined to be particularly wide awake and on his guard, so as not to fall a prey to any hallucination that the badger might raise.

The night was beautiful, and calm as the mouldering tombs in the temple graveyard. The full moon shone brightly over the great black sloping roofs, and cast a flood of light into the room where the doctor was patiently awaiting the mysterious foe. The minutes went slowly by, an hour elapsed, and still no ghostly visitant appeared. At last the baffled intruder placed his flask of wine before him and began to make preparations for his evening meal, thinking that possibly the badger might be unable to resist the tempting savour of the food.

"There is nothing like solitude," he mused aloud. "What a perfect night it is! How lucky I am to have found this deserted temple from which to view the silvery glory of the autumn moon."

For some time he continued to eat and drink, smacking his lips like a country gourmet in enjoyment of the meal. He began to think that the badger, knowing that he had found his match at last, Intended to leave him alone. Then to his delight, he heard the sound of footsteps. He watched the entrance to the room, expecting the old wizard to assume his favourite disguise, and that some pretty maiden would come to cast a spell upon him with her fascinations.



Suddenly he saw that the three performers had become *headless*!... Like children playing a game of ball, they tossed their heads from one to the other

But, to his surprise, who should come into sight but an old priest, who dragged himself into the room with faltering steps and sank down upon the mats with a deep long-drawn sigh of weariness. Apparently between seventy and eighty years of age, his clothes were old and travel-stained, and in his withered hands he carried a rosary. The effort of ascending the steps had evidently been a great trial to him, he breathed heavily and seemed in a state of great exhaustion. His whole appearance was one to arouse pity in the heart of the beholder.

"May I inquire who are you?" asked the doctor.

The old man replied, in a quavering voice, "I am the priest who used to live here many years ago when the temple was in a prosperous condition. As a youth I received my training here under the abbot then in charge, having been dedicated from childhood to the service of the most holy Buddha by my parents. At the time of the great Saigo's rebellion I was sent to another parish. When the castle of Kumamoto was besieged, alas! my own temple was burned to the ground. For years I wandered from place to place and fell on very hard times. In my old age and misfortunes my heart at last yearned to come back to this temple, where I spent so many happy years as an acolyte. It is my hope to spend my last days here. You can imagine my grief when I found it utterly abandoned, sunk in decay, with no priest in charge to offer up the daily prayers to the Lord Buddha, or to keep up the rites for the dead buried here. It is now my sole desire to collect money and to restore the temple. But alas! age and illness and want of food have robbed me of my strength, and I fear that I shall never be able to achieve what I have planned," and here the old man broke down and shed tears—a pitiful sight.

When wiping his eyes with the sleeve of his threadbare robe, he looked hungrily at the food and wine on which the doctor was regaling himself, and added, wistfully:

"Ah, I see you have a delicious meal there and wine withal, which you are enjoying while gazing at the moonlit scenery. I pray you spare me a little, for it is many days since I have had a good meal and I am half-famished."

At first the doctor was persuaded that the story was true, so plausible did it sound, and his heart was filled with compassion for the old bonze. He listened carefully till the melancholy recital was finished.

Then something in the accent of speech struck his ear as being different to that of a human being, and he reflected.

"This may be the badger! I must not allow myself to be deceived! The crafty cunning animal is planning to palm off his customary tricks on me, but he shall see that I am as clever as he is."

The doctor pretended to believe in the old man's story, and answered:

"Indeed, I deeply sympathize with your misfortunes. You are quite welcome to share my meal—nay, I will give you with pleasure all that is left, and, moreover, I promise to bring you some more to-morrow. I will also inform my friends and acquaintances of your pious plan to restore the temple, and will give all the assistance in my power in your work of collecting subscriptions." He then pushed forward the untouched plate of food which contained poison, rose from the mats, and took his leave, promising to return the next evening.

All the friends of the doctor who had heard him boast that he would outwit the badger, arrived early next morning, curious to know what had befallen him. Many of them were very sceptical regarding the tale of the badger trickster, and ascribed the illusions of their friends to the sake bottle.

The doctor would give no answer to their many inquiries, but merely invited them to accompany him.

"Come and see for yourselves," he said, and guided them to the old temple, the scene of so many uncanny experiences.

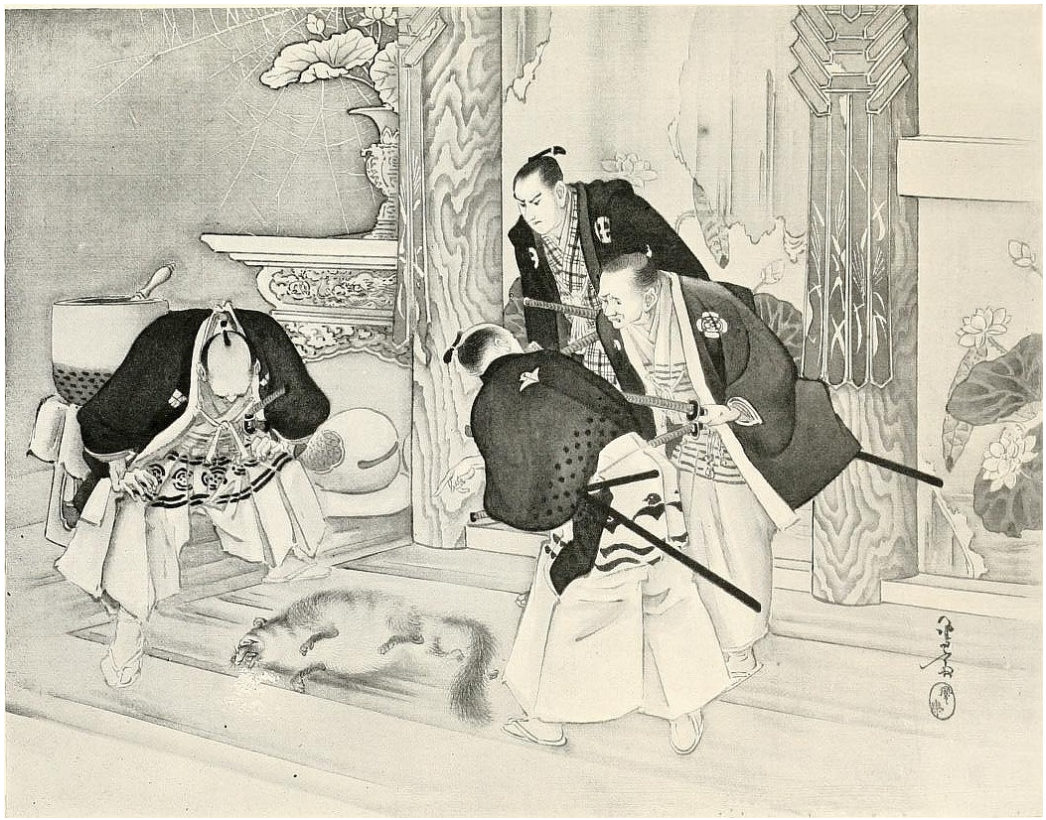
First of all they searched the room where he had sat the evening before, but nothing was to be found except the empty basket in which he had carried the food for himself and the badger. They investigated the whole place thoroughly, and at last, in one of the dark corners of the temple-chamber, they came upon the dead body of an old, old badger. It was the size of a large dog, and its hair was grey with age. Everyone was convinced that it must be at least several hundred years old.

The doctor carried it home in triumph. For several days the people in the neighbourhood came in large numbers to gloat over the hoary carcase, and to listen in awe and wonder to the marvellous stories of the numbers of people that had been duped and befooled by the magic powers of the old goblin-badger.

The writer adds that he was told another badger story concerning the same temple. Many of the old people in the parish remember the incident, and one of them related the following story.

Years before, when the sacred building was still in a prosperous state, the priest in charge celebrated a great Buddhist festival, which lasted some days. Amongst the numerous devotees who attended the services he noticed a very handsome youth, who listened with profound reverence, unusual in one so young, to the sermons and litanies. When the festival was over and the other worshippers had gone, he lingered around the temple as though loth to leave the sacred spot. The head-priest, who had conceived a liking for the lad, judged from his refined and dignified appearance that he must be the son of a high-class *samurai* family, probably desirous of entering the priesthood.

Gratified by the youth's apparent religious fervour, the holy man invited him to come to his study, and thereupon gave him some instruction in the Buddhist doctrines. He listened with the utmost attention for the whole afternoon to the bonze's learned discourse, and thanked him repeatedly for the condescension and trouble he had taken in instructing one so unworthy as himself.



In one of the dark comers of the temple-chamber, they came upon the dead body of an old, old badger

The afternoon waned and the hour for the evening meal came round. The priest ordered a bowl of macaroni to be brought for the visitor, who proved to be the owner of a phenomenal appetite, and consumed three times as much as a full-grown man.

He then bowed most courteously and asked permission to return home. In bidding him good-bye, the priest, who felt a curious fascination for the youth, presented him with a gold-lacquered medicine-box (*inro*) as a parting souvenir.

The lad prostrated himself in gratitude, and then took his departure.

The next day the temple servant, sweeping the graveyard, came across a badger. He was quite dead, and was dressed in a straw-covering put on in such a way as to resemble the clothes of a human being. To his side was tied a gold-lacquered *inro*, and his paunch was much distended and as round as a large bowl. It was evident that the creature's gluttony had been the cause of his death, and the priest, on seeing the animal, identified the *inro* as the one which he had bestowed upon the good-looking lad the day before, and knew that he had been the victim of a badger's deceiving wiles.

It was thus certain that the temple had been haunted by a pair of goblin-badgers, and that when this one had died, its mate had continued to inhabit the same temple even after it had been abandoned. The creature had evidently taken a fantastic delight in bewitching wayfarers and travellers, or anyone who carried delectable food with them, and while mystifying them with his tricks and illusions, had deftly abstracted their baskets and bundles, and had lived comfortably upon his stolen booty.

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[1] The badger and the fox as tricksters figure largely in Japanese superstition and folk-lore.

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