

e-book edition

## **A MOORHEN**

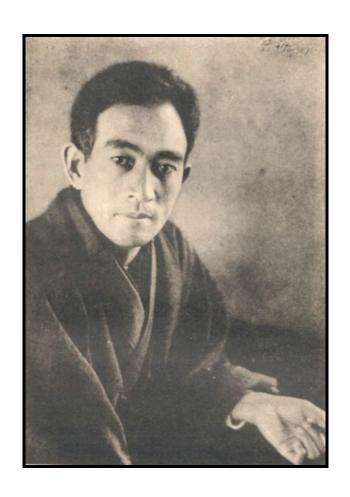
By

Naoya Shiga

(A SHORT STORY),

Translated by

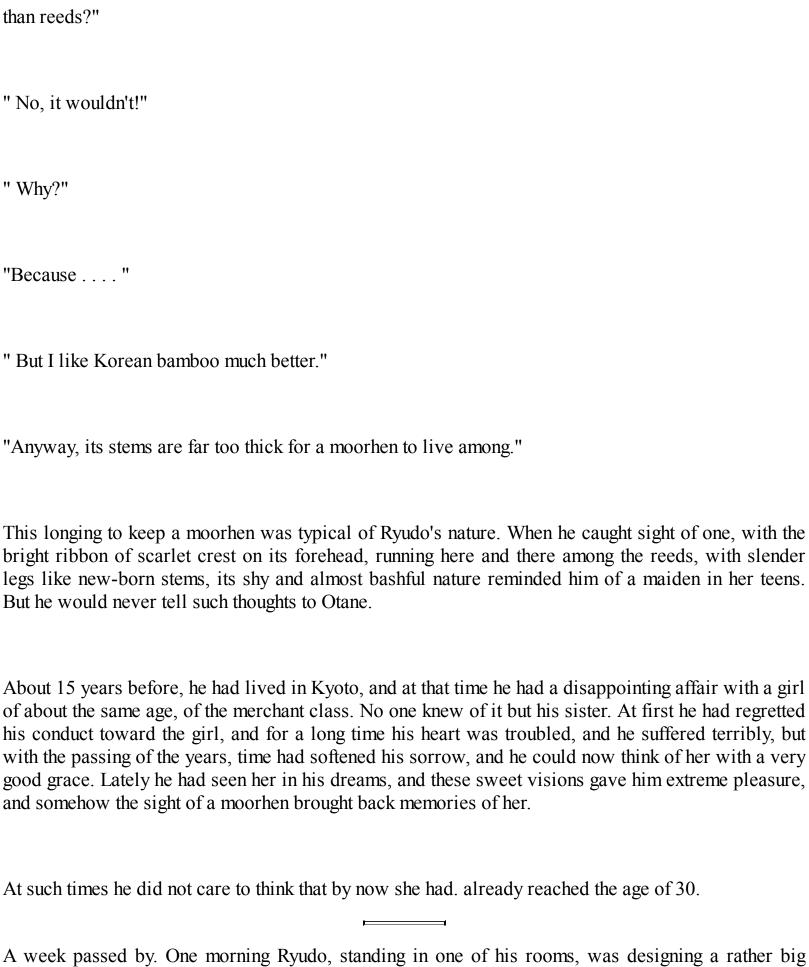
Haruo Endo and Eric S. Bell.



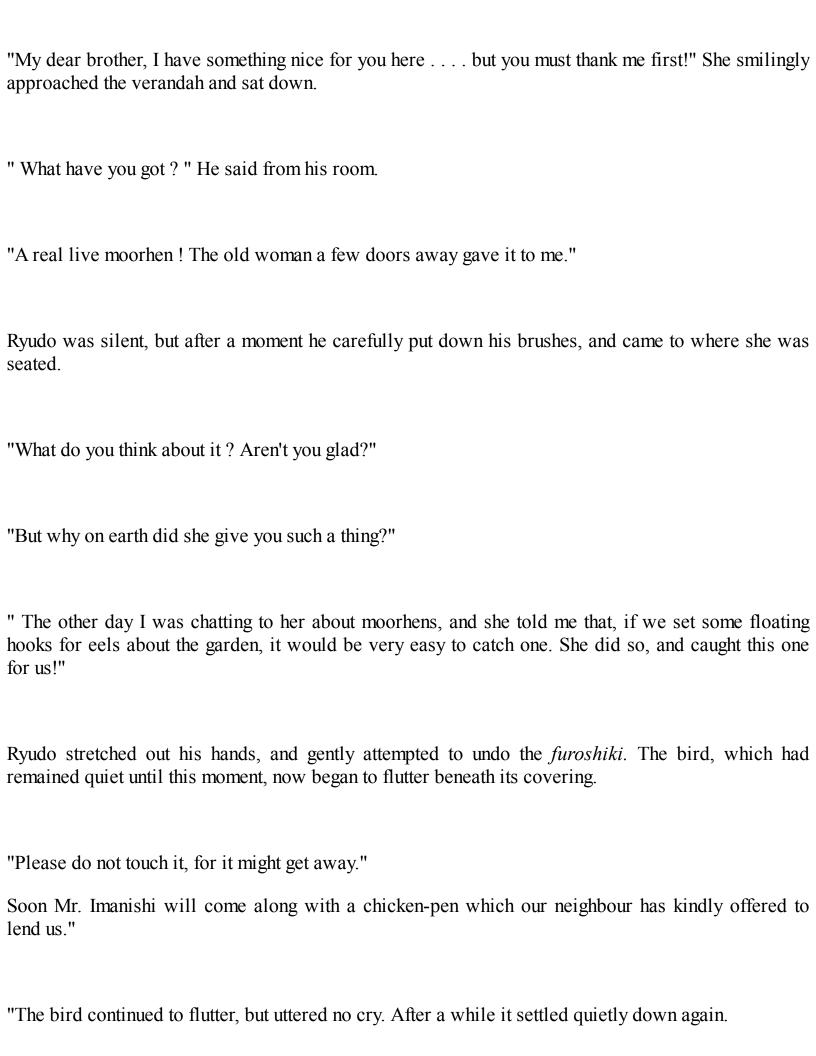
## A Moorhen



"But, don't you think it would be far more picturesque to plant Korean variegated bamboo-grass there



picture, referring every now and then to his sketch-book in which he had lately been taking down some rough drawings. From the wicket-gate which led into the garden, came Otane, clothed in a morning dress, and holding in her hands a small parcel wrapped round with a 'furoshiki.'



The moorhen would never become tamed. It not only refused to be tame, but it would eat nothing; and, when Ryudo was absent from home, it beat its wings against the wire of its cage and tried its hardest to get free. No sooner did he make his appearance than it would run into a corner of its cage, and would stand with its tail toward him, remaining absolutely motionless.

Ryudo became very anxious about the bird. He gave it goby and small silver carp, and he made Imanishi catch young dragon-flies for it to eat. Sometimes he would attach some food to a bamboostick and would push it through the wire-netting close to the bird, but this only made it flutter its wings, or move to the other corner of the cage, where it would immediately become immovable as before.

As he watched its antics, he could not help thinking that its fear and its motionless attitude as if of anger were something like the nature of the girl he had once loved. But every time he thought of this it made him sad.

"No bird will become tame, even though such a man as you gives it persistent attention. Let it be free and it will become tame naturally. If it felt hungry then it would surely look for food!"

"Yes, I believe you are right," he answered gently and rather unusually for him.

The next morning, soon after getting up, he went to look at his moorhen. He found the bird lying on its side on the floor of the cage, with its long legs stretched out straight in front of it, quite dead. Over its cold body insects and dragon-flies crawled about.

As Ryudo gazed, he was filled with horror.

That evening, when they were sitting together, the student remarked: "Moorhens are very delicious to eat. When I told our neighbour that we had buried our dead moorhen, they were very regretful!"

"In spite of their regret I would never eat a bird I had tried to tame! Even if the day comes when I shall realise my great aspiration, I will never again try to keep a rnoorhen!" he added with a bitter smile.

THE END