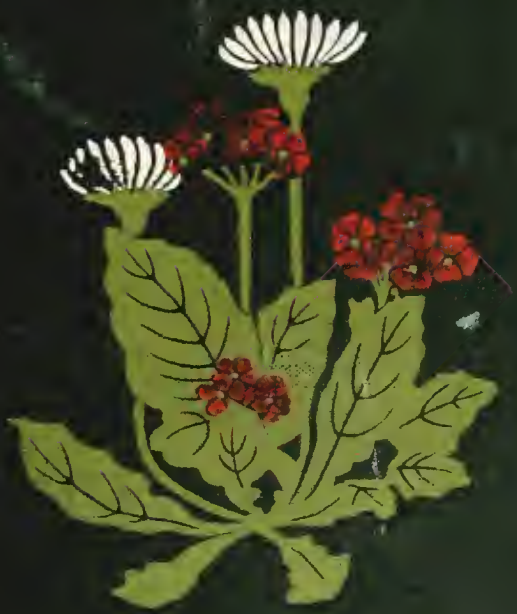
IN THE LAND OF THE GODS



ALICE MABEL BACON

DATE DUE

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SOME STORIES OF JAPAN

BY
ALICE
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TO MY JAPANESE FRIENDS, THROUGH WHOSE EYES I HAVE SEEN, BY WHOSE EARS I HAVE HEARD, WITH WHOSE VOICES I HAVE SPOKEN, THIS VOLUME IS GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

DEDICATION

A STORY book should need no introduction, but inasmuch as this one deals with customs, beliefs, and modes of thought as yet unfamiliar to American readers, a few preliminary words of explanation may be an aid to sympathy and comprehension.

Since the great war has begun to show us something of the intensity of Japanese national life, nothing, perhaps, has surprised the Occident more than the spiritual force of the race, — the reverent but certain attitude in which its members stand toward much that is to us unknown, or at best intermittently believed. In no respect do the Japanese as a nation differ more widely from Occidentals than in their actual practical belief in the close relations existing between the visible and the invisible, and in the continuity of this life and the next. The pledge of "loyalty to the

 Emperor for seven lives" is not a mere hyperbole. It voices the deepest religious feeling of the Japanese soul.

In the hope that somehow, by this effort to render vivid to American minds some of the popular beliefs and superstitions of Japan, I may be able to help my own people to a more sympathetic understanding of our trans-Pacific neighbors, I have written out these stories. Many of them are simply folk-tales, set, for our better comprehension of the conditions, in the every-day atmosphere of Japanese home-life in country or city. One, "The Blue Flame," is an incident told me as true, and as occurring in the very town in which the narrator lived. Two, "The Favor of Hachiman" and "At the Shrine of Fudō," while neither folk-tales nor stories told to me, set forth beliefs that to-day actuate the lives of some forty million wide-awake, progressive, and intelligent people.

Three of the stories are devoted to the fox superstition, still found among the

peasants and among the lower classes in the cities, but that no longer survives among the educated modern Japanese.

For a fuller understanding of the mysteries touched upon in this volume, the reader is referred to the works of Lafcadio Hearn. His book, "Japan, an Attempt at Interpretation," is the most complete and sympathetic study yet made of the spiritual side of the nation, and the chapter "Kitsuné," in volume one of his "Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan," relates in charming form the various phases of the fox belief.

HOLDERNESS, N. H.,
August, 1905.

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THE FAVOR OF HACHIMAN

Hachiman is the deified spirit of the Emperor Ojin, son of the warrior Empress Jingo. He is now worshiped as the God of War in many shrines and temples throughout Japan.

I

IT was the eve of the annual Feast of the Dead,[1] and O Kimi San had just finished the construction and decoration of the "Spirit Altar." She had set the posts and hung the rice-straw rope, and swung from it the fringe of vermicelli, green chestnut sprays, white paper, and dried fruits and vegetables. She had shaped with her own hands, from cucumbers and egg-fruits, the rude representations of cattle and horses, and had set them, together with fresh food and wine, before the quaint little shrine that stood now, completed, in the place of honor in the house. And all the time as she worked she had been thinking of

[1] The annual Feast of the Dead, or *O Bon Matsuri*, is celebrated at the August full moon. At this time, for three days, the spirits of the dead are believed to revisit their old homes, and special measures are taken for their reception and entertainment.

4 Taro, and the tears came to her tired old eyes, and dropped sometimes upon her work, as she thought of how, only three months before, he had gone to the war, and then of how soon came back to his old father and mother the word of his death, fighting the hairy Russians in Manchuria.

And so to-day, as she prepared to do honor to the visiting spirits, it was of Taro that she thought more than of the ancestral ghosts for whom she had kept the feast so many years. Taro, her brave, strong Taro, who should have lived to make his daily and yearly offerings at his parents' shrine, was coming to them to-night, a spirit, to receive from them the comfort and love that was all the happiness earth could offer him now! As she worked through the hot August morning, her heart was sore and sad, and there seemed no hope ahead for her and Gunkichi, her old husband. Lonely they must live on until death came, and lonely must their spirits

be forever, for no descendants would offer to them the affection and the daily gifts that disembodied spirits crave.

She stood now on the edge of her little piazza, and looked down the length of the village street. A small white flag, in its centre a blood-red sun, drooped idly from its slender bamboo staff before the house. A great gray monkey, chained to a tree across the road, woke from his noonday doze to blink at her sleepily, then closed his eyes and humped himself once more into a fluffy ball. The heated air wavered above the dusty road until the shops and hotels on each side of it seemed to shimmer and shake like the background of a moving picture. And — still like a moving picture — there came directly toward her the figure of a woman, wavering, almost staggering, under the heat of the August sun and the weight of a heavy baby tied to her back. The village lay quiet, asleep or preoccupied with its own discomfort, while the woman toiled on toward O Kimi San's

little rest-house. It was a tiny, thatched, open-fronted cottage, just beyond the village, and almost overhanging the mountain gorge along which the road was built. It was cool and fresh with the foam of the torrent far below, and in the shadow of a wooded rocky peak that towered above.

O Kimi San shaded her eyes with her hand as she looked into the shimmering glare at the small burdened figure. Her kindly old face, seamed and criss-crossed with the wrinkles of a hard life, grew sympathetic. The traveler, as she came into the shade of the Tengu Rock, breathed a deep sigh, and with a hitch of her shoulders tilted the baby into a more comfortable position. O Kimi, from the little matted platform that was the floor of her house, called out hospitably to the newcomer, —

"It is very hot! Come in and rest a little; you must be tired."

The mother looked up doubtfully and

shook her head. "Thank you," she said; "it is hot, but I must go on. I must reach Shio no Yu to-night;" and she struggled forward.

But O Kimi's kindly soul was not content with such refusal. She slipped from the platform into her sandals lying ready on the earth below, and followed the traveler.

"Come in," she said; "please come, for the baby's sake if not for your own. You cannot see how red and hot he is. He will be sick if you carry him farther in this heat. Wait here with me until it's cooler. You can get to Shio no Yu if you start by four o'clock. The moon is full, and you can walk late." O Kimi fairly dragged the little woman back with her to the house, her tired visitor demurring faintly. "Now sit down here and untie the baby, and I will take him. Then you can rest your poor tired feet with some of that hot water over there;" and O Kimi pointed to a steaming, dripping pipe creeping along the perpen-

dicular upper edge of the road,[1] under which tubs were set to catch the leakage.

The tired little mother, in a paroxysm of thanks and expostulations, gave herself up to the kindly solicitude of her hostess. She sat obediently down on the tiny, polished piazza, and untied the band which held the heavy baby to her. O Kimi took him in her arms, hugged him for a moment to her wrinkled breast, then laid him down and watched him with greedy eyes while his mother was washing her face and arms and blistered feet in the steaming hot water across the way.

"When he wakes he shall have a bath too," said the old woman, as the mother, refreshed, came and took her seat on the soft mats of the little house; "but now you must have some tea and a fan, and then, when you are rested, tell me something about yourself, and why you are traveling all alone this way with your baby."

[1] The pipe led the water from hot springs to the baths in the village.

O Kimi bustled off to her kitchen, and soon came back with tea and cake. Then she disappeared again, and after a longer time brought in a second tray with rice-bowl, pickles, fish, and iced vermicelli, all as daintily served as the Empress herself could have wished. "It is a poor meal," she said, with formal self-depreciation. "My husband caught the trout in the river this morning, and the vermicelli is but the O Bon fare. I am sorry that I have nothing better to offer you;" and she bowed low as she set the tray before her guest.

But though the food was dainty, though O Kimi San offered new helpings of rice from the brass-bound wooden bucket with insistent hospitality, the traveler was too tired to eat. She played with her chop-sticks and commented with enthusiastic politeness on the delicacies set before her, but could hardly choke down the last of the rice in her bowl, — an act which etiquette and religion both required of her, — and the fish and vermicelli were left almost

 untouched. Her face was pale, and under her eyes were blue rings. Every movement of the visitor showed that she needed rest more than food. O Kimi's sympathetic heart went out to the poor stranger.

"Here," she said, "lie down beside your baby, and I will hang my large mosquito-net, and you can sleep awhile before you go on. You are too tired to move yet." With gentle insistence she gained her point. The tired mother lay down on the mat beside her sleeping baby, and the great green linen mosquito-netting, hung from the four corners of the room, shut out the hard things of life for a space, leaving the wanderers to the ministration of the green coolness, the soft air, the murmur and rush of the torrent far below them.

O Kimi San continued with her household tasks. She carried out her dishes and trays and rice-bucket to the kitchen, she swept the road in front of the house, and watered it with a dipper from a wooden

pail. She filled the kettle with fresh spring water, and arranged the bits of charcoal in the fire so that they should concentrate their heat at the precise centre of the kettle's bottom. Then she went back to her guests who were sleeping under the mosquito-net, just as the baby opened his eyes and began to whimper. O Kimi went down on her knees and gathered him to her longing heart. "Botchan,"[1] she whispered, and cuddled him and talked to him in the soft baby language until his little hand stole into her bosom, and he began to chatter in reply like a sparrow, looking up into her eyes and laughing with quaint baby humor. He was a fat, sturdy, red-cheeked boy of three, who trotted about the matted floor on chubby brown feet, and laughed and danced when O Kimi brought him a bowl of rice. She fed him with chopsticks, he sitting on his heels facing her solemnly with open mouth like a young bird, and

[1] Literally, "Little Mr. Priest," the universal title of the small boy, probably on account of his shaven head.

 closing mouth and eyes ecstatically when the chopsticks, like the old bird's beak, pushed the food between his lips.

When the tired mother waked at last, O Kimi and the boy were great friends. She had brought a tub of hot water from the pipe across the road, and was taking off his scanty clothing in preparation for the promised bath. He wore only a little cotton kimono, with a diamond-shaped apron of many-colored *to chirimen*, or woolen crape, beneath. Undressing was a small affair, and soon Botchan was sitting in the wooden tub, splashing and chattering like a young duck.

"Such a boy!" said O Kimi San to the mother, who was sitting up now, watching the operations of her hostess. "He is so like my son. It makes me happy to have him near me."

"And your son — where is he?" asked the visitor.

O Kimi San looked straight ahead of her and spoke very softly: "My son has had the

great honor to give himself to the Emperor. Alas! we must light the O Bon lanterns for him to-night" — Her voice broke, and she hid her face behind her sleeve.

The visitor bowed low. "It is sad, and my heart is grieved for you," she said. "To my husband, too, has come such honor. He went down in the Sakura Maru at Port Arthur, and even his body was not found. His spirit, they say, is in the Shokonsha,[1] but" —

The elder woman bowed in her turn in the presence of a grief so like her own, and there was silence for a space. At last she said softly, "How is my heart grieved with your sorrow;" then, her eye resting on Botchan, who was squatting now beside his mother, looking with wondering eyes at his elders, she added comfortingly, "But your boy will grow up to care for you, and to preserve his father's memory."

[1] Literally, "Spirit-Invoking Temple" at Tokyo, whither the spirits of soldiers who die in battle return, and where they live and receive the honor and offerings of their grateful compatriots.

The visitor bowed again. "True, he will care for me when he is grown, but how shall I care for him until he is grown? I am going now to my husband's brother in Shio no Yu, but he is poor, and has many boys of his own, and I do not know whether he will receive me." The woman's voice trembled, and she stopped for a moment, then went on in the curious, even tone which in a Japanese woman betrays deep emotion. "When my husband went, he said to me, 'Suzu, I shall probably die for my country. You must not mourn, you must be glad, and must teach the boy to be glad that his father had so great honor.' And when I said, 'Oh, Yofu, how can I be glad? How can I live? I must kill myself if you are killed,' he answered, 'To kill yourself would not be brave or wise, if by so doing you should leave our boy to starve. If I die, you must live and make a brave man of him.' So I have lived, but it is hard for me. And Botchan is a brave boy, — so brave and so strong. All this

morning as we came up from Nishi Nasuno, he walked by my side, his little hand in mine. Sometimes he would stumble and almost fall, and I would say, 'Botchan is tired, let mamma carry him,' but it was always, 'Botchan is very strong. Mamma is tired.' At noon we stopped to eat our lunch, and when I looked at his feet they were all blistered. I washed them in cold water as we sat beside the road, but when we started out again he could not walk. That is why I carried him. Yes, Botchan is a soldier's son, and he will be a brave man."

Suzu hugged the stolid, chubby baby sitting so solemnly beside her, until he giggled and shouted with delight. "And now, if indeed it must be, we will go, for I must reach Shio no Yu to-night," and Suzu bowed her farewell to O Kimi with many expressions of gratitude for her kindness, while Botchan gravely imitated her prostrations.

"Can't you stay here with me to-night?"

 protested O Kimi. "There is a storm coming. You should not try to brave a storm with that baby." But Suzu was set on her plan, and with a final hug of Botchan as she tied him to his mother's back, O Kimi set them forth upon the road.

"Cross the river about a mile above here where you see a little bridge, then follow the road to the left, and Shio no Yu is about four miles away."

Suzu bowed and smiled, and O Kimi went back to her little house, lonelier than ever for the baby's visit.

There was a muttering of thunder from the hills above, a darkness and stifling stillness in the air. O Kimi looked out uneasily. "It is time Gunkichi was back," she said. "He has been gone all day. If he gets caught across the river, and the storm comes, how will he get home?" But as she was bringing her vague fears to a point by speech, there was a light pat-pat of sandals along the road, and Gunkichi, wrinkled and smiling, with a great bundle

of sprawling, straggling roots upon his back, hailed his old wife with a cheerful greeting.

"It 's very hot," he said, as he dipped his towel into the hot water and washed the streaming perspiration from his face and arms and bare brown legs and feet, "but we are going to have a great storm, and then it will be cool." He laughed and chattered, partly to himself, partly to his wife, and partly to the great gray monkey perched on the tree above him. "Heh! Mr. Monkey," he said, "you are so lazy this hot weather that you don't care for anything. Heh! Mr. Monkey, wake up!" He poked at the humpy fur ball until it turned its red face, grown redder with rage, toward him and chattered viciously. "Now you are awake at last, and I will give you something. Here, mother, will you hand me a cracker for Mr. Monkey?"

O Kimi laughed, and brought him a toasted rice cracker. "Gunkichi," she said, "I believe you try to be a boy just to

 comfort me;" and she looked at him affectionately, but with tears in her eyes.

Gunkichi said nothing. He was apparently absorbed in watching the monkey, who was meditatively crunching the cracker. When he turned again he cleared his throat a little before he went on to tell O Kimi of his day's successes.

Such a day as it had been! He had climbed the Tengu Rock and worshiped at the little shrine of Hachiman, the war-god, on its top, and seen the great black snake who lies always coiled up within the shrine except when the god sends him forth with his messages. Then he had set out in search of roots suitable for his use. For Gunkichi was an artist in roots. His little shop beside O Kimi's kitchen was filled with strange productions of his fancy. By smoothing here and hollowing there, by cunningly reinforcing and adding in another place, by a spot of red or black or white paint judiciously applied, Gunkichi would evolve from the most hopeless-look-

ing roots and snags griffins, *tengus*, devils, monsters of all sorts, which found a ready sale among the summer visitors at the hot baths in the village. As he opened his bundle and drew out his new-found treasures one by one, he discoursed eloquently on the wonderful things that they would become in his hands.

"Look, mother, this will make a grand dragon!" He pulled a long twisted root with many branches from the heap in front of him. "Here is his head now, with horns and wide-open mouth. I will paint his mouth red, and give him two great white eyes. Then when I have soaked his long body in the hot water, and coiled it about, these branches will make his legs, and this long slender one his tail. Perhaps some of the Tokyo people will buy it. I wish the Emperor could see it! I'd give it to him if I could."

He stopped, abashed by the temerity into which his enthusiasm had led him, and added humbly, "But of course it would

 not be worthy," and bowed low at the name that he had invoked.

"Father, you have given to the Emperor the only thing you had to give." There was a pride, carefully veiled, in O Kimi's voice. Gunkichi, who had by this time slipped out of his sandals and seated himself on the mats, turned his head aside and vigorously rubbed his face with his blue-and-white towel.

Just then the storm broke. With vivid lightning, a crash of thunder, and the roaring as of a waterspout, it rushed down the mountain gorge. O Kimi San drew the outer rain-doors of the house, sliding them along their grooves on a full run. The monkey, a moment before a motionless ball of gray fur on the top of his perch, scuttled down, with much angry chattering and rattling of his chain, into his little house. They were none too soon, for the rain, like a solid column of water, was rushing and swirling about them, the river foaming and roaring beneath, almost before O Kimi

and Gunkichi could fasten the house se- 21
curely. Then O Kimi stirred about the kitchen preparing supper, while Gunkichi smoked thoughtfully in the shuttered twilight of the little guest-room.

As O Kimi brought in the tray and the rice-bucket, she suddenly bethought herself of her visitor. "Ma!" she exclaimed. "Poor Suzu! I wonder where she is now!"

"What Suzu?" asked Gunkichi.

Then Kimi told him all the story of her afternoon, and of how Suzu had left the house only just before he came home.

"If she got across the bridge before the storm came, she will be safe," said Gunkichi; "but if she tries to cross it in the storm, she may be carried away with it."

There was nothing to be done. Supper cleared away, the old couple sat and talked. Once or twice O Kimi tried to light the O Bon lanterns, but with a swirl and a rush the wind blowing through the funnel-like gorge extinguished them each time. She

was perturbed, and a look of fear came into her eyes, a wail into her voice. "It will be dark for him, and he will think we have forgotten him! Gunkichi, what shall we do?"

Gunkichi answered her gently, "Our Taro knows we would not forget him. He knows that we would light the lanterns for him if we could, but the wind-gods will not let us. You have set the food and trimmed the light before the spirit altar. He has been away so short a time, he cannot lose his way home, even if there is no light outside."

"If I could only open the *amado* a crack so that he could come through," O Kimi moaned, and pushed the shutter aside a little. But the howling wind filled the house, and shook the flimsy structure as a terrier shakes a rat. Both tugged together to close the door again, and then sat down in the darkness, for the wind had put out their light. Only the tiny lamp before the spirit altar continued to burn. It flickered

in the searching wind, and threw strange creeping shadows on the walls.

And then there came a cry, a wail of terror from the stream below. Gunkichi started up. "What 's that? Some one is in trouble in the river!" He threw open the *amado*, and the wind and rain nearly took his breath away. He felt the road with his bare foot. It was a running torrent, but he stepped in, and out from the shelter of the roof. The wind took him and pinned him fast against a rock, while the pouring rain nearly drowned him. He could see the river by the pale light of the full moon behind the clouds. It was boiling white among the great black rocks far below, and he knew that to reach its level in the wind and rain would be useless. Spent and water-soaked, he crawled back at last to the house.

All night the wind blew, the thunder roared, and the rain fell in torrents; but when morning came the clouds cleared away, the wind blew fair, the sun shone,

 and every rock and leaf and twig seemed new-created after the storm.

Gunkichi started out early, to go up the river and see what had happened in the night. "If I can get across, I will go to Shio no Yu and see if Suzu reached there safely," he said, as he tied on his sandals.

O Kimi set about her household tasks. She was thinking a great deal about her own Taro, and then, again, of Suzu and her little Botchan. Her heart ached to hold the chubby baby form close to her breast, to put food between the soft baby lips, to hear the cooing baby voice; and somehow Taro and Botchan seemed to mingle in her mind until she felt that yesterday she had held her own boy in her arms, and then had sent him away into the storm with an unknown woman.

She was sitting at her sewing, looking from time to time out into the road, her eyes dim and misty, and with an occasional tear dropping upon the blue cotton of Gun-

kichi's new blouse. Did she see aright, or was that mist before her eyes deceiving her? There was a great black snake gliding down the road! She rubbed her eyes and looked. Never had she seen such a snake. He was eight feet long or more, and of ample girth, and his black, scaly body glistened in the sunshine. He came on to the little rest-house, and paused before it, lifted his head, and waved it back and forth, raising it higher and higher until his gleaming eyes looked over the edge of the piazza right at O Kimi San.

"It is the messenger of Hachiman," whispered O Kimi, and prostrated herself in reverence, face down upon the mats. She raised her head, the snake was still looking at her. Again she bowed, and when she looked up there was still that shining waving head with the glittering eyes fixed full upon her. Once more O Kimi bowed low, and in her heart was a prayer to Hachiman that he would call his dread messenger back to his shrine. When

 she lifted her head, no snake was there, but there was a slight rustle on the side of the Tengu Rock, and O Kimi knew that her petition had been answered.

"Did he send a message to me?" she thought. And then, in spite of her grief and perturbation, she laughed at the audacity of her question. "Of course he had no message for me. I am too low a person to have a message from a god." She went back to her sewing, her hand shaking a little and her eyes dimmer than ever. Presently she looked up, brushing her hand across her eyes as she did so. Would wonders never cease? What was coming along the road now?

He looked very small, and very fat, and very bullet-headed, as he walked nonchalantly along against a background of towering cliffs, waving trees, and blue, white-flecked sky. He was dressed in a small diamond of bright-colored cloth tied over his fat stomach, and he carried in one hand a stick, while the other was crumpled tightly

about a struggling, gauzy insect. When he saw the rest-house standing by the road he crowed merrily, and hastened his steps. O Kimi could hardly believe her eyes. It was Suzu's Botchan coming back to her! All the love and longing of her bereaved soul went out to the brave baby marching serenely toward her.

"O kaeri!"[1] she called out, afraid that he might go by her and out of her life again. The baby stopped at the familiar voice, stood motionless a moment regarding her, then bowed solemnly and nearly double.

"Tadaima,"[2] he responded gravely, then toddled toward her holding out his doubled fist, in which was firmly clenched a dragon-fly. "My horse," he explained cheerfully. "If I had a long thread, I would harness him." He caracoled ponderously on his small chubby feet. "I am a soldier just come home from the war!"

[1] "Honorable return," the greeting to a returning guest or member of the household.

[2] "Just now," the conventional reply to the greeting.

"Mamma's soldier boy!" said O Kimi in a rapture. "Come in, and we will tie up the horse and give the soldier some rice."

She seized him in her arms and hugged him, then carried him across the way to the hot water pipe, where she washed the mud from his little bare feet before setting him down on her clean mats.

He pointed with delight to the rude semblances of animals before the spirit altar. "Taro's horses!" he shouted, and clapped his chubby hands.

O Kimi looked at him with a curious awe. How could he know that those things were set out for her Taro's spirit? He was such a baby, he could not have listened to their talk of yesterday. She questioned him: "Where did you come from, Botchan? Where is mamma?"

He looked at her, puzzled. "You are mamma," he said. "Taro come home from war."

She spoke very gently, half afraid at his strangeness. "But, Botchan, don't you

remember mamma, who brought you here yesterday? Where is she?"

His baby face quivered, and he looked woebegone at her obtuseness. "Taro can't remember yesterday," he whimpered; "Taro come home to mamma."

O Kimi hugged him close. "Never mind, Botchan," she said; "sit here a minute and grandma will get you some breakfast."

"Not grandma, mamma," insisted Botchan, his round mouth puckering.

"Kimi! Kimi!" sounded Gunkichi's voice up the road. O Kimi slipped into her sandals, and ran to him as he came toward her on a trot. He was breathless with excitement. "O Suzu San's body is on the rocks, way down below the bridge! She must have tried to cross after the storm broke!"

"Poor thing! Poor thing!" wailed O Kimi. "I should never have let her go! And now Botchan" —

"Botchan must have been drowned too," interrupted Gunkichi, anxious to tell

all he knew. "His dress was still tied fast to his mother's back; so he fell and went down with her, that is certain. Then he was washed down by the current. Poor baby! They will find his body farther down the stream."

"Father," said O Kimi in an awe-stricken voice, "the baby is in our house. I was getting him some rice when you called me."

"Impossible, Kimi. If he went down with his mother, he must surely have been drowned. Why, she was held fast, head downward against a rock, and both must have been drowned as they fell."

"Gunkichi," — O Kimi's voice was low and solemn, — "there is something very strange that I must tell you before we go back and look at the baby. Sit down here and cool yourself, and listen."

They sat down at the edge of the road, out of sight of the little house, while O Kimi told her story. She told of Hachiman's messenger, and of how he stopped

and looked at her, and how she bowed three times and asked Hachiman to take him away. "I think, Gunkichi, that he really brought a message, and that Hachiman was pleased with your visit yesterday to his shrine. For then the baby came, and what do you think he had in his hand? A dragon-fly! and he said it was his horse!"

Gunkichi sat up, excited. "I have heard that dragon-flies are horses' spirits!" he said.

"That is one of the strange things," answered O Kimi; "and then he told me he was a soldier just come home from the war. I thought he was playing, and played with him, but when I brought him into the house, he went right to the spirit altar, and when he saw the animals he clapped his hands and said, 'Taro's horses!' Then I began to wonder. How did he know about Taro? How did he know those things were set out for him? So then I questioned him about his mother, and he said I was his mother. He could n't

 remember yesterday, only that he was a soldier just come back from the war. He nearly cried when I called myself grandma. 'Not grandma, mamma,' he insisted. Gunkichi, what does it all mean? You say that the child was surely drowned, but he is here, or rather, his body is here, but his spirit is changed. Hachiman has sent us back our Taro. He gave his body in the war, and now Hachiman has let him enter a new body so that he could comfort us."

Gunkichi was doubtful. He had heard that such things used to happen, but every instance that he had ever heard of was at least a hundred years old. Things were different in those days. This was Meiji, the Era of Enlightenment, and though strange things were still happening daily, they were not of just this kind. There were two persons who must be consulted before they could be quite sure what to do. One was the policeman at the far end of the village, the other was the parish priest.

He explained this to O Kimi, in whose mind no shadow of doubt now existed, and while she hastened home to feed and fondle her baby, he walked along to the police station. There, after bowing low and offering many polite excuses for troubling his excellency, he told the whole story to the dignified little man in his white, new-style uniform. The policeman listened with interest, making notes the while in his little book. Then he sallied forth, taking with him Gunkichi and a number of the villagers, to study the situation. Poor Suzu's body was first recovered, and the opinion of the villagers, indorsed by the policeman, was that the baby must have fallen with his mother, and been washed out of his lashings and his kimono in the boiling current. How he could have lived through it, no one could understand.

"And may we keep the baby, your honor?" said Gunkichi appealingly.

"If, when I have investigated, I find that the brother at Shio no Yu does not

 want him, I think you can keep him," was the guarded reply.

With many bows of deep respect, and effusive thanks for the hope held forth, Gunkichi parted from the officer, and took his way toward the village temple. It was a great, old, shabby sanctuary, with wide-eaved curving roof of blackened thatch, and two stone statues of Jizo, buried almost to the eyes in pebbles, sitting in mild serenity outside the gate. Gunkichi stooped and threw a stone to each as he passed in, murmuring a prayer to the gentle guardian of the children's ghosts, and thinking the while of the poor baby's spirit, wandering beside the river of death. He stood beside the veranda of the priest's house that adjoined the temple, and lifted up his voice in the polite "Excuse me for troubling you," that announces the presence of a guest. The old priest came himself to greet him and bid him come in. Gunkichi bowed and bowed, but remained humbly without, and told once more his story. It was

spiritual enlightenment that he wanted. Might he and O Kimi believe that their Taro's spirit, coming that first night of the Feast of the Dead to visit his parents, had found the baby's body lying where the river had tossed it, and entered in, through the favor of Hachiman? He gave all the quaint bits of evidence, the coming of the messenger, the dragon-fly in the baby's hand ("You know our Taro and his horse were found shot down together," explained Gunkichi with some pride), the child's use of the name Taro, his reiteration of the fact that he was a soldier, his insistence that O Kimi was his mother.

The priest listened with reverent interest. "My son," he said, "it is plain that you and O Kimi San have been blessed by a miracle. The gods have seen your kindness to the poor traveler, your worship of the great Hachiman, your patience under your loss. And they have vouchsafed to you this wonderful thing. Without doubt the spirit of your own Taro has come back

 to you clothed in the body of poor Suzu's baby. Give thanks to Hachiman, whose messenger brought you your son again."

Gunkichi fell on hands and knees upon the pebbled walk, and laid his forehead to the ground. "Reverend priest," he said, "since the gods have indeed condescended to grant so great a gift to our unworthiness, we would show our gratitude by some offering. What humble thing may we do?"

And the priest made answer, "Upon the river bank, close to the spot where Suzu's body was found, build ye a shrine to the memory of her and of her child. And at the full moon carry thither, you and Kimi and Taro, offerings of food and wine to their spirits. And each year, when the O Bon feast comes round, hang there a lantern and erect a spirit altar, so that when they return they may not be lonely, but may join in the good cheer of the festival. And teach Taro, and bid him teach his children and his children's children, that the shrine is holy, and that they must continue through-

out their generations the monthly and the yearly offerings. For by the death of Suzu and her baby your family is continued, and your spirits shall be loved and tended. Therefore, so long as your generations continue must they love and tend the spirits of Suzu and her son."

Gunkichi lifted his forehead from the earth. "Surely," he said, "we and our children and our children's children will pay honor to the spirits of the mother and her child." Then with grateful words of farewell he went back, subdued and thoughtful, to his home.

Up and down the road in the bright sunshine galloped little Taro, driving his great dragon-fly attached by a thread to a long bamboo stick. "O uma!" (horse!), he shouted gleefully when he saw Gunkichi. "O Totchan! O uma!" (Papa, horse!) O Kimi had hunted out from her iron-bound chest of drawers a tiny blue-and-white kimono, in which she had enveloped his chubby body, and she sat, the

picture of cheer and happiness, watching his play, and working, when she could take her greedy eyes away from him, upon another small garment ready cut upon her lap. When she saw Gunkichi she called out, "Father, his excellency has been here again, and he says we may keep the baby. The man at Shio no Yu does n't want him. His honor said for you to come and register at the police station. Please go quickly."

Gunkichi pattered eagerly away; Taro played on in the sunny road; O Kimi San sat and crooned a nursery song as she worked on the little garment; and in the shrine of Hachiman, on the top of the Tengu Rock, a great black snake, coiled in the damp coolness, awaited another message from the god.

II

AT THE SHRINE OF FUDŌ

II

IT had come at last. Torao had been wondering all day how he should tell his mother. The reserve regiment of which he was a member had been ordered to the front, and he must go day after to-morrow. As he whirled homeward through the Tokyo streets, his fast-trotting kuruma-ya rushing headlong into the crowds with loud shouts of "He! He!" he looked straight in front of him with knitted brows and unseeing eyes, hoping one moment that she had not yet returned from her visit to her sister, the next, that she would be waiting for him, and that he could see her at once and have it over.

He had passed through the thronged avenues of Uyeno Park, now in its full glory of cherry blossoms, and was winding along the narrow lanes of the Negishi

 quarter, and he had not yet decided whether it would be best to tell her to-night, or to let her have one more night of rest and happiness without knowing what the future had in store for her. He did not think of himself at all. All his life he had hoped, and for months he had expected, that he would have his chance to serve the Emperor, and if so it should be ordained, to die in that service. Now that the time had come and he was called, if he had thought of himself at all, it would have been with the exaltation that comes from the near fulfillment of a high destiny. Nor did Fuyu, his young wife, add greatly to the burden of his mind. She loved him, to be sure, with a supreme devotion that would give him her very soul, if need be; a love to which he responded with the condescending though sincere affection that Japanese husbands are apt to bestow on their wives. But when he thought of her, it was with a calmness that could reason out her future and derive a comfort that

was almost satisfaction from the forward look. If he should fall, and their child, whom he might never see, should live, Fuyu would find a hope and pleasure in its existence that would go far toward cheering her life. If, through some mischance, their baby should not live, Fuyu would then be free to return to her father's house. She was young, she could begin life anew, and might in the future become again a happy wife and the mother of children.

But his mother,—his brows knitted more closely,—she was old; she had reached the age of rest and freedom from care, after a long life of labor and sorrow. His mind ran back to those days, long ago, when in her early widowhood, ruined in estate by the same war that had taken her husband from her, she had been father and mother, comrade and friend, to his babyhood. How long the days seemed when she was away at the government school in which she earned, by eight hours of absence from her

 home and her baby, the pittance that kept them both alive! Kind old Bāya, the nurse and general servant, would while away the time for the little fellow as best she could, by songs and stories, by taking him out for long walks to see the temples and the shops and the flowers, — walks so long that sometimes his feet would falter and fail, and she would have to pick him up and carry him on her back, holding his dirty little clogs in her hand so that they should not soil her dress.

Bāya was kind and amusing, and a very comfortable person for a small boy to depend upon, but she was not his mother, and so he was lonely all those days, and only at night did he feel that he was really satisfied. For when she came home from her long hours of work, what a wonderful coziness the little house took on suddenly! He would watch for her every night in the front room, and when he heard her clogs stop at the lattice, he would bounce quickly out and fling it open

wide, and shout "O kaeri!" and seize her bundle of books and pull her into the house. And they had such good times together. She was never too sad or too tired or too busy to listen with the most absorbed interest to the story of his day, to laugh at the funny paper toys he brought home to her for *o mi age*,[1] to explain to him all the strange things that he had seen, and to cuddle him and make much of him until at last, when Bāya had spread the beds upon the floor and he had crept into his, the dim light of the *andon*[2] would shine upon his mother's face close beside him, the last and loveliest object upon which his sleepy eyes rested.

Torao shut his eyes now to call up again that face of his childhood, — smooth, oval, with velvet eyes and firm, beautiful lips that flashed from their wonted seriousness into the most brilliant of smiles in response to

[1] The present given to one who stays at home by a member of the family returning from a pleasure trip.

[2] The paper lantern used as a night light.

 his baby wit or awkward boyish affection. The abundant hair grew to a little point on the low, broad forehead, and was combed smoothly back and cut short at the nape of the neck, the cropped ends held in place by a clasp.

"Poor mother," said Torao, thinking of the many years that she had worn this sign of her widowhood, nor knew that he had spoken until the kurumaya in the shafts turned his head over his shoulder as he ran, to inquire, "Did the master speak?"

With an impatient phrase he answered the man, but the vision of his early boyhood had faded from his mind, and in its place was the little, worn, tired mother of to-day. The smooth, oval face was lined and hollow-cheeked, the soft, deep eyes were dim, the abundant black hair was thin and iron-gray, the sweet mouth, with its soft curves, had taken on an expression of resignation and patient endurance, — signs of the prolonged toil and continual

self-sacrifice by means of which she had managed to educate her son, until at last, in a good position in the Bank of Japan, he was giving back to her in her old age something of the care and service with which she had surrounded his boyhood.

Since his marriage, less than a year ago, the mother had become Go Inkyo Sama, "the honorable retired one," and free from the cares which had been her lot for thirty years, she lived in her own portion of her son's house, honored and beloved by her son and her daughter-in-law. Instead of the long days at school, she could devote her time to visiting her friends or receiving them in her own rooms. There was now abundant leisure for days at the theatre, for attendance at the temple festivals, for excursions to the parks and gardens to see the flowers as they came into bloom in the orderly procession of the seasons.

Torao, even as he groaned inwardly over the sorrow that must come to darken these sunny days of old age, could not but smile

as he thought how difficult it had been for his mother to acquire the rest habit. It was hard for her, who had waited upon herself and her son for thirty years, to sit still and let Fuyu do the little things that were now her care. From early morning, when the *amado* were to be opened and the house made ready for the day, till bedtime, when the *futons*[1] must be spread on the floor and the night lights lighted behind their white paper shades, O Fuyu needed to be brisk indeed, if she would attend to her work before Go Inkyo Sama could attempt it. And as for the visits and festivities which Torao had hoped that his mother would enjoy in the freedom of her new position, she had so long been forced to leave her home each day, whether she would or no, that to her there seemed no pleasure comparable to sitting down with O Fuyu when the morning work was done, and sewing, chatting, reading, writing, and smoking tiny pipefuls of tobacco from time to time, through the

[1] The heavy quilts used in making a Japanese bed.

pleasant, restful days. And now the prospect of a grandchild had made her so solicitous for O Fuyu's health that she had taken almost the entire work of the house upon herself, so that Torao had been driven to add to the family a little girl to wait upon his mother; and O Kō San, a child of fourteen, neat, smiling, slender, and most anxious to learn the polite ways of the gentry, had been imported from their native province to save Go Inkyo Sama from her own zeal.

The high, breathless "O kaeri!" of the kurumaya, as he dashed in at the gate, roused Torao from his reverie. Panting and dripping, hat in hand and blue wing-sleeves rolled to the shoulder, the kurumaya bent double beside the little carriage as his master stepped to the ground. There was a pattering of feet within the house, and as Torao sat to let the man unlace his shoes, — for he wore his business dress with all its foreign accompaniments, — O Kō San slid open the *shoji* and prostrated herself face

 downward in the vestibule, murmuring her "O kaeri!"

"Has my mother returned?" he asked.

O Kō San lifted her head and bowed again. "Go Inkyo Sama returned not half an hour ago, and is now awaiting the master in her room. She brought many gifts home from her sister's."

"Torao," — it was O Fuyu now who was bowing and smiling with the pleasure of his return and of the gifts that Go Inkyo Sama had brought, — "Torao, forgive me that I was not at the door to meet you, but mother has just returned and I was with her."

She looked up at him after her low bow, and caught from his face some premonition of the coming sorrow. "Oh, Torao! What is it? What has happened? Why do you look so strange?"

His voice was gentle as he answered her, "Come, we will go to mother's room, and there we can talk it all over." There was no question now of when or how he

should tell the news. Certainty was better than the fear that came into O Fuyu's eyes when she saw his face.

Go Inkyo Sama was sitting in her room, surrounded by the presents that her sister had heaped upon her after the all-day visit she had been trying so long to make. The great box of cake, the bolt of soft gray silk, the wooden case containing a rare curio, each wrapped neatly about with a sheet of white paper, tied with red-and-white strings, and adorned with a *noshi*,[1] relieved the spotless simplicity of the matted room, giving it almost a furnished aspect. The old lady sat by the *hibachi*,[2] for the day was cool with the damp chilliness of the springtime, and with tiny pipe in hand was taking her comfort in a leisurely smoking bout while she awaited her son's return.

"O kaeri," she said, as he and Fuyu en-

[1] A bit of bright-colored paper folded about a strip of seaweed and slipped under the string of a present.

[2] The fire-pot used for heating purposes in a Japanese house.

 tered, and it was only after his face was lifted from the bow with which he responded "Tadaima," that she could see the cloud upon it.

"Mother," he said, and he paused a moment.

"Yes, my son." The look of patient endurance that the years had taught her was behind the caressing smile that always came to her lips when she spoke to him.

"Mother," he began again; then with a plunge, "I have been ordered to the front. I must go the day after to-morrow."

Even Torao's years of closest intimacy with his mother had not prepared him for the change that swept across the gentle, refined old face. It was as if a light had been suddenly lighted from within; as if the faith and patience of a lifetime had been at last crowned by fulfillment. She bowed in reverence, her face between her hands upon the matted floor.

"How great is the honor vouchsafed to us by our lord the Emperor!" she mur-

mured softly,— "to us, who have waited all these years to make atonement!"

Torao listened in amazement. O Fuyu at the threshold bowed in grief and awe, while little O Kō San in the passage beyond snuffled audibly as she crouched with her nose flattened against the polished floor. Go Inkyo Sama lifted her head at last. Her eyes were bright and tearless, her withered cheeks slightly reddened with the excitement.

"Listen," she said, "and I will tell you. You know about the troubled times after the foreigners began to come into the country, when the Tokugawa house had fallen. His Majesty was hardly more than a boy, and none knew who were the friends and who the enemies of the Son of Heaven.[1] Your father believed that the great Saigo was right when he withdrew to Kagoshima and took up arms against the new party that had surrounded the Emperor, that had

[1] Go Inkyo Sama refers to the famous Satsuma Rebellion of 1877.

drilled a heimin[1] army, that would take from the samurai the prerogatives that they had held for a thousand years. He believed that Saigo was right, that the Emperor was listening to evil councilors, — and he died fighting to restore the older councilors to their places, and to give back to his own class their ancient privileges. But after it was all over, and he had yielded up his life for his cause and the great Saigo lay dead upon the field, we who remained, and who suffered more than those who gave their lives in battle, learned little by little how blind had been the fight against the will of the Emperor, against the Era of Enlightenment and all it means to Japan. And when at last I knew, I desired most of all, Torao, that you should give to the Emperor and to Japan your life as an atonement for your father's mistake. You are going, by the grace of his Majesty, to the front. Do not forget that your father's spirit has through

[1] The common people, as distinguished from the military or samurai class.

all these years been waiting for you to make his atonement."

Her voice, which had been throughout her long speech curiously monotonous and inexpressive, so carefully had she maintained her self-control under the strong emotion that possessed her, died away, and she bowed once more to the floor.

"Mother," said Torao, "I am thankful. It was of you and of your grief in losing me that I thought as I came home. But if to you my going is the fulfillment of a lifelong hope, then I go gladly, and my father shall see that his atonement is made. The Son of Heaven himself has said, 'Duty is heavier than a mountain, while death is lighter than a feather.'[1] If I do my duty, my death is nothing to be mourned."

Little O Fuyu, lonely and desolate in the presence of the rapt exaltation of mother and son, was shaking now with the sobs that she could no longer control. The sun of her life seemed to be setting, and here

[1] From the Imperial rescript to the soldiers.

 were these two talking of hopes fulfilled, of honor, of atonement, of duty and death, with no word for her, or for the dear baby whose life and well-being had seemed until now of such consequence to the whole household. At the sound of her sobs Torao turned to where she sat humbly behind him close to the threshold.

"Fuyu," he said gently, "do not grieve. Mother will take care of you and you of her, and soon you will be happy with our baby to live for. I should not be worthy to be a father if I were not glad to make atonement for my father's error. And if I come back, how proud you will be to show me the little one! Remember you are a samurai and the wife of a samurai, and soon to be the mother of a samurai," and he patted her shoulder gently.

"Poor little O Fuyu San." Go Inkyo Sama's voice was very tender. "I know how hard it is. I am old now, and this life and the next are very close together. That is why I can let Torao go without a tear.

But when I let my husband go, it was different. Life was long then, and I could not look forward to it without him. It has been long, but it has been lived, and the happiness after all has been more than the sorrow. Oh, Fuyu, we women must bear things bravely when they come to us, for courage is in itself happiness."

O Fuyu lifted her pretty face from behind her sleeves and bowed humbly. "I was wrong, mother, to weep. I will be brave now," she said simply, and even as she spoke, she forced her trembling lips to smile.

"There speaks a daughter of the samurai!" Go Inkyo Sama smiled approvingly. "And now, if Torao is so soon to leave us, we must prepare all festival dishes for to-morrow. Call O Kō San, and we will make some plans."

So ended the dreaded interview, and Torao retired from his mother's presence to the refreshment of a hot bath and the loose Japanese garments, while the women

 turned their thoughts from the burden of great emotions to the restful details of petty household arrangements.

In the bustle of the morrow, when friends came and went all day making farewell visits, when there were all the preparations for departure to be made and all the arrangements for the little household in its master's absence, Go Inkyo Sama and O Fuyu San were calm, collected, smiling. They set before each guest a tray of festival food. They chatted and bowed and received with every sign of complete satisfaction the conventional congratulations upon the honor that had come to them. They acted their parts in a way worthy of their pride of race. And though, when it was all over, and the *amado* closed for the night, O Fuyu could no longer control herself, and retired, for lack of a better place in the small house, to the clothes-closet, there to pour out her soul in tears, Torao, when he found her, a forlorn, crouching, shaking heap, had no word of blame for her

weakness, but drew her out and comforted her, and brought back to her face at last a damp and precarious smile.

In the gray of the morning they were all astir, and before the day had fairly dawned the kuruma, with Tetsu standing beside it hat in hand, was ready at the door. There were no tears, or sighs, or kisses; but followed by many bows and tender smiles and low-breathed "Sayo naras," Torao passed out through the little lattice door and became a part of the great war.

It was then that O Fuyu's nerve gave way, and all day long Go Inkyo Sama and O Kō San worked over her and petted her and comforted her; and when night came and she was tucked away among the *futons*, she slept at last, worn out with grief, nor knew anything more until the sound of opening *amado* roused her and O Kō San from their slumbers in the chill before dawn. O Kō San bounded to her feet to see Go Inkyo Sama, lantern in hand, wear-

ing the conventional dress of ceremony, pattering along the stone-paved walk to the street. Where was she going? and at such an hour!

Shivering and frightened, O Fuyu San and O Kō San dressed and set the house to rights, although it was only four o'clock, then sat and awaited the old lady's return. They talked in a desultory way of the war, of the sufferings of the soldiers, of the ferocity and stupidity of the Russians, and in the intervals of silence O Fuyu surreptitiously wiped the tears from her eyes.

At last, about seven o'clock, when they were beginning to be worried about her strange absence, Go Inkyo Sama came. She was smiling and serene, but her worn face looked more worn, her slender shrunken body more slender and shrunken. In response to their eager questioning, she told them of her early morning visit to the shrine of Fudō.[1]

[1] The Buddhist God of Wisdom. His name means "The Immovable."

"It is time for me to pray," she said simply, "and Fudō Sama is wise and powerful. We all need strength and courage, — Torao and you, little O Fuyu San, and I, so I shall ask it for us all every day."

In the months that followed, Go Inkyo Sama never failed to rise at four, and after a complete ceremonial cleansing in cold water, to walk the three miles to the Fudō shrine, offer there her prayer, and return in time for the day's work, whatever it might prove to be. When letters began to come from Torao, and he told of his life at Port Arthur and of the terrible sufferings and great courage and enthusiasm of the soldiers, Go Inkyo Sama added to her daily prayer for her own a petition for all the soldiers of Nippon, and threw herself with feverish energy into the relief work for the families left at home. When, in July, the baby came, — a sturdy brown boy, so like his father that he gave new courage and hope to mother and grandmother alike, she took him as a direct answer to her

prayers, and grew stronger than ever in her faith. To the whole of the sad little household the baby was a joy and a delight. "Gunjiri" (Soldier Boy), they called him while they waited for the true name that his father should send him when they had had time to hear from him; and the pet name clung even after the baby had been formally carried to the temple and presented to the tutelar god of the parish under his real name of Heitaro.

The days were never too long for Go Inkyo Sama and O Fuyu San, even though they began at four o'clock, for there was always something to do, and the baby furnished an unfailing subject of care and conversation. When O Kō San carried him out to walk tied to her back, the bereaved mother and grandmother would sit at home and talk about his present charms, his future greatness, what his father would say when he saw him, while their busy fingers flew over stockings that they were knitting for the hard winter that

the soldiers had ahead of them in Manchuria, or on the sewing of hospital kimonos or clothes for the orphaned children, or some other work of helpfulness for those who were suffering for the country.

But when the baby came home, his little black slits of eyes usually tightly closed, his head atilt like a sleepy flower on his slender neck, there was a great rush to take him from O Kō San's back, to hug him and cuddle him and make much of him, and Go Inkyo Sama was almost jealous of O Fuyu because it was to her at last that he must go for food. But as she sat and watched the little mother, and saw the ineffable tenderness of motherhood steal into the girlish face, her heart would lose its soreness, and she would feel once more Torao's baby head pillowed on her own breast.

"It is what we are glad to give our lives for, is n't it Fuyu?" she would say; and Fuyu would smile and answer shyly, "It is, indeed!"

The long walks, even in the cool mornings of the hot summer days, seemed to tell a little upon Go Inkyo Sama. She grew more delicate, more worn, as her sweet old face grew more ethereal. O Fuyu, young and inexperienced as she was, watched the change with anxiety, but could do nothing.

"Mother," she said one day, "do you feel quite well? Are n't you tiring yourself with your long days and your hard work?"

"Fuyu, can we speak of being tired when we know what our soldiers are doing?" was all the answer that the old lady would give.

"But, mother, Torao told me to take care of you," persisted the little wife.

"Yes, child, I know, but we must do what we can for the brave men at the front, and for the little ones they have left behind."

Go Inkyo Sama's eyes wandered lovingly to the brown baby lying asleep on

his quilt close beside her, one crumpled rose-leaf hand, palm upward, thrust outside his wrapping. She leaned over and patted him, and a tear fell and splashed on his unconscious cheek, — a tear that Fuyu could not see.

As the autumn came on, and the mornings grew colder, there was no relaxation of Go Inkyo Sama's austerities. Every morning, long before day, after the cold water purification, she trotted shivering through the sleeping streets to the temple of her devotion, offered her prayer, and returned, sometimes too tired to eat the warm soup and rice which O Fuyu San set before her. But she was never too tired for the long day of work, for a smile or a pleasant word to her daughter and to O Kō San, for a hug and a pat to the baby, who grew stronger and redder-cheeked every day.

Torao's letters came regularly, telling not much about what was being accomplished, but something of how they lived and how they fought, and what they hoped and

prayed might come from the daily sacrifice of lives offered gladly for the Emperor. Go Inkyo Sama read them again and again, sometimes aloud to O Fuyu San, sometimes alone in her room with streaming eyes. "I will do my best," he wrote, "and you must not grieve if I change into a spirit at Port Arthur. Even though my perishable body may nevermore be seen in this world, I shall not forget 'loyalty to our Emperor for seven lives.'"

By the end of October the weather had grown cold and bleak; the early morning walk was taken through dark and silent streets with the aid of a bobbing paper lantern.

"Let O Kō San go with you," pleaded O Fuyu San.

"No, child, let O Kō San do her duty, this is mine;" and Go Inkyo Sama set forth alone in the darkness.

Along the entrance-way to the great temple, between the rows of shuttered booths that all the day long were gay with

toys and notions, and thronged by purchasers, she passed to the heavy gateway on either side of which the gigantic figures of the Two Kings[1] glowered and writhed behind their bars. The dying moon cast strange shadows, the sweeping curves of the temple roof hung over the great lacquered pillars and the dark spaces between. She paused before the shrine where Fudō, the immovable, encircled by flames and carrying in his hands the sword and the robe of justice, sat enthroned. As she knelt with bowed head, closed eyes, and rosary rubbed between her folded palms, chanting in subdued tones the invocation, her whole soul went out in the prayer that Fudō, the immovably just and wise, might grant to her the wish of her heart. She knelt longer than usual, in an ecstasy of devotion, and when she reached home at last, it seemed to poor little anxious O Fuyu

[1] Ni-ō, or "Two Kings," Indra and Brahma, who keep guard at the outer gates of Buddhist temples to scare away demons.

 San that she looked so frail, so ethereal, that the worn body could scarcely do the will of the lofty spirit that was driving it on.

Go Inkyo Sama hardly tasted her breakfast, though O Fuyu San served it daintily and urged the old lady to eat. At last the young wife retired sorrowfully with the tray and the rice-bucket, handed them to O Kō San in the kitchen, and stopped a few moments in her own room to look after little Heitaro, asleep on his quilt in the corner. As she bent over him she heard Go Inkyo Sama call, —

"Fuyu, come quickly! I must tell you something."

O Fuyu slid open the door, and crouched at the threshold of the mother's room.

"Here I am, mother; what is it?"

Go Inkyo Sama's face was very pale her eyes were bright, her breath came quickly. "O Fuyu, my prayer is granted. Torao will come home again to you and the baby. All these months I have prayed to Fudō Sama that he would let me die

in Torao's place, and to-day the time has come."

She fell forward as she spoke and said no more. O Fuyu did all she could. She put her to bed with O Kō San's aid, and sent for the doctor, the relatives, the near friends. All day there was coming and going at the little house, and Go Inkyo Sama lay breathing faintly. At midnight there came a change. The unconscious face was suddenly transfigured by a radiant smile, and she sat up and spoke, knowing no one of all the weeping relatives who knelt about her.

"Torao, come with me!" she said, and that was all.

Next day the great white lanterns[1] were hung before the door, and little O Fuyu San offered the daily and hourly honors of food and incense to the brave spirit that had passed so suddenly from sight. "How

[1] White lanterns are hung before the door of a house where a death has taken place, much as crape or black ribbon is used with us.

 can I ever tell Torao?" she said to herself again and again, while the tears flowed unchecked, for there was no one to be made sadder by her grief.

On the steep slope of a beleaguered Russian fortress, mingled with heaps of dead and dying, lay Torao, breathing faintly through that long October day. Above him shrieked and roared the shells of both sides, about him fell from time to time stray bullets, but his ears were dull, his eyes dim. The sun went down, the search-lights from the forts played over the ghastly scene, the firing never ceased, and still he lay unconscious of it all.

Then, from out the far distance, — a distance of hundreds of miles, it seemed, and of years too remote for memory's reach, — there came to him a voice.

"Torao," it said, "come with me."

Slowly the languid eyes opened. A light that was neither search-light nor rocket, but a clear, steady, bluish flame, was mov-

ing toward him. Lazily he watched it, then sat up with a start. Was he dreaming, or was he dying? How could she be here on this ghastly field of death? For there before him was the beautiful young face of his boyhood; not worn or lined, but smooth and fair and oval, the sweet lips smiling, the velvet eyes searching through all that horrible place for him.

"Torao, come," she said; and at the word, wounded, weak, bleeding, amid the glare of search-lights, the hail of bullets, the boom of guns, Torao rose to his feet, staggered forward, following the guidance of his mother's voice, and fell at last, safe from danger, behind the shelter of an abandoned trench.

There they found him in the morning with a great hole in his side, but still alive. When, two weeks later, there came to him in the hospital at Dalny O Fuyu's letter telling him of his mother's death, he knew, even as she had known, how Fudō answers prayer.

III

THE BLUE FLAME

The incident of this story is connected with the disastrous "snow-march" of February, 1901, when the Japanese army was testing its ability to meet Siberian winter conditions.

III

IT had been snowing for weeks in the province of Aomori, and the little city was almost hidden under drifts. The mud-walled, boulder-covered houses were white mounds, the streets were tunneled valleys. As you looked down on the city from the hills above, you could see no signs of life except the wreaths of blue smoke curling into the air.

And yet there was cheer and comfort enough in one of the quaint little houses. O Yuki San was very busy with preparations to receive her husband. She had built a big charcoal fire in the *kotatsu*,[1] for she knew that he would be cold after his two days of snow-marching with his company. In the kitchen the red-cheeked cook-

[1] A fire-box in the floor, over which is set a rack, and the whole covered by a heavy comfortable.

 maid was broiling a fish over the coals, preparing a savory soup in a porringer, and keeping an anxious eye on the big rice-pot, to make sure that the staff of life was boiled just right, neither too hard nor too soft, — just as the master liked to have it. O Yuki San must watch the cook, and see that she did everything exactly as she should, and she must make ready her husband's tray with her own hands. Lovingly she placed in their respective corners the porcelain rice-bowl, the lacquered soup-bowl, the dainty plate on which the broiled fish was to be served, and the chopsticks of clean white pine, joined together at the ends to show that no one had ever used them.

Old Jiiya, the man-servant, decrepit but faithful, came in suddenly out of the driving snow, as O Yuki San, on her knees in the matted end of the kitchen, was cocking her head on one side to make sure that her arrangement of the tray was quite symmetrical. He pulled his feet noisily

out of his clogs, and came down on the loosely rattling boards of the floor in a crouching position at the sight of his mistress.

"It 's a cold night, mistress!" he ejaculated, by way of greeting, and dropped his face between his hands on the floor.

"Yes, Jiiya, it is cold, and how it snows! When do you think your master will come?"

Jiiya's face came up for a moment. "It is thought at the garrison that the troops may be in at any time now. They had only fifteen miles to march to-day, and they would start early. The master will probably be here in a few minutes more."

O Yuki San rose to her feet. "There, the tray is finished!" she said. "O Kayo, when you hear the master's voice, bring in his supper; and, Jiiya, be ready to help him off with his boots as soon as he comes, for they will be wet and stiff."

Jiiya and O Kayo bowed low, and mur-

mured the "Saio de gozaimasu"[1] with which the respectful Japanese servant always receives his master's commands; and O Yuki San returned to her little sitting-room. On the floor in one corner lay a little heap of bright-colored comfortables. O Yuki San bent over it, turning back the quilts that she might see the round, rosy face, the crumpled, slender hands, and the closely shaven head of her baby boy.

"Oh, baby, how you sleep!" she said. Don't you know that papa's coming home to-night?"

She patted him lightly, and he smiled and gurgled in his sleep; then she covered him tenderly and made a tour of the room. The hanging scroll on the wall bore a picture of a plum-tree in blossom, sign of the spring that was only one month away, — for even in Aomori the plum-trees blossom in March, — and sign, too, of long life and good luck and happiness. That was why the little wife had taken it to-day from the

[1] "It is honorably so."

fireproof storehouse and hung it up to greet her husband on his return. "He will want to think about the spring when he comes in all tired and cold from his snow-march," she had said to herself as she unrolled it. She laughed gleefully now as she looked at the picture, and sang a little song that had been running in her head all day, —

"When the spring wind is blowing sharp and chill,
Like snowflakes fall the plum-blooms on the hill."

"Snowflakes now," she said to herself, "but plum-blooms next month for all of us!"

There was a sound at the outer door, and the sliding lattice flew sharply back. "He has come, Jiiya," called O Yuki San, as she hurried to the door and flung it wide. She could see the gold-trimmed soldier cap as her husband fumbled with his boots. "Let Jiiya help you," she said; "he is right here."

He raised his head and she saw his bearded face. It was so white that it frightened her. The beard was covered with snow, and icicles dripped from the hair and eyebrows.

"Come in! Come in!" she cried. "Never mind the boots or the snow. You are freezing. Come in and let me warm you."

He looked at her strangely, and his eyes were sunken and dull. Jiiya, who had come around the house, and was bowing obsequiously in the doorway, started and turned pale. The master sat down, and Jiiya seized his boots, but the feet were like stones and the boots would not come off. O Yuki San, wild with anxiety, pushed and pulled her husband into the sitting-room, made him sit down by the *kotatsu*, and pulled the warm comfortables about him. The baby moaned in his sleep, but she had no time to hush him now. She hurried to the kitchen to bring the tray, saying to the red-cheeked cook, "Hurry! Hurry! He is so cold! He will die if you do not hurry!"

Jiiya came shuffling in at the back door just as she took the tray from the hands of the cook and hastened away with it.

"What is the matter with the master?" asked O Kayo of Jiiya.

The old man shook his head doubtfully. 81
"It is hard to say," was his noncommittal answer. "Strange things happen in this world. — Hark! What is that?"

A shriek rent the air, and another, and then another. Man and maid stood for a moment looking at each other, then Jiiya started to the rescue. Flinging wide the paper screen that separated the kitchen from the sitting-room, they saw nothing there but the baby, who, wakened by the sounds, had rolled out of his comfortables and lay kicking and screaming on the floor. The door beyond was open, and they heard the mistress calling, "Jiiya, come quick! He is gone!" Out through the open door into the snow tunnel that joined the house to the street, they went, seeking. A pale blue flame danced in the tunnel, the mistress lay on her face in the snow, stretching her arms toward the dancing light.

"He was here, and then there was nothing, only that light," she cried, and her head fell and she knew no more. The flame

 danced and flickered and disappeared, and with it went the light of O Yuki San's life.

Four days later, when the news began to come in of the disaster that had overtaken the snow-march, and the first and only men saved from that terrible tragedy were brought back, maimed and almost dead from the long exposure, Lieutenant Maruki told to some of his fellow officers all that he knew of the death of Lieutenant Saito.

"We pushed on together," he said, "looking for a sign of the village. It was the second day, and we had been wandering, without a path, in snow up to our armpits, for more than twenty-four hours. I could see that Saito was freezing. His face was crusted with ice, and his hair and beard fringed with icicles. At last he turned to me and said, 'I can't go any farther, Maruki. You must not let them waste any time looking for me. I will tell my wife, and there is no one else who cares.' Then he dropped and gave up. I tried to rub

and shake him back into life, but I knew it was no use when I saw a pale blue flame[1] hovering over his body. I had seen such a flame once before, when my father died," — his voice sank almost to a whisper, — "and I knew that his spirit had passed. The light moved away across the snow until I lost it in the thickness of the night. I followed the direction it had taken as well as I could. Perhaps that is why I am here to-day."

"The poor little wife is gone, I hear," said a listening comrade, "and the old man at the house tells a strange story of the master's return, and of a blue flame that vanished through the snow tunnel."

"Then Saito was right," said Maruki, with a sigh; "he did go and tell his wife. Poor little woman! She was not a widow very long!"

[1] It is a common belief in Japan that the recently freed soul is visible in the shape of a luminous ball or blue flame immediately after death.

IV

THE INDEPENDENCE OF SABURO

IV

IT was the month of June, and a great festival of the Sanno Temple was in full swing. The streets were alive with excitement and brilliant with lanterns. The whole length of Kojimachi-dori was lined with gay booths and crowded with sightseers. Here and there the beat of drums, the clashing of cymbals, and the antics and grimaces of mummers held the crowd for a moment before some fantastic festival car. Off in the side streets were to be heard the rhythmic shouts of boys, who rushed about with square red lanterns, bearing a miniature festival car high on their shoulders.

To Saburo Nozaki, sitting alone at home, in charge of his father's shop, the cheerful sounds carried nothing but misery. He sat at his little table figuring out the day's

accounts by the light of a small hanging-lamp. The shop front was wide open to the narrow, dark side street, and now and then a wandering jinrikisha-man's lantern flashed by, but for the most part the street was empty, for it was away from the centre of the festival, and every one who could leave his work had gone to the great celebration. Only Saburo seemed left of all the populous neighborhood, and as he fingered his *soroban*[1] and wrote out his accounts, the cheerful hum of the festival just around the corner simply increased his sense of desertion.

Saburo was thoroughly tired of the shop. He had been born in it, or rather in the room just behind it. His babyhood had been passed watching its business over his mother's shoulder; and when he had been removed from his perch on her back to make room for a baby sister, he had at once begun to make himself useful. At first he

[1] The abacus used in the East by all merchants in reckoning.

could only run back and forth between the fireproof storehouse and the salesroom, carrying rolls of silk and cotton. Later, he had pulled a small hand-cart about the streets, acting at once as horse and delivery clerk. And now, since he had learned to count with the *soroban*, he sat all day on his heels, bowing and smiling and propitiating customers, measuring and counting and writing out bills, until it seemed to him that he could bear it no longer. His older brothers, Taro and Jiro, good, honest, unambitious youths, adapted themselves readily to the routine of the shop, but Saburo chafed under it and longed for a change. He was eighteen now, and still his only view of the world was what he could see of the street from under the heavy black curtains that draped the front of the salesroom.

How irksome the life was to a proud spirit that felt itself set apart for better things! And now to-night, when the greatest festival in a cycle of sixty years was

going on close by, and on the great last night of all the three, his father had taken the rest of the family to see the sights, and had left poor Saburo alone at home to guard the shop and wait upon improbable customers. It was too much! Saburo counted and wrote and counted again, but the bursts of gayety from Kojimachi confused his reckoning, and he gave up at last and settled down to listen and wish.

Suddenly the wish became the father of a thought — a great thought — an audacious thought. It had sometimes come before into Saburo's head, though he had never seen the way clear to its accomplishment, but to-night was the very night for it.

The boy reached out from where he sat to a drawer in the wall, and drew from thence a heavy, iron-bound box, the till of the establishment. This he opened with a key from his girdle, counted out fifty yen with methodical exactness, set down his name in the account-book opposite to that amount, then closed and locked the box

and returned it to its drawer. The money he tucked away in his belt. Then he rose, carried the key into the back room and hung it on the wall, slid all the wooden shutters but one into place across the front of the shop, stepped out into the street, closed the last shutter, and walked off into the darkness, away from the lights and noise of the festival. He did not care where he went. All he wanted was to get away from the close confinement, the unvarying monotony of the shop.

For an hour or so he wandered about dark and narrow streets, not daring to show himself in the wider, brightly lighted thoroughfares, lest he should be recognized by some chance acquaintance and his great plan be frustrated at its beginning.

It was ten o'clock, and even the business streets were putting up their shutters for the night, when the youth drifted aimlessly into a broad avenue, almost deserted at that hour, which he recognized as the one that led to the northern railway station.

 Then a new thought struck him, and he pushed forward with the energy of a definite purpose. When he reached the station a bell was ringing, and the north-bound train was puffing on the track. He purchased a third-class ticket, selecting his destination — Nishi Nasu-no — at random from the time-table hanging on the wall, rushed through the gate, and curled himself up in the corner of an empty carriage.

By noon of the following day, Saburo found himself, after a long morning's walk, close to the beautiful mountain region that surrounds the gorge of Shiobara. His morning had not been one of unalloyed pleasure in his independence. The girls at the tea-house, where he had stopped and called for breakfast, had met his air of assumed importance with derisive giggles and mocking obeisances, and had given him, not the cool, retired upper room that he had demanded, but a place close to the street, noisy and sunny, where he had eaten his meal in full sight of the public, and

of all the employees of the hotel kitchen. Then the morning's walk had been hot and tiresome, — a straight, shadeless road pointing directly toward the mountains.

Saburo found himself tired and hungry enough when he sat down to rest and eat his lunch in front of a tea-house that stood just where the road entered a beautiful mountain gorge.

"Elder sister, where does this road go?" he asked of the bright-eyed, red-cheeked girl who waited on him.

"To Shiobara," she said; adding, "It is seven miles to the first village."

As Saburo looked at the steep, rocky road ahead, he felt sure that he needed some stimulus to carry him over those seven miles to the village, and he ordered from the "elder sister" a gourd full of saké, which he hung at his belt. Then he pressed on, and the mountains closed about him.

He seemed to be entering the very bowels of the earth, and the roaring of the

 torrent below him, the awful grandeur of the peaks above, impressed his unsophisticated soul with a strange uneasiness. He remembered all the weird tales that he had heard from his childhood, of the mountain gods and goblins, of the spirits of the dead that mow and gibber by the roadside, of the foxes and badgers that work strange enchantments on unwary travelers, and as each horrid detail came before his mind, he took a pull at the saké bottle to brace up his courage. And so, as the day waned, his steps grew heavier and heavier, and his brain more and more confused, until, at last, he felt sure that he could not reach the village for which he was bound before the night fell.

He sat down by the roadside and wondered what he should do, and how he should pass the night; and as he sat there, he saw a young girl coming out of the woods, carrying a bucket of water. She was dressed after the country fashion, with her kimono tucked up to her knees, show-

ing her red petticoat below. She wore white silk leggins and straw sandals, and she walked lightly and gracefully with her load, in the dog-trot of the mountain peasant.

Saburo rose as she passed, and she stopped and set down her bucket.

"Honorable maiden," he said, "can you tell me of any house near here where I can get a meal and a bed?"

She bowed and smiled as she answered, "I have a very humble roadside booth just beyond the turn of the road where your honor can obtain refreshment, though of poor quality."

Saburo started up, his tired, unsteady legs reeling under him, and followed the girl a few paces, to a spot where the smallest of roadside eating-shops had been placed, almost overhanging the torrent. How cool and inviting it looked! Screens of bamboo across the front shut it off from undue publicity. A small stream of water from a bamboo pipe plashed pleasantly into

a stone tank close by, and over the *hibachi* the kettle was bubbling. Cups and plates and various comestibles showed that the small establishment could furnish a meal, and it was with a sigh of relief that Saburo slipped his tired feet out of his clogs, bathed them in the cool sparkling water from the tank, and seated himself on the matted platform that made the guest-room.

"While I am preparing the poor meal, would your honor condescend to drink a cup of ama-zake?"[1] said the silvery voice of the girl.

"Thank you, I shall be glad to take it," answered Saburo, holding his head up with an attempt at dignity, as he felt that now he had found some one who addressed him with the deference due to his independent position.

The girl, who to Saburo's eyes grew more beautiful every minute, brought a steaming bowl of the thick white liquor and set it down in front of him. He drank

[1] A thick, sweet, slightly fermented rice-soup.

it, sucking it down with gulps and smacks of satisfaction.

"That is food and drink both," he said, as the maiden brought him another brimming bowl.

Cheered by the gracious glow which the comforting draught diffused through his entire being, Saburo sat and watched his beautiful friend while she attended to her lowly tasks. At last he spoke, and his voice was husky with emotion.

"It is strange and sad, that so beautiful a maiden as you should waste her life up here in these wild mountains. Why do you stay in such a place? If you went to Tokyo, you would soon make a good marriage."

The girl looked at him before she answered, and Saburo felt as if his soul were on fire.

"Sometimes I have thought I would like to go out and see the world," she said, "but I am the only child of my old mother, and she would not consent to my going,"

 and she wept, holding her sleeves before her face.

"And now my mother is dead, and I have no brother, nor any friends." She wept quietly behind her sleeves for a space, her body shaking with the violence of her emotion; then she uncovered her face. Saburo felt her eyes looking deep into his heart. "If you do not object to my humble birth," she continued, "and since you sympathize with my grief, please take me with you to Tokyo, and teach me how to sweep and wash floors." Then she hid her face once more behind her sleeves.

Saburo's head was fairly turned by such a show of confidence, and he reached forward and patted the poor girl's shoulder as she sat with covered face on the edge of the matted platform.

"Do not feel so sad," he said; "I will find you a place where you will be much better off than here."

The maiden looked with one eye from behind her sleeves. Saburo gently pulled

down her hands until her whole face was visible. "How can I ever reward you for your kindness?" she whispered.

By the time he had eaten supper it was quite dark, and Saburo began to wonder where he could spend the night, for the little tea-house was simply an open booth.

"Where do you live?" he asked of his entertainer.

"Quite near here," she answered, "and if you can endure my rude and squalid home, I can give you a bed there for to-night."

She extinguished the coals in the *hibachi* by dropping them into a pot of water, using for the purpose a pair of fire-sticks, one of bamboo and one of bone. Saburo's superstitious soul shuddered a little when he saw her do it, for he knew that in Tokyo such sticks were used only in collecting the ashes of the dead. But he remembered that she was only a country girl, and could not be expected to know all the Tokyo customs. Then she closed the shut-

 ters about the little guest-room, and taking a white lantern[1] in her hand, she led the way into the woods. To Saburo there was something uncanny about the white lantern. It was like a funeral procession, he thought, but he said nothing.

There was a muttering of thunder among the hills, and zigzag lightning flashed from a black cloud overhead. The way seemed longer than Saburo had expected, but at last his guide stopped, just as a flash of lightning revealed a miserable dilapidated cottage. The paper of the sliding screens was flapping like ghostly garments in the wind, the plaster of the walls had fallen in places, showing the bamboo skeleton of the house, the roof seemed breaking down under its load of stones, and the floor gave and creaked dismally as they stepped up on the dirty mats.

On one side of the room was a broken screen, inverted;[2] two of the floor mats had

[1] White lanterns are used only at funerals.

[2] Sign of the presence of a corpse.

been taken up, and a clean new tub, bucket, and dipper stood on the rotten boards in the place thus left bare.[1] Saburo shuddered. What did all this mean? His legs, which had been painfully weak for several hours, nearly gave way beneath him.

"My mother lies there dead," said the girl in explanation. "I have not been able to bury her yet, but I will bury her to-morrow before we start. Wait here a little while, for I must go and find a priest to attend the funeral," and the maiden disappeared in the darkness, leaving Saburo alone with the dead.

He tried to call, but his voice was choked; he tried to move, but his legs refused to carry him. He could only sit and wait for the return of his hostess, the horror of the place freezing his blood the while.

It was deadly silent in the woods. He would have been grateful even for a thunder-clap to break the silence, but the storm had passed. Suddenly the clouds parted,

[1] Preparations for washing a corpse.

 and the moonlight streamed through a hole in the roof right into the room.

Saburo found himself filled with a strange desire to look behind the screen, to see whether the girl had told him the truth. Slowly, on hands and knees, he crept across the floor. Softly he moved the screen away. It was too true! There, on the floor, covered with a white quilt, sat a rigid figure, its knees drawn up to its chin.

Saburo crept closer and removed the covering from the face. Horror of horrors! It was the face of his beautiful hostess. But even as he looked at it, the hair became snowy white, the eyes grew hollow, the parchment-like skin stretched tense across the nose, and the face changed to that of a demon.

Poor Saburo, not daring to turn his back on the awful object, retreated backward. The dead, raising her head, hitched forward across the floor. Saburo backed again. Once more the thing moved toward

him, and once more he backed. It came close, — closer, — then suddenly, opening its mouth wide, it sneezed, and Saburo, forgetting his fatigue, turned and ran madly away from that terrible place.

Next morning a peasant, leading his shock-headed pony loaded with grass along the mountain road, saw, far beneath him, close to the brawling torrent, what looked like the body of a man. Scrambling down, he found poor Saburo, not dead, but badly bruised. With much labor and suffering he was at last dragged up to the road.

How familiar the whole place looked to him when he opened his eyes! There was the turn in the road near which he had sat down, there the footpath along which the girl had come with the bucket of water. A great terror came over him.

"Do not take me to the rest-house beyond the turn," he begged of his kind-hearted rescuer.

"What rest-house? There is no rest-

 house near here," said the bewildered peasant.

Then Saburo told him his story, but the man only shook his head. "There is no rest-house here, nor ever has been," he said, "but there are foxes that live in the temple of Inari Sama[1] up in the woods there," and he pointed toward the foot-path. "They have bewitched you, and you should thank the gods that you have escaped alive."

Two days later, Saburo, bruised and tired, stepped out of his clogs and prostrated himself on his face in his father's shop. "I have returned," he said, as he bowed to his parents. Then he went back to his measuring stick, his *soroban*, and his account-books.

[1] Inari Sama, the god or goddess of rice, whose messenger the fox is supposed to be. Sometimes known as the Fox-God.

V

KITSUNÉ YASHIKI

Kitsuné Yashiki, "The Foxes' Mansion."

V

MINOKICHI sat on the edge of the little open shop, his feet in his clogs, his staff in his hand, ready for the afternoon's work. His face, bearing the curiously refined expression that belongs to the blind, was turned toward O Koto San, who, with her baby tied to her back, sat on her heels behind the minute stock in trade. So small and so cheap was it that five dollars would probably have bought it all. A few pairs of straw sandals, a pattern or two of blue-and-white toweling, a pile of broad-brimmed hats, a small variety of cakes, and some eggs, — these were the entire contents of the shop. But O Koto San sat at the receipt of custom, as proud and happy in her new business as if she were conducting the great Mitsui[1] silk-store on Ginza.[2]

[1] One of the great merchant firms of Japan.

[2] The principal business street of Tokyo.

Minokichi was a blind *amma*, or masseur, who earned a certain but scanty living by his trade. Every afternoon, when the great bell of the temple tolled out its four slow strokes, Minokichi, staff in hand and whistle in mouth, walked up and down the streets of Ushigomé,[1] stopping wherever called, to smooth and rub and soothe and pat any tired body who, after the hot bath, might feel the need of further comforting. Some days, when he was fortunate, he earned as much as twenty cents. Once he had been summoned to a great house, where he had worked for an hour or two over a man whose silken garment proved that he was prosperous, and had pocketed for his fee a fifty-cent note ; but such luck had never come to him again. It had taken him a long time to save enough to marry, and when the wedding was over, the go-between and the fortune-teller paid, the presents sent to the bride's family, the tiny hired house new-papered and fitted up

[1] One of the districts of Tokyo.

with the very few articles necessary for Japanese housekeeping, and the wedding feast paid for, not only was the long-saved hoard all gone, but he had been obliged to put in pawn every garment he possessed that was not at the time in actual use.

And so O Koto San, a red-cheeked, curly-haired country girl, whose round body seemed always trying to work its way out of her garments, came into the humblest of homes and took up the task of making life for two cheaper and happier than life for one. A good little wife she had proved to be, — in every respect exactly as the go-between had said. She kept the tiny house as neat as her willing hands could make it. She managed the scanty supply of charcoal so that every piece did some work for the family, no grain of rice was ever wasted by her in cooking or in clearing away, and the additional luxuries of the Japanese table, soups, fish, beans, greens, *mochi*[1] at New Year's,

[1] Rice-dumpling, a special festival dish.

 and vermicelli at O Bon, made their appearance with due regularity. She took in cigarettes to roll in her spare time, and added to Minokichi's earnings the tidy little sum of a dollar to a dollar and a half a month by her own labor. Minokichi brought her all his wages, and whenever he wanted money there was some in her hands for him. He always had wherewith to pay for a hot bath at the public bath-house; his tobacco pouch was never empty; he could entertain his friends at an eel-house, or a macaroni-shop, or in his own home, and O Koto San never told him that there was no money for such foolishness, as did the thrifty wife of the carpenter next door when her husband went to her for change to meet emergencies of like nature.

Surely Minokichi was a lucky man, in spite of his blindness. He had been married nearly two years now, and a baby boy had come to cement the union even more closely. O Koto San worked, if such a

thing were possible, more diligently with her baby tied to her shoulders than she had at the beginning. Her rosy face was perhaps a thought less rosy, her curly hair a trifle less abundant, but she was just as cheerful and energetic in her care for two as she had been when her husband was her only thought. The little shop was her idea, and the stock in trade the saving from her cigarette work. They lived on the very edge of Tokyo, just where the city streets turn into narrow lanes and then into the dyked roadways across the rice-fields. Koto's shrewd business sense realized that if she had to offer to passing jinrikisha-men just such things as they might need when starting out for a long country run or returning, she might make a profit from her savings. And so the things had been bought and set in place, and already more than one kurumaya had discovered the smiling face of the shop-keeper, and had bought from her, exchanging at the same time a few pleasant words, for the sake of

 her bright eyes, her shining teeth, and her low bows.

Minokichi was waiting for the temple bell to strike, and as the first deep boom sounded he rose to his feet, struck the ground with his staff, and felt his way out into the narrow road.

"If I am late," he said, "close the shutters, and I will call you when I come. I am going to try a new part of the district. Perhaps I can find that rich man again who gave me so much money once. He was over near Koishikawa."[1] He moved cautiously down the street, rapping his stick on the ground and blowing his whistle, signs to all passers that a blind *amma* was on the march.

It was nearly six o'clock, and the sun was low at his back, when Minokichi, tapping and whistling, reached the northeast corner of Ushigomé, close to the Koishikawa district. He had spent about an hour at one of his regular places of call, rubbing

[1] One of the districts of Tokyo.

and kneading the head and shoulders of an overworked newspaper-man, preparing him for his night at the office. For this service he had received, with many bows and protestations of gratitude, the sum of eight cents, carefully folded in white paper. Then he had felt his way, by the sun at his back and the autumn wind on his left cheek, along the narrow, crooked streets, to the very border of his own district. Here he paused, wondering whether it would be better to go on to Koishikawa, or to return by devious routes to O Koto San, trusting to chance for one or two more calls on the way.

As he stood in hesitation he heard a voice, a sharp, boy's voice, of curiously staccato utterance. "Amm' San!"[1] it said.

Minokichi cocked his head in the direction from which the sound came and answered "Hai!"

[1] *Amma San*, "Mr. Amma." The clipped utterance in this and in other speeches is quite un-Japanese, and must have sounded foreign to Minokichi.

Then he heard the soft pat-pat of bare running feet. They sounded like a dog's feet, he thought, as they came near him, and he was almost surprised when the boy's voice close by said "Come," and a small, firm hand took hold of his and began to lead him, not toward Koishikawa, nor yet toward his home, but northward across the rice-fields along the city's edge. He walked for miles, clutched by the firm little hand. "The master is ill," was all the answer that his guide gave to his inquiries. The sun had long been down; he could feel the chill of the autumn evening, and hear the shrill piping of the autumn insects, before they reached their destination.

"Careful! Amm' San," called the shrill staccato voice, and Minokichi reached with his stick to feel the stone threshold of a gateway. Then a muffled bell sounded, and he felt against his cheek the slight stirring of the air caused by the bell-rope in the hands of his guide.

"Is it a temple or a *yashiki?*"[1] asked Minokichi of himself, for he had long before ceased trying to get information from his taciturn young escort. "That bell and rope seem like the entrance to a temple. Perhaps it is a priest who is ill, and this is his acolyte."

Then came the swift rattle of a sliding lattice, and as he bowed and entered the narrow doorway that he knew must be in front of him, he heard the soft, sibilant purr of sliding *shoji*, and the patter of *tabi*-shod feet upon matted floors.

"Good-evening," he said, sucking in his breath and bending double as he stood at the entrance of the house.

The small, firm hand that had led him relaxed its grasp.

"Amm' San," came the sound of a woman's voice, "you are welcome! Enter, if you please!"

Minokichi slipped from his clogs to the

[1] A great house, belonging to a noble or samurai of high rank.

 polished wooden step, then up to the floor above, and fell on his knees with his forehead to the mats, sucking in his breath, and murmuring in politest terms his desire to be of service to the master.

"Come quickly, please!" It was the woman's voice again, so anxious, so hurried, with utterance so clipped and abrupt, that Minokichi could hardly understand her words. A soft hand slipped into his, and he was led by passageways with polished wooden floors and through spacious matted apartments, sweet-smelling with the odors of fresh straw and aromatic cedar.

"A great lord's *yashiki*," thought Minokichi, as he sniffed the air and felt the polished wood beneath his feet.

"This is the master's room. Enter," said the woman's voice again, and a sound of sobbing followed.

Once more Minokichi fell on his face and with his forehead to the mats. The sobbing ceased, and in the silence he heard

long, gasping breaths, as if some one lay dying close beside him.

"This is the master," said the voice again. "Do what you can to make him easier."

With deft and tender touch Minokichi placed his practiced fingers on the quivering body at his side. In spite of his awe and sympathy, a pleasant thought came to his mind. The master wore a wadded silk kimono, and visions of his former princely patron came before him to make him work with redoubled skill and patience. He felt the rigid muscles relax little by little under his hand, the convulsive quivering cease, the labored breathing grow soft and regular.

For hours he worked over the sufferer, and at last, as he stopped to wipe the streaming perspiration from his face, the woman's voice, quieter and less anxious, said to him, "That is enough, Amm' San. You are very skillful. The master is really resting now. Come with me and rest yourself awhile. You must be tired."

 Minokichi bowed, and murmured very softly his formula of self-depreciation. Then a soft hand took hold of his and led him from the room.

"Forgive our rudeness," said the voice again, "in that we offered you no refreshment when you came. The master was suffering so that we were forgetful of all else. Kindly accept this tea, and smoke your pipe, and soon there will be some humble repast ready for you before you leave us."

Minokichi was glad enough to sit in the quiet of the room to which he had been led, to smoke his tiny pipe and drink the tea set before him, and reflect on the events of the evening and the possibilities of his fee, while he rested from his protracted efforts. The time seemed very short to him before soft footsteps on the mats and the gentle shoving of trays toward him told that the promised refreshment had arrived.

"It is a poor meal," said the woman's voice once more. "Please pardon it, for

Minokichi had never tasted such food as the "poor meal" thus politely offered. Fit for the gods, it seemed to him. He ate sparingly, however, for he did not wish to seem a rude and churlish person, who knew no better than to eat up clean all that was set before him. When he had finished, he returned thanks to his unseen hostess, bowing low with face to the floor in the direction whence came the sound of quick breathing, so rapid that it seemed to him like the panting of a dog.

"Poor lady," he thought, "she is still worried about the master."

As he left the house, a heavy folded white paper was placed in his hand, and a wooden box, containing, as he knew, the remains of his feast, was given him. In an ecstasy of thanks and protestations he committed himself to the firm clutch of his first small guide, whose shrill voice uttered the single word, "Come."

So fast the little feet at his side pattered along, that Minokichi was nearly out of breath when at last his companion relinquished his hold, and with a jerky "Say nar'"[1] left him standing alone, staff in hand. Just then a great bell began to toll, and he knew that he was near his own home, on the north edge of Ushigomé. Slowly, with leisurely waits between the strokes, the ringer beat out the hour. It took a long time to reach the tenth stroke, and Minokichi was sure then that it was through.

"Koto will be fast asleep, and I shall have to wake her," he said, and started to feel his way home. "Eleven" boomed the bell, and Minokichi hurried faster. "Poor Koto! If she is not asleep, she will be anxious about me." "Twelve," and the whirring, buzzing reverberations seemed close to his ear, so near was he to the temple. With

[1] *Sayo nara*, "Good-by," another example of the curious clipping of speech that characterizes foxes masquerading as human beings.

clattering clogs and tapping staff the blind man broke into a run, and in a few moments was standing by his own house.

"Koto," he called very softly, so that the neighbors should not be disturbed. His quick ear caught the rustle within, and he knew that she was awake. He heard her scratch a match and speak a soothing word in response to the baby's sleepy murmur, then the wooden shutter was pushed gently aside, just wide enough to admit the *amma's* slender body.

"It is very late," he said softly, as he entered, "but I have had such an evening!" and he told her what had befallen him. "The fee should be a good one," he said when he had finished his story, "for they were very grand people. A great house, and, oh, such a supper!"

As he spoke, he drew the folded paper from his bosom. "Let us see what it is," he said. "It's very heavy! Perhaps they paid it all in tempō sen!"[1]

[1] A large oval copper coin, worth about eight mills.

He laid the bundle on the floor and opened it. O Koto's eyes shone as she saw the yellow glint of the great gold pieces — five of them — antique oval ōban,[1] such as no one saw in these days, except in pictures, or in yellow tin counterfeits hung to the masts of the "ships of fortune."

"Minokichi, it's all in gold!" she said solemnly. "Surely it must have been a great prince who called you in. No one but a prince would give such a fee to an *amma!*"

"Surely, it was a prince," said Minokichi joyfully. "I thought so from the house and the *go chiso.*[2] And now, let us look at the *go chiso,*" and he took up the wooden box that he had brought with him. "Open it, Koto. You never tasted such food in all your life."

O Koto San opened it, and as she saw the contents, her face fell and a look of terror came into it.

[1] A large oval gold coin, worth about eighty dollars.

[2] Honorable feast, a term applied to any special delicacy served to guests.

"Taste it, Koto, and see if it's not good," insisted Minokichi, but Koto made no answer. "What is the matter, Koto? Why don't you say something?" Her husband turned his blind face toward her expectantly.

"Minokichi," she said, and her voice was strange and scared, "there is no food here, nothing but grass and leaves. You have been fooled, and may the gods protect us, for I believe that it was to the foxes you went to-night, and that you have been bewitched."

"There is the money," said Minokichi. "This box was packed with grass and leaves by mistake. The gold is here to prove that I was not bewitched," and he clinked the gold coins together reassuringly.

But O Koto San, who was from the country, and who knew much more about the ways of foxes than did her city-bred husband, shook her head, and murmured something about "to-morrow."

They did not sleep a great deal that night, Minokichi for thinking of his good luck, Koto in dread of some strange trick that the foxes might have in store for them all. When morning came, they were glad to rise early and go about their common, every-day tasks. Neither spoke of last night's experience until the shutters had been opened, the beds folded and laid away in the closet, the floors swept, the *shoji* dusted, and Minokichi seated at his breakfast, with Koto by the rice-bucket, waiting to refill his bowl. Then he spoke: —

"Koto, just get that paper that I brought home, and see if your eyes deceived you last night about the gold. If you are right, there will be nothing here this morning but grass, or at most, tempō sen."

Koto fetched her little iron-bound cash-box, opened it with the key which she wore always hung about her neck, and drew out the white paper. Her face brightened when she heard its golden chink, while her husband laughed triumphantly. As she opened

it the coins shone bright and yellow, no copper tempō sen, but gold ōban, without a doubt. She dropped them one by one upon the mat, counting as she did so. "One, two, three, four"— She shook the paper, felt in her belt, her sleeves, her bosom, searched the box, got up and shook herself. Where was the fifth? One green leaf lay on the floor and four gold pieces.

"How many did we count last night?" she asked of Minokichi.

"Five," he answered.

"There!" she cried, "it was the foxes that bewitched you, and one of those pieces is a green leaf this morning!"

"Nonsense!" said Minokichi. "You must have made a mistake in your counting last night. You were sleepy, and probably you saw more than there were."

He laughed affectionately. Koto was so clever and business-like that it was rather pleasant to catch her in a mistake once in a while. But Koto would not accept his theory. She was sure of her own, and

 worried lest all their gold should depart as had the fifth piece.

When Minokichi was ready for his afternoon start, Koto, her baby firmly tied to her back, slipped into her clogs and stood beside him. "If you go to your fox-place again, I am going with you," she said decidedly. "I at least can see, and the foxes will not find me quite so easy to fool. O Kin San from next door will mind the shop, and I can walk as far and as fast as you."

Minokichi demurred. It was not customary for an *amma* to go about his work escorted by his wife and baby. His princely patron, if they should be lucky enough to find their way to him, might not be willing to employ a man so accompanied. But Koto was firm. She would not interfere with her husband's business. She would follow him at a discreet distance, and pretend she had nothing to do with him. But go she would, and so they started, Minokichi tapping and whistling in front, Koto

and the baby clattering along a few paces behind. As they passed the house of the newspaper-man, a servant who had been watching for the *amma* called him in, and so it happened that the sun was low when the trio reached the spot where the day before Minokichi had been accosted by the shrill-voiced, barefooted messenger.

O Koto San, who, while her husband was rubbing the newspaper-man, had visited a neighboring temple and made an offering and a prayer to Kwannon, the Goddess of Mercy, felt fairly bold and cheerful by now. The chink of the gold was in her ears, its glitter dazzled her eyes. It was at her suggestion that Minokichi turned northward, and struck out by the dyked roadway in the same direction that he had taken the night before under guidance. They walked a long, long way. The sun went down and the moon came up over the rice-fields, the wind blew chill, the dead leaves rattled on the trees by the wayside.

Poor Koto shivered, and called out to her

 husband walking in front, "Let's go home! There is no *yashiki* here,— only rice-fields and a clump of trees ahead. Come home! Don't you know by now that you were bewitched last night?"

"Just a little farther, Koto," pleaded Minokichi. "I am sure we are almost there."

They walked on, Minokichi feeling the way very carefully with his staff. When they reached the clump of trees, he turned aside, fumbling with his stick until it sounded on stone. "Here it is," he said, and passed under a low, red *torii*[1] that stood hidden among the giant cedars.

O Koto followed, trembling. It was a little Inari[2] shrine, and before it sat two grinning stone foxes. Minokichi went swiftly forward on the stone-paved walk, sure of his way now, and passed between the guardian images. He lifted his hand and swung the cobwebbed, knotted rope that dangled be-

[1] An erection in the form of a gateway that marks the approach to a temple or sacred place.

[2] The god of rice, whose messengers are foxes.

fore a gong above the entrance. A dull, metallic boom smote the silence, but there was no sound in answer to the summons. O Koto shuddered, and the baby struggled restlessly in its wrappings.

At last Minokichi turned sadly. "I am afraid the master is dead, for the house is closed. We will go home now."

Just then Koto, whose fears had not dulled her wits, noticed a dark object lying close to the foundation of the temple. Her first thought was to seize Minokichi's hand and run, her next, to find out now what this mystery might be. Controlling her desire to shriek, she went on, to take a nearer look at the crouching body, and by the moon's bright light, shining through a gap in the trees, she saw that it was a great dead fox, with gray lips drawn back from his toothless jaws in a ghastly grin.

"Poor Minokichi," she said, "here is your prince. The grandfather of all the foxes he must have been. Even your skill could not save him."

Minokichi walked on in silence, nor did his wife lag far behind, for across the deserted rice-fields came to her ears a dismal yapping and wailing, the mourning of the foxes for "the master."

To this day O Koto San does not know whether her husband believes in his own bewitchment. The four ōban remained as they were, and Minokichi, who is a rich man now, thanks to the gold and to O Koto's clever management, dates all his good luck from that night when he was led out across the rice-fields to minister to the dying man. And when O Koto shakes her head and talks of "Kitsuné Yashiki," he laughs, and warns her that fox-gold may turn to leaves over night.

VI

CHOKICHI'S PILGRIMAGE

VI

THE whole year had gone wrong for Chokichi. When, at the close of the old year, his bills had come in and he had paid them off, — as every Japanese must if he would go on into the future at all, — he had not only been left without money, but had been forced to offer his stock in trade at absurdly low prices; and — for purchasers are few and sellers many at that season, and in a small village only as many *tabi*[1] can be absorbed at once as the population has feet to cover — he had, after all, been driven to carry a large part of his wardrobe to the *furugi-ya*[2] and sell it for what it would bring, in order to satisfy his creditors.

And then, after beginning the new year

[1] The mitten-shaped sock worn by Japanese.

[2] The old-clothes dealer.

 with narrowed resources, he had been further afflicted by the illness of his wife. Money spent on doctors and medicines was of no avail, and she had gone steadily from bad to worse, until at last she had died and left him with no one to attend to the house or the shop, just as things were looking up a little and custom coming in.

Then he had taken an apprentice,—Tōshi, the son of a neighbor who had more boys than he needed to carry on the hereditary business of tub-making, and who was glad to put into Chokichi's care the most mischievous and good-for-nothing of his lithe, laughing, bullet-headed progeny. Tōshi, with his smooth brown face, his black slits of eyes, his short blue kimono folded neatly about his muscular young legs, would sit meekly on his heels by his master's side, sewing at the *tabi* that had been cut and put into his hands, a very model of all the virtues. But if Chokichi left the house for an hour or two in Tōshi's care, trusting for the moment to the guile-

less expression and exemplary behavior of his apprentice, he was more than likely on his return to meet the miscreant in the street at the head of a procession of boys marching with flags and singing war-songs with brazen voices, while in the shop all would be disorder, the unfinished socks scattered about the floor, the cat curled up in the tumbled bolt of white cotton from which the *tabi* were to be cut, or a live coal from the *hibachi* burning a hole in the newly covered mats.

What was a poor *tabi*-maker to do? Chokichi spent much time in meditation upon this problem, and at last, when August came and pilgrim parties were starting from all the villages to make the tour of the sacred places, a thought came to him that soon urged him into action.

If everything went wrong, it must surely be that he had somehow failed in his duty toward the gods. He could not make a grand tour with the clubs that went out, after a year of saving and preparation, to

 be gone a month or more, and reap much spiritual benefit by propitiating as many of the gods as possible, — he fairly shuddered to think of what might happen to the shop and Tōshi in such an absence, — but why not take a day, close the shop, send Tōshi home to his mischievous brothers, and make a pilgrimage to the shrine on the top of Miyamoto Yama? He had heard his father tell of how once his grandfather had made pilgrimage thither, and of what wonderful good luck had come in answer to his prayers.

It took Chokichi some time to reason this all out while he sat over his work, cutting, basting, directing Tōshi, sewing on the cheap German hand-machine that he had bought one lucky year when he had found a pleasant little surplus in his till after all his debts were paid. But when he had thought it out, there was no delay about decision.

"Tōshi," he said suddenly, "would you like a holiday?"

Tōshi's black eyes gleamed, his ivory teeth shone, but he kept on demurely with his work.

"Yes, master," he answered, "if your honor would condescend to give one to my unworthiness."

"I shall close the shop to-morrow, for I must go away on business of importance. You may return to your father's to-night, and come back to me early in the morning of the day after to-morrow, in time to open the shop." Chokichi was very condescending and important in his manner. He wished Tōshi to understand that the holiday was no reward of virtue.

Very early the next morning, Chokichi, a box of luncheon tied up in a *furoshiki*,[1] dangling from one hand, a stout staff in the other, his kimono turned up above his knees and tucked into his belt, his bare feet shod with sandals tied tightly about his ankles by strings of twisted straw, walked quickly out of the village, taking the straight high-

[1] A square of cloth used for wrapping bundles.

 road that pointed toward the mountains. The mists lay in low, level bands against the sides of the great range, the sun was hardly above the horizon, but the peasants were already at work in the rice-fields, their broad hats showing like rows of giant mushrooms on the square green patches of growing rice.

Chokichi swung along jauntily, making good time in the morning coolness; for the red-faced sun behind him promised a hot day on the plain, and he was anxious to reach the shelter of the wooded gorges before the heat was full upon him. And thanks to his vigorous pace, it was not more than nine o'clock when he found himself traveling along the rugged mountain path, a precipice above him, a green ravine beneath, through which roared and tumbled a small river, swollen and white from the August rains. How delightfully cool and damp it was! He stopped beside a stream that leaped from the precipice in a sheet of foam into a basin cut for it

beside the road, then gurgled and hissed under a culvert on its way to the river, below. He bathed his hands and arms and feet and legs in the clear, cool water

"It was a great thing to do," he said to himself. "Such a day for the walk! I almost wish I had brought Tōshi, though, for it is pretty lonely!"

He stopped and listened. All the cheerful valley sounds were gone, — the children shouting at their play, the women singing at their looms, the squawking and chatter of fowls, the peasants calling from field to field, the bump-bump of the great mill-wheel, the clatter of clogs and patter of bare feet. There was no sound except the gushing and rushing of water, the swish of green leaves over which the breeze was passing, the murmur of the pines as the wind came their way. As Chokichi listened he shivered a little, for he was used to the social village life, and he seemed so far from human companionship. But he cheered himself with the thought of his grand-

 father's luck. There would be little merit to be gained if his day of pilgrimage were all pleasure. And the fact that he was alone would make his luck all the greater,—there would be no one to share it.

And so he trudged along,—one moment wishing for company, the next glad he had none,—until he had reached a goodly height. He stopped to breathe and wipe his face and arms with his blue-figured towel, and stood a moment to look at the square green rice-fields far below him, and the village from which he had come, with its huddled thatched roofs like haystacks on both sides of the narrow road. He was engaged in trying to pick out his own among the gray cottages, and heard no sound of approaching feet, so that a fresh young voice with a ripple of laughter in it startled him, though it uttered only a polite "Good day!"

He turned quickly and looked into a bright, roguish pair of eyes a little below the level of his own,—eyes that flashed

from under a blue-and-white towel coquettishly tied about puffs of shining black hair.

"Good day!" he answered, looking with undisguised pleasure upon the picturesque maiden before him.

She seemed about sixteen years old, and was dressed in the simple country costume, — a dark blue kimono and a red-figured *obi*. Her skirt was turned up, and showed a bright red petticoat reaching a little below the knee. Her legs were bare, shapely, and white; she wore rough straw sandals on her feet, tied about her slender ankles. Her face was merry, — red-cheeked, with laughing lips which showed no trace of care or trouble or evil temper.

Chokichi ventured to remark that it was a warm day, — very warm for a young lady to choose for mountain-climbing.

"Truly, it is very warm," answered the girl, "and I have lost my way. Can you tell me which path leads to the Miyamoto shrine?"

"Assuredly, honorable young lady. I

 am going there myself, and shall be only too glad if you will condescend to let me accompany you."

The girl bowed low in thanks, and then the two walked on together, Chokichi ahead, the maiden modestly following. They scrambled a little way in silence up the steep path; then Chokichi, who thanked his lucky stars that he had not brought the mischievous Tōshi, stopped and seated himself upon a rock.

"Let us rest here a little," he said. "The shrine is not far distant, but the road is steep, and we must get our breath before we begin the last pull."

The girl sat down across the path from him, and her eyes danced as she looked at him, then she dropped them to the ground and sighed. Chokichi could not but think what an adornment so fair a maiden would be to his lonely house. He began tentatively, —

"And the young lady's home — is it far from here?"

The girl looked up as she answered, "My humble home? Indeed, it is far away — beyond Futago Yama," and she pointed to a great double peak that rose out of the north. "I have been walking since before light, and have seen no one since I started until I met you."

"But why, — if you will permit me to ask so impolite a question, — why do you walk so far all alone to this lonely mountain shrine?"

The girl lifted her hand to her face so that her long sleeve hid her mouth, and her bright eyes softened a little.

"My mother is very ill," she said gently, "and we are poor and have no money to buy medicine, so I am going to the shrine to ask the gods to give her health." She hid her whole face behind her sleeve, and Chokichi where he sat could hear her sobbing softly.

"Do not be sad," he entreated, rising and going to her. He laid one hand on her shoulder, patting her lightly. "The gods

 will surely grant the prayer of so sweet a pilgrim, and I have money enough to buy medicine for your mother when we come down."

"Come! Let us go!" she said, rising briskly.

Chokichi was astonished at the sudden change. The roguish light came back into her eyes. She hurried on ahead, looking back at him over her shoulder from time to time. Chokichi was fairly infatuated.

"Wait! Wait a moment!" he called, for her shapely white legs were speeding so fast that he could hardly keep up with her. "Wait for me! I have something to tell you!"

The girl stopped, laughing gleefully. Chokichi, puffing from the chase, came up to her.

"Might it not be" — He stopped, embarrassed. When he had courted Kiku, all had been done through go-betweens. This was new work for him. He began again, "Might it not be that if you had a hus-

band to take care of you, you would not need to take such long journeys all alone to strange shrines?"

Her roguish eyes went up at the corners until they were almost lost in her hair.

"Truly," she answered, "it might be; but now I go to pray. When we return, we will talk of other things."

The way wound dimly now through thick woods, — great cedars with trunks like temple pillars. Ahead of them, across the path, stood the heavy *torii* that marked the beginning of the holy ground. Suddenly the girl stumbled, then gathered herself together with a groan.

"What is the matter? What have you done? Let me help you!" Chokichi cried, hurrying to her.

"I have hurt my ankle and twisted my knee," she said faintly, leaning against a tree. "My sandal string is cutting me, and I cannot stoop to loosen it!"

"Let me fix it for you," said Chokichi,

 squatting beside her and touching lightly the injured ankle.

As he touched it, suddenly it changed under his hand. It was no longer the shapely, slender foot of a young woman, but a great hairy, muscular paw like that of a bear. A yell of demon laughter was in the air. He looked up to see that his companion had grown to the height of a giant, and was staring at him with terrible eyes from a monkey face. Only the dress remained to show that this fearful monster was the charming maiden of the moment before.

Mad with fright, Chokichi fled through the *torii* into the shrine itself that stood with mossy roof in the dark grove. An old man was sitting in the priest's room adjoining the temple, and over a *hibachi* by his side a tea-kettle was boiling merrily. The homely sight and sound were reassuring, and Chokichi felt a little better for the pleasant human companionship.

"Welcome! Welcome!" called the old

man. "Come in and take a cup of tea and have a whiff of tobacco. The day is hot, and you must be tired with your long climb up the hill."

So gentle, so polite, so smiling was his host, that Chokichi sat and talked with him, forgetting the prayers that he had come so far to offer. At last he told him all about his strange adventure on the hillside. The old man chuckled as he described the girl.

"Ay, truly!" he said, wagging his head knowingly.

Then Chokichi told of the great hairy foot.

"Was it like this?" shouted the old man, with a yell, rising suddenly, and Chokichi saw that same foot thrust out in front of him, while far above his head, with staring, terrible eyes and monkey face, was the monster from which he had fled. Around him echoed peals of derisive laughter.

This time it was rage rather than fright that moved Chokichi, and he sprang at his

 tormentor like a wounded tiger. Gripping the great hairy leg tightly with both hands, he held on until he lost consciousness.

A hunter, passing the shrine late in the day, found him lying on the ground just within the *torii*. He was bleeding from a cut on the head. In one hand he held a bunch of reddish hair. It took some time to bring him to his senses, and then he told his story.

"I 've got something to show for it," he said manfully. "I tore this out of the monster before he threw me down."

The hunter looked at it curiously.

"That is fox-hair!" he exclaimed. "You were bewitched! I know those foxes, they come from the Inari shrine on the other side of Futago Yama!"

Slowly Chokichi toiled down the mountain-side through the darkness; sadly he let himself into his silent house.

When Tōshi returned to his work the next morning, he found his master with

a bad cut on his forehead, but welcoming his apprentice with a joy that caused that mischievous youngster some surprise.

"And did the master's business prosper yesterday?" he inquired humbly, but with a twinkle in his eye that showed he had his own suspicions.

"Tōshi," answered Chokichi enigmatically, "if a man would see his business prosper, let him mind it himself, nor clamor to the gods for aid."

VII

THE BUYER OF AMÉ

Amé, a sweetmeat made from wheat gluten, very nourishing and wholesome for children.

VII

OLD man Genjiro was sitting over the last coals in his *hibachi*, warming his hands and blinking sleepily. The shutters of the little sweetmeat shop were closed for the night. The street outside was quiet. Even the footsteps of the few belated wayfarers who were still abroad were muffled by the soft, heavy snow that had wrapped the city as in a garment.

The old man nodded over the dying embers, jerking himself awake from time to time to poke the few coals together with the iron fire-sticks, or to rake and pick over the mound of ashes. His worn old face was seamed and crisscrossed with wrinkles, but they were the tracks of kindly emotions, not of the fiercer passions. His wadded blue cotton garments were wrapped tightly about his small, withered body, and his

 rough, red, bare feet were doubled up under him as he sat on the matted floor. He shivered a little as the red coals grew smaller and smaller.

"What a cold night it is!" he said to himself. "I am glad I do not have to be out pulling a jinrikisha;" and he laughed cheerfully, as he looked about with some pride on his little shop, and his stock in trade spread out in the front of it in small glass showcases.

Genjiro felt that he was living like a lord in his old age after his years of toil, first in the rice-fields, then in the shafts of a jinrikisha. He had lived honestly always, and had brought up three sons, who were now his pride and joy,—strong men all,—two, pullers of jinrikisha like their father before them, and one, the baby, serving his time in the army. When he grew old his sons had set him up in the little shop, and he managed to make a comfortable living off of the small coins that the children in the neighborhood paid him for his wares.

Genjiro's old wife, Fusa, was pottering about the back room, making the bed for the night. He could hear her snort and snuffle about her work, for she was asthmatic, and the heavy winter comfortables that she was handling were almost too much for her strength.

"Put on all the comfortables that we have," he called to her; "I am coming to bed in a minute. No one will come to buy *amé* on such a night as this."

Fusa grunted in response and went on with her work. Genjiro sat still over his fire, too sleepy and warm to leave it for the cold little back room, even with the prospect of all the comfortables in the house to lure him to his bed. He heard the great bell of the temple close by boom out the hour, but he was too sleepy to count the slow strokes.

It was Fusa's voice from the next room that roused him with the words, "Some one is at the door!"

He jumped up with a start and heard a

 very thin, weak voice calling, "Excuse me," just outside the shop. He pushed open the shutter in surprise that any one should come at that hour for *amé*. A woman stood in the street. He could not see her clearly in the darkness and amid the falling snow, which covered her dress and lay upon her disheveled hair and seemed to whiten even her face. She glided rather than stepped into the shop.

Genjiro hardly knew what to say, but he bowed politely, on all fours, lifting his head at intervals from between his hands to remark that it was a cold night, that it was the first time that he had had the pleasure of seeing his visitor, and that he hoped he might be able to serve her.

The woman's face was very sweet and sad, as she bowed in response to Genjiro's greetings. "I would like to buy a little of your *amé*," she said, and she pointed to a long, bright-colored paper bag of the confection, such as is sold to mothers when they bring their babies to the temple for

the *miya mairi*.[1] Genjiro handed it to her, and received in return a curiously blackened and mouldy coin. Then the customer glided out into the street, and the old man closed his shutter and retired to the back room.

"What was it?" said Fusa, for Genjiro was shaking all over.

"Only a woman who wanted to buy *amé*," he said; but he shuddered as he crept into bed, and it was a long time before he was warm enough to sleep.

The next day the old man was pale and distraught. When the baby of the clog-seller across the street came toddling over, holding out a rin[2] piece with a square hole in the middle, he was so absorbed in thinking of his strange customer that he did not see her at all, and her dirty round mouth began to pucker, and her fat little

[1] The presentation of a baby at the parish temple, a ceremony that takes place when the child is about a month old.

[2] A coin something like the Chinese "cash," worth about half a mill.

 bosom to heave up and down under its red wadded gown, before he turned his abstracted gaze upon her. To be sure, he comforted her with a beautiful long piece of *amé* jelly and a little paper flag with a round red sun in the middle; but her faith in him was only partially restored, and she trotted home so depressed that she nearly ran under the wheels of a passing jinrikisha, and wailed loudly when the runner threw her aside as if she had been a pillow. And when the boys came home from school at noon, they were surprised to see that their friend Genjiro, instead of sitting in the front of the shop, bowing and smiling over his tempting wares, was hugging his *hibachi*, smoking gloomily, and staring into the street with vacant eyes. It took two shouts and much jingling of small coin to wake him from his reverie.

That night, Genjiro and his old wife went to bed early, and the shop was closely shuttered and quite dark when the temple bell sounded ten. Genjiro was not asleep, how-

ever, and he lay listening to the sounds in the street, with Fusa wheezing and snoring beside him. And then, again he heard the weak, pleading voice.

"Excuse me for troubling you," it said.

Genjiro lay and shivered, but his kind heart at last got the better of his fears, and he rose and went into the shop. Softly he slid open the shutter, and his last night's visitor stood before him.

"I am making you great trouble," she said, "but I would like some more of your nice *amé*," and she bowed, and pointed as before to a bright-colored paper bag.

Genjiro gave it to her, she slipped into his hand again a rusty coin, and glided away. Trembling, the old man closed the shutter, crept back to bed, and lay cowering with cold and fear.

Every night for five nights the same thing happened, and Genjiro, what with fear and bewilderment, was a changed man. His business suffered, for the boys now patronized the itinerant sweetmeat

 vender who came into the street every noon and stood close to Genjiro's shop with his little cart of sweets, blowing a bubbly brass horn and dancing at intervals for the crowd of children that flocked about him. Genjiro was too forlorn to make an effort to hold his trade. He only sat in the back of the shop and watched the small coins that ought to be his drop into his supplanter's money-box.

At last Genjiro forced himself up to a high resolve. He would follow the stranger and see what became of her. He never went to bed now until his weird customer had made her nightly purchase, but sat and shivered over his *hibachi* until she came. Fusa was sure that the visitor was a fox-woman, and that her husband was bewitched; and when he told her that night that he was going to follow the stranger, the poor old woman groveled on the floor, entreating him not to be so rash.

"She will only lead you into some great danger. You will never come back if you

follow that fox-woman," she cried; but though Genjiro shuddered, he remained firm, and all day Fusa mourned him as one already dead.

When the woman came that night, she looked paler and sadder than ever, and she bowed very low and wept as she handed Genjiro the rusty rin in payment for her purchase. When the old man saw her distress, he was firmer than ever in his resolve to follow her and discover her home and her grief. He had put on a clean pair of jinrikisha-man's shoes, so that there should be no sound from his footsteps. As he stepped down from the shop platform to draw the shutter, he closed himself out into the street, and glided along in his soft foot-gear almost as silently as the retreating figure that he followed. He had to run at a dog-trot to keep up with her, so quickly did she move. They passed the temple, the great curves of its roof throwing dark shadows in the moonlight, then on into the graveyard beyond.

 There was a faint smell of incense in the air, and a few coals burned dimly on a tombstone. Genjiro hesitated, — a graveyard is not a pleasant place to enter so late at night, — but his strange guide seemed to feel his hesitation, and turning, looked at him sadly and beckoned to him. Genjiro followed manfully. "Poor thing! She wants something of me!" he said to himself. They came to a great tree girdled with a straw rope, under which was a grave, and there the woman disappeared.

So he had been selling *amé* every night to a ghost! Surely Genjiro's fears were justified! He was weak and trembling when he reached home, and it was only after several cups of saké, which Fusa brought him when she saw his condition, that he could speak connectedly enough to tell his story.

Far into the night they talked the matter over, but they could not tell what to do next. At last Fusa said, "You must go to the priest to-morrow, and he will know

who is buried in that grave. Then, perhaps, we can find out what the ghost wants."

Very early the next morning Genjiro and Fusa went to the temple, taking with them the six rusty coins that their ghostly visitor had paid. They found the place alive with worshipers, for it was a feast day. The priests were almost too busy to attend to the humble pair, but at last a gentle old ecclesiastic took pity on their evident distress, called them to the priests' house close by the shrine, and asked them kindly what their trouble was. They told the story, passing it from one to the other in their excitement over its details, and handed over to the priest the coins, neatly folded in a piece of white paper.

The holy man looked grave. "Where is the tomb?" he said. "Can you show it to me now?"

"Surely, your reverence," answered Genjiro eagerly; "it is just under the sacred cedar tree, — the great tree with a rope around it."

"Show it to me," said the priest, and together they went to the graveyard. The grave was a new one; only a wooden post bearing the posthumous name of the deceased marked the spot.

"This is the grave of Kiku," said the good man, and tears of pity stood in his eyes. "She was the wife of Chokichi Sato, and she died less than ten days ago. I myself performed the ceremony when we laid her and her unborn child here under the sacred cedar. Without doubt the gods have sent her to you with a message."

Then Genjiro and Fusa stood, awestruck, before the grave, while the priest returned to the temple to tell what had come to pass. And when the priests and the people heard the story of the woman ghost that had come nightly to Genjiro's shop to buy *amé*, they came in a great crowd and stood about the grave.

And one who heard the story went to Chokichi, the husband of Kiku, and told him, and he hastened to the place just as

he was, in his white-lettered carpenter's blouse and blue tights. And when he saw the priests and the people standing, he said, "Will you permit that we open the grave, and learn whether there is any reason why my wife has visited the *améya*[1] every night for a week?"

And the priests answered, "We will permit it, and we will, ourselves, watch the opening and say prayers for the repose of O Kiku San's spirit."

Then picks and hoes were brought, and the earth, wet and heavy with melted snow, was moved from the grave, until at last they came to the great cask in which the dead had been placed for burial.

And Chokichi said, "If it please your reverences, I will open the coffin, that I alone may be polluted by the touch of the dead." And he opened the coffin, the priests chanting a mass for the repose of the young wife's soul.

And when the cover was removed, a

[1] One who sells *amé*.

 little gurgle came from within the coffin, and all the people saw the dead mother sitting within, and at her feet a tiny living baby, smiling and gurgling, and sucking a piece of *amé*. And Chokichi lifted out the baby, all naked as it was, and folded it from the winter air in his bosom. "My little son!" he said, and he wept.

Then said the old priest to all the people as they stood amazed, "Now ye can see how great is mother love, that will, even from the grave, watch over and feed its offspring. Behold how for her baby's sake this poor mother hath given to the *améya* the six rin[1] which she needed to keep her from entering naked into the spirit world," and he placed reverently in the coffin the paper containing the six rusty coins that Genjiro had given to him.

Then he turned to Genjiro, and said,

[1] On the banks of the River of Death an old hag waits to strip the souls of their clothing as they pass by. Therefore with the dead must always be buried six rin, with which to propitiate the old woman.

"The kindness of this man, opening his door night after night to the mother's ghost, has given back to Chokichi his son." And Genjiro and Chokichi returned to their homes, each followed by a wondering crowd.

From that time on everything that Genjiro did prospered. From all the city people came to buy *amé* of him, and to hear his story. Mothers sent their children to spend their stray coins at his shop, for they said, "He is a kind man, and will always give you good *amé*." And the rival *améya* with his bubbly trumpet came no more into the neighborhood, but danced and played in the next ward, where there was no Genjiro to hold the trade of all the street.

VIII

THE PEONY LANTERN

VIII

OLD Hanzo stood at the front door bowing double and sucking in his breath as his master stepped into the jinrikisha and stood for a moment to be firmly wrapped about by the dust-robe that the kurumaya held in his hands.

"Good-by, Hanzo," called the young man gayly as he whirled away. "Do not expect me back until late to-night, and mind that you have something good to eat ready for me when I return."

The old servant bowed, and clattered off on his clogs to discuss with his wife the carrying out of the master's order.

Tēichi Ogiwara was a gay young fellow, who, with more wealth than was quite good for him, was living carelessly and idly in his pleasant little house in the Negishi suburb of Tokyo. Of samurai

 descent, brought up in the stern traditions of his ancestors, he had come to Tokyo a few years before from the castle town of Wakamatsu, an earnest youth, on fire with zeal to so educate himself as to be of use to his beloved country. While his parents lived, their delight in his progress through the University, their joy in the letters in which he breathed forth his high resolves, had kept him steadily at his work and away from the temptations that are set for the feet of unwary students in the capital.

But things had changed greatly for him within a year. His parents had died, leaving to him a substantial little income; and after the first grief was over, the young fellow, looking about him for companionship, had made friends with one of his classmates in the medical school, — a brilliant scholar and amusing talker, popular with classmates and instructors alike, and always ready to engage in any enterprise that promised either pleasure or profit to

himself. Tēichi, by nature silent and reserved, was attracted by the gayety and energy of Komura, and Komura, himself of low birth and small financial resources, was only too delighted to be taken up by a young fellow of independent means, and of a social position far higher than his own. And so the friendship grew apace, Komura gaining daily greater influence over Tēichi, until, at the expiration of a few months, he had subtly sapped the high ideals and brought the younger and more innocent man as nearly as possible to his own level.

"You have brains enough and money enough. Why do you dig so at your studies? If I had your chances, would n't I have a good time? Leave the hard work and plain living to us of the heimin. We have to do it because we have neither money nor place. I 'd show you how to use your money so as to get some good out of it, if you 'd let me!"

This was the general trend of Komura's

 influence, and to Tēichi the temptations of a luxury and dissipation that he had always been taught to shun grew irresistible. It seemed as if the asceticism of his early life, the plain living and high thinking that are a part of the samurai creed, had been the mere restraining shell of his pupa state, from which he emerged suddenly as a full-grown butterfly, seeking pleasure wherever it was to be found.

It was at Komura's suggestion that he had taken the dainty house at Negishi, hidden behind a bamboo fence from the quiet lane that was its only approach, and with a lovely garden shaded by pine and cherry, cool with running water, picturesque with mossy lanterns, rustic bridges, azalea-covered mountain ranges, and pebbly walks. Here, by Komura's recommendation, old Hanzo had been installed as major domo in a lodge at the gate, where he lived with his old wife Koma, keeping guard in the master's absence and caring for his comfort when he was at

home. Hanzo and Koma were both discreet, and said nothing to any one of the high revels that went on within the house, — of kurumas that came bringing not only gay young blades like Ogiwara himself, but daintier freight in the shape of bright-eyed, black-haired, brilliantly robed geishas, who plied the saké bottle, and danced, and bandied wit, and entertained the uproarious young fellows far into the night. Then there would be times when Hanzo had a long rest, and his master never came home at all, but spent his days and nights wandering about the city to various questionable resorts, or seeking new stimulus for his jaded senses by trips into the country to places famous for the pleasures offered to travelers. If Tēichi ever thought in those reckless days of his stern old samurai father, of the joy of his mother in his high ideals, it was to push the thought out of his mind as quickly as possible, and obstinately shut the door against its reëntrance.

 To-day he trundled merrily along in his jinrikisha to meet Komura at Kameido, where, after viewing the plum-blossoms and spending a sentimental afternoon in writing poems to hang upon the branches of the gray old trees, they hoped to pick up a jovial party for an evening together at an eel-house near Megané Bashi. Through the damp greenness of Uyeno Park he sped, along the front of the great temple and pleasure-ground of Asakusa, across the Sumida River, and into the Kameido grounds, where, by the quaint semicircular bridge that arches over the "Pond of the Heart," he found Komura awaiting him, a big bundle in his hand wrapped in a purple *furoshiki.*

"Hulloa! old fellow, I thought you were never coming. I have n't seen a soul that we know yet, but I 've brought some good company along, anyway," and he shook the suspiciously shaped bundle, from which came a gurgle that explained his meaning. "We shan't lack inspira-

tion for our poems even if the plums are not in bloom."

It was early in the season, and the great gray trees of the plum-garden showed only here and there a pink bud pushing its way outward. For a real poet the suggestion of beauty to come might mean more than its later fulfillment, but to the two thoughtless youths who seated themselves upon a blanket-covered bench beneath the trees, clapping their hands loudly until a red-cheeked maid brought them tea and cakes, then took out their writing-cases, poem-cards, and saké-bottles to seek a borrowed inspiration, the bare, gnarled trunks gave little material for composition. For a while they thought and wrote in silence, but the quiet and beauty of the place did not appeal to their excitement-pampered tastes, and it was Komura at last who dashed his effort to the ground, shut up his writing-case with a snap, and jumped into his clogs.

"Come on, old man, I can show you an

 adventure worth two of this," he cried,— "an adventure that Yoshitsuné [1] himself might envy!"

Tēichi rose to the bait, glad enough to leave a place in the seclusion of which unwelcome thoughts kept crowding and would not be driven out.

"I 'm with you, boy, lead on!" he shouted. "Wait till I pay the tea-money, and then we 're off."

In the long jinrikisha ride to Fukagawa that followed, Komura took the lead, and Tēichi, sleepy with the saké he had taken, sat loosely in his little carriage, with red face and closed eyes. At last they stopped at a neat gateway in a green bamboo fence, and Komura roused him from his slumbers with a shake.

"Here we are now. Collect yourself and put on your prettiest manners, for we are to make a call upon a real lady,—

[1] A hero of the twelfth century, noted not only for his skill in war, but also for his adventures with the fair sex.

one whom even you, with all your aristocratic notions, would be glad to marry if you could."

Tēichi, prepared for any adventure with a young person of doubtful reputation, shrank back at his friend's words.

"But her father! What would her father think?"

"Old Iijima, her father, is far enough away. No fear of him! He's taken up with a young wife, and leaves his daughter here alone because the two women cannot live in one house. He'll never know. Trust the girl to keep her secret. I've called on her once or twice before," and he winked in a meaning way.

Still reluctant, for some spark of honor yet remained to him, but curious to see the young woman, Tēichi pocketed his scruples. Komura rang the bell at the gate, and soon, on clattering clogs, an elderly maid-servant answered the summons.

"Welcome, Dr. Komura," she said,

bowing and smiling. "Come in and bring with you your honorable companion."

Komura, with an air of professional gravity, entered the gate, introducing his friend as Dr. Ogiwara.

"And how is your mistress since my last visit?" he inquired. "Her father bade me call again and make sure that she was improving."

"Truly, she is much better, doctor, but still she is restless and feverish at times, and sometimes I fear that all is not well. I will call her and let you see her."

"Remember, O Kuni San, give her no hint that I am a physician. Tell her only that a friend of her father has come with a message from him."

"Indeed, doctor, I will give no hint," answered O Kuni, bowing profoundly as she left the room.

Komura and Ogiwara discussed their tea and cake in silence while the maid was gone, for paper walls have ears, and eyes

as well, and discretion in speech and act is a necessary precaution in a Japanese house.

Soon there was a double pattering of feet without, the sliding doors were pushed open, and a graceful, slender girl, dressed in the *montzuki* or ceremonial dress, crouching at the threshold, bowed humbly to the two young men, greeting them as friends of her father and murmuring polite and hospitable phrases.

Komura bowed in return, introduced Ogiwara, gave a long hypothetical message from her father, and inquired deferentially after her health. When at last the bows and speeches of ceremony were over, the real visit began. Komura, as usual, was the leader of the conversation, but Ogiwara, sitting almost in silence beside him, used his eyes to good effect. Never had he seen such beauty in a woman, never such charming ways, such bashful, winning smiles. He compared her in his mind with the creatures to whom of late his attentions had

 been given, and with a revulsion of feeling despised himself that he had thought them fascinating. And through his mind went ringing Komura's words,—"a real lady—one whom even you would be glad to marry."

Komura, heated by saké and flushed with the success of his adventure, chatted gayly on, growing more and more familiar, less like the gentleman he affected to be, until there came upon the face of his little hostess, and of her maid as well, a look of disgust not unmingled with terror. Little by little he dropped the niceties of language, the subtle use of honorifics that marks the intercourse between persons of gentle breeding, and talked to the little lady with the easy, coarse, patronizing familiarity that he was wont to use toward the women of his acquaintance. Tēichi was wakened from his reverie by seeing his companion lean forward and lay an impudent hand upon the shoulder of his shocked and shrinking hostess. Instantly the samurai

training of his youth came to the front. He seized Komura by the wrist.

"Dog!" he hissed between set teeth, "would you insult a lady in her own house?"

Holding him in an iron grasp, he turned to little Tsuyu, crouching frightened with Kuni behind her.

"If the young lady will kindly retire with her maid, I will see that this rude fellow troubles the house no longer."

With hasty bows and hurried apologies for the trouble they were causing him, the women withdrew, and Ogiwara, partly by force and partly by persuasion, dragged Komura to his kuruma, tumbled him in, and ordered the runner to take him to his lodgings. For himself, the day of careless pleasure was ended, and he went to his home as fast as his men could carry him, thinking the while with remorse of the timid smiles, the frightened, pleading eyes of his little hostess.

For Tēichi, though at first he did not

 know it, was in love. Day and night the small house by the river, with its charming mistress, seemed calling him. He had relapsed into his old loneliness, for the thought of Komura was hateful to him; and though the two men met at lectures and other university work, they did nothing more than exchange greetings. All intimacy had vanished since the struggle in O Tsuyu's quiet guest-room. As the months went by, old Hanzo, seeing his master moping alone at home, reading the Chinese classics, studying from huge foreign books, eating sparingly and without relish, drinking not at all, grew alarmed. He had enjoyed the old days of wild dissipation; he did not care for so stern and grave a master, who wanted nothing and was pleased with nothing, and brought no friends nor presents to the house.

"Is the master ill, that he goes abroad no more?" he suggested deferentially.

"Nay, Hanzo, not ill, only sad and lonely."

"But if you will permit the suggestion from one so unworthy, would it not be well for the master to seek relief from his sadness and loneliness by going out and seeing his friends or some of the sights of the town?"

"Indeed, Hanzo, your care for me is most commendable, but I have already seen too much of my friends and of the town. A little rest is what I need most;" and Tēichi relapsed into silence.

Hanzo sat pondering, his head bowed, his hands drawn up within his blue cotton sleeves. At last he spoke again:—

"Will the master pardon my stupidity if I make a suggestion?"

"Say on, Hanzo, I am listening."

The old man bowed his head upon his hands.

"Master, I know a man. He is of low birth and a most unworthy person, a cousin of my own. He has a poor, mean boat, with a matted deck-house amidships, and in this boat he sculls along the river, taking

 out pleasure parties by the day. If it is desired to fish, he will supply the bait and tackle. Would it not save your honor from his sadness to spend a day thus upon the river?"

"Good Hanzo," said the young man, touched by his servant's thoughtfulness in his behalf, "send for your cousin. Perhaps a day upon the river is what I need. If he has no other engagement, we will go to-morrow."

And so it came about that the next day Ogiwara, lying on the mats of a house-boat of spotless white wood, and propelled by strong arms, found himself on the river Sumida, watching with lazy interest the crowds of small craft that fill the stream above the iron bridge. Small steam ferry-boats towing strings of passenger barges sputtered along on their way to Mukojima and Hōrikiri, well patronized to-day, for the great iris-beds were in full bloom. Women and brightly dressed girls were there in plenty, and Tēichi scanned them eagerly

in the hope that he might catch some glimpse of the sweet face that haunted his dreams. Other house-boats too, like his own, were there, in which whole families sat and gossiped on the mats, sipping tea, smoking pipes, playing games, and taking vast delight in the life and movement of the river. Fast racing barges, too, came scurrying along under the impulse of the strong young arms of their student crews, picked men from the University, the Naval School, and many other of the higher schools of the city.

As they dropped downstream the pleasure-boats grew fewer, and the cargo-boats — junks, schooners, and small coasting steamers — were moored or anchored near the storehouses from which the city is fed. And then, still lower down, they came into a place where small houses stood in gardens running down to the water's edge.

Ogiwara left the fishing to Hanzo, and spent his time in a meditation that was still

 conscious of the continually changing scene through which they moved.

"Look, Hanzo, is not this Fukagawa we are passing?"

"Truly, master, it is Fukagawa."

"And, Hanzo, do you see that gate that opens toward the river? Bid your cousin bring the boat close to the gate, that I may see therein."

Softly the boat glided to the open gate, and Tēichi looked into a little garden, green and damp and shady, with an iris-bed in full bloom close to a miniature pond. As he stepped from the boat O Kuni came running to him, her clogs making no sound on the soft, mossy earth.

"Welcome," she said; "please enter our humble cottage. My young lady has been waiting so long for you, and you did not come! Now she is very ill. She cannot eat, and she is growing thinner every day. She will be so glad that you have come!"

Tēichi walked up through the pleasant garden, stepped upon the polished piazza,

and as O Kuni pushed aside the *shoji*, bowed low, murmuring polite phrases of pleasure at meeting O Tsuyu again. As he lifted his head and looked at the lady of his dreams, his heart, just now madly elated, fell like a lump of lead in his breast; for it was the same sweet face and smile, but pale and wan; the same graceful figure, but so thin that the loose robe she wore seemed to have nothing within it.

"Oh, I am so glad, — so glad," she said, and tears rose in her eyes and rolled down her hollow cheeks. "It is long since you were here! Why did you not come before?"

Very gently he soothed her, and in a long, long talk they told their love. How swiftly the hours passed! It was only when the setting sun turned the river into molten gold that they remembered anything of time and place. Then Tsuyu started with a shudder: —

"Oh, go! go!" she said. "What if my father should find you here!"

"Give me, then, some token of your love, — something to draw me back to you, — a pledge that you are mine and I am yours."

Hurriedly she drew from a little cupboard in the *tokonoma* a white wooden case, and from it took a gold-lacquered incense-box.

"Here," she said, "this was my mother's. I have always kept it with me until now. The half of it I give to you, — a pledge of love through seven lives."

He took it from her with eager hands, lifted it to his face and touched it reverently to his forehead, then hid it in his sleeve.

"Through seven lives I will be true," he said.

Just then there was a loud whirr of kuruma wheels without, a clatter of clogs upon the stone walk. With a hissing rush the sliding-doors flew open, and a man's face, distorted with rage, was looking down upon them both.

"Fellow, who are you who dare to enter my daughter's house in my absence?"

There was a rush, a struggle, — Ogiwara felt himself overpowered, and was awaiting death from the sharp, short dirk of his adversary, when O Tsuyu's soft arm was thrown around him, her gentle voice cried: —

"Father, oh, father, kill me instead! I am the wicked one."

The voice died in a gurgle, and Ogiwara shouted hoarsely at the wretch, who had buried his knife in the soft round throat of his daughter.

"Master," — it was Hanzo's well-trained servant's voice, — "master, a dream is troubling your slumber, and the boat has reached her mooring-place. Will it please you to permit me to pay my worthless cousin and seek kurumas for our return?"

Teichi, opening his dazed eyes, saw about him the busy river, — the pleasure-boats, the little steamers, the holiday-makers returning from their flower-view-

 ing, — and knew that it was only a dream. With a sigh, partly of regret that he had not really seen his beloved, and greatly of relief that he might hope to find her some day in the land of the living, he rose, and soon was rattling through the prosaic modern streets toward his home in Negishi.

As he took off his clothing for the night, he felt a flat, hard something in his sleeve, and searching there he found a piece of golden lacquer, the lid of an incense-box. Upon it had been painted by some great artist of the past the seven flowers of autumn, and here and there, on the polished, gleaming surface, slight spots, as of mould, had begun to show themselves. "A pledge of love through seven lives!" Surely it was a dream, and yet — this lacquered box — where did it come from?

Hanzo had no special reason to be proud of the successful issue of his effort for his master's entertainment. Ogiwara grew more silent and ascetic. He spent long

hours alone in his room with closed doors, and once, when the old man had placed his eye to a tongue-made hole in the paper of the *shoji*, he had seen him looking at a gold-lacquered box-lid like one demented.

"The master is surely crazy," he said to Koma. "I will go to his friend Komura San, and tell him about it."

Komura heard the story of Ogiwara's strange freak with unchanging face and half-closed eyes that looked not once upon the humble Hanzo, crouched at the threshold and bowing at the end of every sentence. When he spoke, it was only to chide Hanzo politely for his officiousness, and tell him that he need not fear for his place.

"The master will soon recover," he said patronizingly. "I have seen young fellows before who thought they were in love. When he knows the girl is beyond his reach, he will be himself again."

Not many days later, Komura, pocketing his pride, called at the villa in Negishi.

"What's happened to you, old fellow?"

 he said to Ogiwara, after the first greetings were over. "You look as if you had been living with ghosts until you were all ready to become one yourself!"

Tēichi started. The color rushed to his face, then left him pale as death. Komura rattled on, observing but giving no sign: —

"You have been shy of all the fellows since our last adventure, at Fukagawa. You need society. What do you say to some kind of a spree to-night?"

Tēichi shuddered. He could not look Komura in the face when he thought of his coarse manners and low behavior, and O Tsuyu's frightened eyes. He muttered something scarcely intelligible about his studies and the necessity for hard work if he would get his degree with his class. Komura was angry. Here he had gone more than half way, and now Ogiwara refused to take one step toward renewing their old comradeship.

"When you get your degree, if you ever do," he said with a sneer, "I hope it will

bring you better success as a physician than you have had so far. Do you know the effect of your last professional call?"

His companion was at last roused to interest.

"Komura," he said, "if you are not ashamed to speak of that day, I need not be. Tell me what you mean."

Into his eyes rushed the spirit of his race. Komura remembered the stories Ogiwara had told him in his roistering days of the practice in jiu-jitsu, in sword-play, in archery, and with modern firearms, that had been his training under his father's roof. The sneer changed for a wheedling tone of apology as he watched Tēichi's strong brown fingers twitching with emotion.

"Why, Ogiwara, how long is it since you have become so dignified that you cannot take a joke? I meant no harm, but that hot samurai blood of yours is always on the lookout for an insult. I only meant that the girl was dead. She died a few weeks after our visit."

"Dead!" Tēichi looked at Komura as if only half comprehending. "Dead! Then it was not a dream! He did kill her after all!"

"No one killed her," rejoined Komura testily. "How you do go ahead of a fellow's words! She just died. Kuni told me, and said she grew very ill after our visit, and when she died your name was on her lips."

"My name!" Tēichi's voice rose into a wail. "No wonder that I dream of her by night and think of her by day. It is her spirit that comes to me, — her spirit that cannot rest because I love her so."

He buried his face in his sleeves and his whole body shook with sobs, while Komura, a fierce grin of satisfaction on his face at the revenge that was his, sat and watched him.

When Tēichi lifted his head, Komura, his features moulded into an expression of sympathetic gravity, was still sitting near him.

"Why, Ogiwara, old man," he said, "I had no idea that you were so hard hit. Can I do anything for you? I have got you into this trouble, and I would do anything to help you out."

"Go, call me a priest," said Ogiwara. "I would have masses said for that sweet soul, for it cannot rest."

"Ogiwara," — Komura's voice was as smooth as the rustle of silk, and he laid his hand sympathetically upon his companion's arm, — "if you will permit one who shares your grief to advise you, let me speak before I carry out your will."

"Say on," answered the younger man, "and if you have aught to suggest that will be of help to her or to me, be quick with it."

"Ogiwara, it is you she loves, and your companionship she seeks. The sing-song prayers of a thousand priests will be nothing to her. Don't you know that one visit to her grave, one offering of incense and fresh water and flowers from you, will be

 dearer to her than your whole fortune spent in masses?"

"Let us go to her grave! Come quickly!" Tēichi leaped to his feet and seized Komura. "We will go at once."

"But we cannot go now. I do not know where she is buried. Rest here quietly for a few days while I find out. Then I will come and lead you to it."

Komura's voice was softer than the murmur of the summer breeze through a garden. Tēichi looked into his eyes, which answered back his gaze with the innocent unconsciousness of a kitten, then released his hold.

"I will wait," he said, "but come soon, for I cannot bear a long delay." His mouth was twitching, beads of perspiration stood on his forehead, and a deadly pallor followed the flush of anger.

Komura bowed and slipped away, thanking his lucky stars that he was alive, and vowing that it would be a long time before he trusted his precious skin with that lu-

natic again. Nor would he have been reassured if he had seen his friend shut himself tightly in his room, draw from his sleeve a gold-lacquered box-lid, and sit looking at it with streaming eyes until the long summer day died gently into twilight, and Hanzo with silent step stole into the room to find his master's head fallen upon his little desk, while in his hand he still clutched the bit of lacquer.

And so the wretched days slipped by, and August with its steaming heat and myriad odors hung over the drooping city. Only the great white lotus[1] blossoms in the Castle moats, drawing their beauty from the black and evil-smelling slime, basked in the sultry sunshine.

"Flowers of the dead," thought Ogiwara, "spirits that rise like hers from the foulness and evil below, and bear without scathe the heavenly glory that wilts all others!"

[1] The lotus is always associated with death in the Japanese mind.

The festival of O Bon[1] has come, and along the city streets are kindled fires to light the returning spirits to their homes; on every porch and balcony are hung lanterns, glowing balls of light, some with long streamers that wave and flutter in the breeze, or bits of glass that tinkle as if ghostly hands were making music; and in every home, before the ancestral tablets are set special offerings of fruits and fresh vegetables; while in the graveyards, tombs are cleared from moss, newly served with food and drink, and decorated with lanterns.

In the little house in Negishi, Ogiwara had set beside the tablets of his father and mother a new and costly one on which the name of Tsuyu was engraved. And as he made the offerings which filial piety and his own affection enjoined before the other two, he offered yet more abundant gifts to the memorial of her whom he had come to call his "spirit bride." He was alone.

[1] See note 1, page 3.

Hanzo and Koma had for once left their small house in the yard to visit the graves of their parents on the other side of the city. He sat on the veranda, looking into the damp greenness of the garden that seemed resting from the stifling heat of the day. The lanterns above his head glowed softly, great fireflies flickered among the shrubbery. Peace such as he had not known for months stole over his spirit.

There was a clicking of clogs and a sound of gentle voices in the lane. Tēichi started. There was something strange yet familiar in their tones. He stepped down from the veranda into a pair of garden sandals, and walked noiselessly to the hedge, through which he peered. Two figures were moving toward the gate, one of them carrying an O Bon lantern and leading the other by the hand. The light shone upon their white faces, and he could see as they drew near that the lantern-bearer was O Kuni, and by her side walked little Tsuyu.

There was no fear nor hesitation in his walk as he hurried to the gate to welcome them. There she was, not as he had seen her in his dream, pale and hollow-cheeked, but bright, girlish, charming, as she had been on the day of his visit to her home. When she saw him, one little hand went shyly to her face, and her flowing sleeve hid all but her shining eyes from his enchanted gaze.

"Welcome," he said, bowing low. "Welcome to my humble home. Enter, if it please you, and let me offer you some slight refreshment."

With many formal bows and deprecating phrases they were at last installed in his guest-room. The lantern, a translucent globe of white paper, with trailing streamers and a bunch of many-colored peonies at the top, was hung from the eaves, where it glowed and waved its paper streamers in the cool breeze that had sprung up at their entrance.

With curious eyes O Tsuyu looked at

the tablets on the sacred shelf. The tiny streams of smoke that had been rising straight as needles toward the low ceiling, now wavered and twisted into strange shapes.

"The tablets of your honorable ancestors?" she said.

"Yes, truly," answered Tëichi, feeling uncomfortable as he thought of the offerings he had just made to the spirit of one who was now beside him in the body.

O Kuni San bowed, and in a humble voice began the story of all that had happened since the memorable visit to the cottage in Fukagawa.

"My young lady," she said, "could never forget you and how bravely you had saved her from Komura San's indignities. She hoped that you would return, and waited sadly for you, until at last she grew so ill that her father was anxious. I do not know who told him of your visit, — Komura San, perhaps, for he was very angry at you, — but he learned about it, and then he

said that there was nothing to do with such a forward girl but to marry her to the first man that offered. And then" — O Kuni's voice trembled slightly and O Tsuyu's head bowed low behind her sleeves, — "he came one day and said that Komura San was willing to marry my young lady in spite of all that had happened, because now you were dead and could not make any further trouble. O Jo Sama[1] could not bear it, — she had always hated the man, — and so at last she escaped, and I with her. She has now a small house at Aoyama, so small a house that perhaps you could not find it if you were to look, but she is happy, and I am still with her to care for her as I have done since she was a baby. But still she thinks of you, and to-night we came to worship before your tablet."

Ogiwara listened to this recital with growing amazement. It was so like, yet so unlike what he had heard before.

[1] The title used in speaking to or about a young unmarried lady.

"Komura San told me that O Tsuyu was dead," he said, "and I have prayed and offered gifts to her spirit. I might have known that he was lying, and that he had some evil plan behind that gentle voice of his. But nothing matters now. We are both alive and together, and no one can part us again."

It was not until the wan light of the morning had begun to break that Ogiwara let his visitors out and watched their figures vanish softly through the mist, nor knew that Hanzo from his garden lodge had seen the women as they passed. There was a faintness, a smoky, misty look about them as they disappeared from sight that set the old man thinking. Bidding O Koma attend the master if he called, and serve his breakfast, Hanzo slipped into his clogs and clattered along the street and up the hill by wide flights of stone steps to the temple of Kwannon that stood amid its cedars not far away. The priest's house stood beside the temple, and the old man,

 stopping before it, bowed low and cried in a humble voice: —

"Excuse the trouble I am making you."

A little black-robed acolyte, with chubby face and neatly shaven head, answered his summons and bade him enter. Hanzo, sitting on his heels close to the door, waited until, in flowing silken vestment, ready for the great temple service that was soon to begin, an old priest came to learn his need.

"Your Reverence," he said, "it is on behalf of my master I am come. He lives not far from here, and I am troubled lest evil spirits have bewitched him."

As Hanzo told his story of the change that had come over his master, the priest listened with an occasional sympathetic exclamation, and when at the end the old servant described the vague, cloud-like figures that had emerged from the house at dawn, the holy man shook his head.

"Clearly," he said, "some evil ghost is troubling him. For sin committed either in this life or in the past, he is bearing now

the punishment. Could you persuade him to come here to me, to study the Master's Law and learn the control of the flesh, all might yet be well with him."

Hanzo shook his head. "Your Reverence," he said, "my master is a man of proud and impetuous spirit. His old servant could hardly persuade him to become a monk," and he smiled between his hands as he bowed himself to the mats, thinking how little such a course would make for the servant's welfare. "Is there no other way?"

"A way there is indeed, which may avail, if the young man's soul is not already knit to the spirit that haunts him. The words of the Lord Buddha have power to drive out evil ghosts, if he whom they seek does not will them to enter."

Armed with a talisman, the good words of the Law written on white paper by the priest himself, Hanzo went home, to find his master already out.

"Where did the master go?" he asked of O Koma, who had seen him off.

"He told the runners to take him to Aoyama, but gave no street or number."

"And was he any more sad and strange than he has always been of late?"

"Nay, Hanzo, he was bright and merry, and waved me good-by, and said that he should probably bring guests home with him."

Still perturbed in spirit, but somewhat cheered by Koma's account of Ogiwara's mood, Hanzo pottered about his work; while the master, bowling along behind two fast-running kurumayas, was saying to himself with each revolution of the wheels, "I 'll find her house if it takes all day."

Through narrow streets and wide, across moats and canals, by grass-grown fortifications topped with leaning pine-trees, along the sentinel-guarded wall of the Crown Prince's Palace and across the great parade ground where white-clad regiments were drilling, into a suburb of green lanes, bamboo fences, grassy fields, and here and there a rice-swamp, he came at last. Here

he dismissed his men and, alone and on foot, wandered from house to house, reading the name-boards that hung before each gate. It was a fruitless search. No Iijima Tsuyu Ko was to be found among them all. His gayety was gone. Tired out with heat and disappointment, he turned at last toward home. In the sultry August afternoon the little open-fronted shops were drowsing under their overhanging eaves. No kuruma was in sight, hardly a foot-traveler was visible. Tēichi stood before the gate of the great cemetery. Within, it looked cool and quiet and green. There was an odor of incense about it. Fresh flowers stood on every stone, and here and there quiet parties of women and children were brushing with reverent hands fallen petals or stray leaves from the graves.

Listlessly he wandered in, thinking of nothing but the quiet green coolness of the place, and walking slowly toward the opposite gate, where he was sure to find a kuruma to take him home. And as he

 walked with down-dropped head, he saw before him a new-made grave. It had no stone, only an upright pole set up to mark the spot, — sign that the first year had not passed since death, — and hanging above the grave, waving slightly even in the still sultry heat of the August afternoon, was the peony lantern which had glowed from his veranda the previous night.

"Such a small house that perhaps you could not find it, even if you were to look — but I am still with her to care for her — and she is happy."

O Kuni's words were in his ears as his tears fell fast above the "small house."

"At last she escaped, and I with her" — Well he understood now the words which last night had meant so little to his dull brain.

"Happy escape," he said to himself. "O Tsuyu San, I too must escape and be happy!"

Somehow or other he reached his home in Negishi, and Hanzo's heart sank when

he saw his master's face. Untouched he sent away the supper that Koma had prepared for his expected guests, and then dismissed his servants for the night.

"I must have a long rest, — I am tired," he said. "Do not wake me before nine to-morrow morning."

Hanzo had pasted above the gate the talisman that the good priest had given him, but it was with an anxious heart that he closed up the shutters for the night and then lay and listened like a cat, wondering and dreading what the night might bring forth.

There was a faint clicking of clogs, and then two women's voices speaking in low tones outside the gate. Then came a stifled sobbing and a wail, thin and piercing, shrilled into words: —

"Tēichi, oh, Tēichi, would you send me away?"

Trembling, but with every sense alert, Hanzo heard the master slide the *amado* aside, heard him pat-pat in the garden san-

 dals to the gate, heard the heavy bolt move in its socket and the hinges groan. He dared not look, but all his brains were centred in his ears.

"O Tsuyu San," came in a whisper, "have you come for me? I too would escape and dwell with you in your small house in Aoyama."

Hanzo opened his eyes, crawled to the ventilating opening in the *amado*, and looked. Two forms like smoke or mist were drifting beside his master. A peony lantern, glowing and waving, lighted their faces, and they were pale as death. The voices died away, the floating vague figures vanished within the house, and softly, very softly, the master's *amado* slid back into its place.

By nine o'clock the next morning the August sun had flooded all the little garden with its light, and driven far away the shadows and horrors of the night. Hanzo, obedient to his master's order, pushed aside the *amado*, his fears almost at rest in

the warmth and brightness of the morning. All was quiet within and dark; the light from the one opened shutter fell across the guest-room into the little four-mat room in which the master slept. And he was sleeping still. A peony lantern hung above his head, a smile lingered upon his lips, and clasped tightly in his hand he held a bit of golden lacquer,[1] — an incense-box with little spots of mould that tarnished its brightness, and on its lid the seven flowers of autumn worked by a master hand. Thus the two tokens of a deathless love were joined in one again, and Tëichi too had escaped and was happy.

[1] It is the custom in Japan to bury with the dead any small keepsakes specially prized during life. The lacquered incense-box seems to have been such a keepsake, given to Tsuyu by her mother, treasured by her in life, and buried with her.

IX

THE LADY OF THE SCROLL

IX

KINTARO YAMAZAKI was sitting in his little upper room with a letter spread out on the floor in front of him, thinking. He was thinking so hard that his brows were wrinkled, his thick black hair stood up straight on his head, and his eyes, fixed on vacancy, were closed to two narrow black lines in his handsome, smooth, young face.

The thought did not seem to come to any result, for soon, with a sigh, he wrenched himself away from it, reached out for the little tea tray that stood beside him, filled up the pot from the kettle that steamed over the *hibachi*, and sipped his tea from a small cup with much gusto. His face lightened with the cheering draught, and he said aloud, perhaps by way of strengthening his own resolution, "I will ask them

 to wait. Surely they might let me finish my studies first!"

A step sounded on the ladder-like stairway that led to his room. There was a rustling of garments in the passage, and a meek voice cried out:—

"Excuse the trouble I am making you."

Kintaro made no move from his place. He knew it was his landlady's daughter coming to see whether he had tea and water and charcoal enough. He only shouted rather gruffly, for his mind was still on his letter, "Come!" and plunged again into thought. The sliding paper screen was pushed gently open, just wide enough to admit the frowzy head and broad face of O Matsu.

"Excuse the trouble I am making you," she said again, in a small, humble voice, and bowed to the matted floor.

"Come in!" he answered, less gruffly, and the girl hitched meekly in on her knees, pulled in the charcoal basket, the tea caddy,

the cold water pot, and a long, narrow bundle, and bowed once more.

"The postman brought this for you," she said, as she bowed again, pushing the bundle toward him with grimy fingers.

A trace of curiosity lighted Kintaro's narrow black eyes, but the girl did not observe it, as he nodded stiffly and left it lying. She knew as well as he that a large package by mail was an excitement in his life, and she would have liked to stay and watch him open it; but he made no move, so she busied herself for a few moments with her work and crept humbly from the room, to lie in wait outside the door and listen.

Kintaro was an art student in Tokyo, and after three or four years of hard study and much practice he was beginning to acquire some little reputation. He had come from his country home in the north with the idea that he would be a great artist. He had made his way into the studio of one of the foremost painters of

220 the day; and had cooked, washed dishes, run errands, swept, mixed colors, cleaned brushes, and acted as servant apprentice, until his good temper, perseverance, and real talent had procured for him the interest and careful attention of his master. Little by little he had learned the secrets of art, the firm, bold strokes, the wonderful blending of colors that had made his master famous, and now he was taking a last year in the art school of the Imperial University before going back to his home. He was an only son, and his parents missed him sorely. He was given what seemed to them an ample allowance, but what was, in the extravagant modern Tokyo, a mere pittance, with which, for this last year, he could only rent a small room in a poor street, and live in the cheapest manner. The little daughter of the house, who answered his summons when he clapped his hands, was a thorn in his flesh. She was always grimy and disheveled; her dress was usually badly disarranged; she was

curious about him and his belongings; and once when he came home at an unexpected hour, he found her pawing over his sketches with dirty fingers. It was the instinct of self-defense that led him to sit unmoved and without interest in his bundle while she puttered about her work, and the same instinct that led him to recall her after her exit from the room and send her out into the street for a package of cigarettes of an unusual brand. He knew it would take her ten or fifteen minutes to find them, and that in that time he could satisfy his curiosity without appeasing hers.

With a sigh of relief he heard her bare feet slipping down the steep, polished stairs, and then the clatter of her clogs as she hastened out to make the purchase. He leaned forward and took up the bundle.

"From Noguchi," he said, as he read the superscription. "What in the world is he sending me? I did n't even know he was back from China yet."

He untied the strings and unwrapped

 the paper as he spoke, laying bare a plain wooden box, tied about the middle with a heavy cord of red silk. Kintaro's hand trembled with eagerness as he opened the box, unrolled the yellow cotton in which its contents were wrapped, and carefully took out a scroll tied with silken bands. Very tenderly he unrolled it, until at last it lay at full length on the mats.

He held his breath with amazement and delight. "What a beauty!" he murmured at last.

It was a picture of a woman, the most beautiful that he had ever seen. The graceful form was dressed in sumptuous trailing garments, the fair, oval face with its crown of raven hair wore an expression of appealing sadness. The lines and coloring were only such as a master can command. The picture was mounted on blue brocade, with carved ivory rollers at each end. As Kintaro leaned over studying it, he heard the clatter of clogs in the courtyard below, and hastily rolling up his treasure, he thrust it

into its box, and the box into a cupboard, before the bare feet had reached the top of the stairs.

Humbly the untidy little maid bowed as she presented the package of cigarettes with a murmured apology for her delay in procuring them. Kintaro looked at her with aversion. "Why do they want me to marry?" he thought within himself. "Women are no good. I don't want them around."

He got up, seized his hat, and pounded noisily in his stocking-feet down the stairs. He must get out into the streets, among the busy crowds, and forget his thoughts.

For an hour or more he tramped along, so abstracted that he hardly knew where he was going. Once he walked right over a toddling boy, who was as absorbed in kite-flying as Kintaro was in meditation, and had to pick him up and give him a penny to spend on sweets before the urchin would cease his lusty bawling. Once a jinrikisha man tearing along at full speed

 nearly ran into him, pushing him aside with his outstretched hand just in time to prevent a catastrophe. When he returned to his lodgings, it was dark, and the streets were full of the moving luminous globes that light the jinrikisha men at their evening work.

The little maid met him at the door, bowing low and murmuring "O kaeri!" by way of greeting. He passed up to his room, where a lamp was burning, a tea-kettle bubbling over the fire, and his supper awaiting him on a tray.

O Matsu followed and sat down to watch him as he ate, filling his rice bowl again and again from the covered box at her side. His aversion came over him in full force. How could he marry? Women were disgusting to him. Poor boy! During his years of work in Tokyo he had never spoken to a woman higher in rank and education than his landlady, and to his mind poor little Matsu, with her frowzy hair and grimy fingers, was the type of womanhood.

And now his parents had written him that the question of marriage could no longer be deferred. He was their only son, and his duty required that he raise up grandchildren to do them honor. They wished him to take a wife from his own province and city, and had been thinking of their neighbor's daughter, O Fumi, who was just seventeen years old, and would make a good daughter-in-law, if all that they could learn of her was true. This they had written to Kintaro in the letter he had received that morning, and it was this that had so disturbed his mind.

O Fumi San, — he remembered her. She was a little girl when he left home, — something of a hoyden, with a slim figure and restless ways. He remembered how fast she could run, with her kimono tucked up to her knees like a peasant girl's, and her bare brown legs flashing back and forth as fast as a jinrikisha man's. She used to laugh at him too, for he was always sitting on his heels working away with brush

 and paper; and she had nicknamed him "Bozu," pretending to think that he was preparing himself for the priesthood. He had been away from home five years now, and she was seventeen, and his parents wanted him to marry her. Undoubtedly she had grown into a fat, red-cheeked maiden like O Matsu there. He shuddered at the thought, and held out his rice-bowl to be filled with tea, a sign that he had finished his meal.

"O Matsu San, how old are you?" he said, anxious to know the worst about his proposed bride.

O Matsu, in an ecstasy of smiles and bows at this unexpected interest in herself, answered as well as she could in the midst of her prostrations that she was seventeen. Kintaro's soul shrank within him. It was just as he thought! They were like that at seventeen, he said to himself, and the picture of roguish, bright-eyed O Fumi San vanished from his heart, and O Matsu, his pet aversion, obsessed him once more.

The real O Matsu, humbly gathering up the supper things, vanished backward through the screen door, leaving Kintaro lost in gloomy meditations. Suddenly the thought of Noguchi's present came to him, and he shook off his forebodings, to open the cupboard, unroll the *kakemono*,[1] and hang it in the *tokonoma*,[2] the place of honor in the room.

How radiantly lovely it looked as it hung there! Kintaro gazed at it as one enchanted, until to his imagination the face and figure seemed those of a living woman. Surely those mournful eyes were looking at him! That mouth which had been so sad was almost smiling! He moved uneasily to the other side of the room, and looked again. The eyes were still following him. He turned his back and sat with his face to the wall. At last he could bear it no longer, and looked

[1] A scroll to hang on the wall.

[2] The alcove in which pictures are hung in a Japanese room.

 around to see the eyes still fixed upon him, and the lips curving into a smile about which there could be no mistake.

His spirit melted within him. His whole soul went out to the fair being in the picture. Long after he had gone to bed he lay with wide open eyes, staring at the *tokonoma*, and at the graceful figure that seemed to move back and forth, to draw near and recede, in the dim light of the night lantern.

From that time life put on a new aspect for Kintaro. In the daytime his *kakemono* lay rolled up and hidden in the cupboard, and he worked at his art as best he could. But work as he might, only one image was before his eyes, only one thought possessed his mind. He had written to his parents that he was coming home in six months, and asked them to let the matter of O Fumi San wait until his return; and with his mind thus free for a time from the vexing question, he let his thoughts centre about the lady of the scroll. Every night,

as soon as O Matsu's ministrations were over, he hung the *kakemono* on the wall, and lived in its companionship until morning. He grew pale and thin. His fellow students joked him on his appearance, and asked him which of the fashionable geishas of the day was making havoc with his heart, but he bristled up so fiercely at the jesting, and put his hand to his side with so meaning a motion, that the mirth died away in their throats, and he was left alone with his art and his dreams.

One evening, when O Matsu had carried away his supper tray, and he had hung up the *kakemono* in its accustomed place, Kintaro sat down at his desk to write. His soul was so full that it must find expression, and his thoughts poured out upon the paper in a poem to the object of his worship. It was not very good poetry, perhaps, but it came from the depths of an honest young heart, and it relieved his mind. He wrote it out in his best hand

 on a poem card and hung it beside the picture, just as he had often hung poems on the branches of his favorite plum-tree at Kameido.

The moon was shining so brightly that night that Kintaro put out his lamp and sat in the moonlight on the piazza of his little room. The scent of the plum-blossoms was in the air, and in the street below sounded the beating of drums, the clatter of many clogs, and the sweet, high voices of excited children, for there was a great temple festival in progress, and the whole city was out making holiday. Then suddenly there stood before him in the moonlight the beautiful lady of the scroll.

Kintaro did not dare to move. He thought it must be a dream. But the vision, if vision it were, sank gracefully to the floor, bowed low three times, and began to speak. The voice was low and sweet, and the language was pure and elegant.

"You have done me many and great favors," said his beautiful visitor, "and I

have been very happy since I came here. If what you say in your poem is true, and if you really wish me to stay with you, I will be yours forever."

Kintaro was choking with joy and fear. He gasped, he nearly fainted. He seized the hand of the picture lady, and it was so warm and soft and human that his courage returned and he was himself again. Far into the night they talked, and in answer to his eager questions she told him all about herself.

"I lived many years ago," she said, "in China. I was a gentleman's daughter, and my name was Shorei." A tear fell from her eyes upon Kintaro's hand. "One year there was a famine, and riots among the peasantry, and my father's house was burned. We ran away and hid, for we were all afraid of the peasants. We went up into the mountains, and I was taken by a robber. He sold me" — she shuddered — "sold me" — her voice dropped to a whisper — "to a tea-house."

She was weeping now, and so was Kintaro. "They said I was beautiful, they gave me fine clothes, and they petted me and made much of me. It was there that the painter painted my picture. They tried to make me like the life, but I could not bear it. I died."

Kintaro started violently and dropped her hand. She looked at him with her sweet, sorrowful eyes.

"I was glad when I was dead," she said, "for spirits cannot suffer as I suffered. Then I came to your country, and when I saw how you loved my picture, I thought perhaps you would love me."

She looked at him reproachfully, and he stretched forth his hand to her, but she vanished from his sight.

In the street the lanterns twinkled and the clogs clattered and the children shouted and sang, but Kintaro sat alone, staring at the spot where his scroll lady had been, until the city sank to sleep and the moon went down.

All the next day his thoughts were on his picture lady. He could hardly wait for the coming of night, and he hurried poor little O Matsu about her final work until she retired with her broad red face drawn into a woeful pucker and tears in her beady black eyes.

When he hung up the scroll he noticed that the lips were smiling, and that the eyes seemed a shade less sad. They were looking to-night, not at him, but beyond him at the little desk at which he studied and wrote. On the desk lay a card on which was written in an elegant feminine hand a poem. Eagerly he read it, and the tears sprang to his eyes. It was only a couplet, —

> "God's will it is that here I stay
> To love and live with you alway."

Over and over again he read it, and he held out his hands to the picture. "Is it true?" he asked. "Will you live with me always?"

The soft eyes looked full into his, the

 beautiful lips smiled. It was enough. His joy was so great that he could not speak, but he sat in a transport until the lamp burned out, and he lay down on his quilt to dream of Shorei.

For six months Kintaro kept up his intercourse with the spirit of Shorei and lived in an ecstasy. One night, late in August, when the crickets were chirping and the whole population of Tokyo was walking the streets for a breath of fresh air before closing the shutters for the night, Kintaro sat, in the restful quiet born of a hot bath and a thin kimono, on the piazza of his little room. Suddenly Shorei came to him, and her face was sad. She sank to the ground weeping, and bowed her head to the floor.

"The end has come," she said. "I have been so happy with you here that I had hoped it could be always so. But I must go. You will never see Shorei again."

In vain Kintaro asked why she must leave him. She only said, "To-morrow

you shall know;" and then, as she vanished from his sight, he heard her whisper, "We will meet soon again."

All night he wept, and in the morning, when he laid the *kakemono* in its cupboard, he felt as if he were burying a dead friend.

Just as he closed the cupboard and was turning away to look about his empty room, Matsu thrust her head through the door. Between her finger-tips she held a letter. She laid it down in front of him, and backed out to bring his breakfast.

Kintaro unrolled the long, thin sheet of paper, and as he read his face clouded. "'In Tokyo,'" he read; "'meet her to-day — at the Koyo Kwan.'[1] Impossible! I can't!" and he thought of Shorei and all she had been to him. Then suddenly those last words came to him, "To-morrow you shall know. We will meet again soon." It was all so strange; perhaps this would explain it.

Very carefully Kintaro dressed himself

[1] The Maple Club Inn.

 that afternoon, and very spruce and handsome he looked in his flowing silk garments when he stepped out of his jinrikisha at the Maple Club Inn, to meet an old friend of his father's who, accompanied by his wife, was visiting in Tokyo. This friend it was who had undertaken, for the sake of both parties concerned, to bring about a meeting between him and O Fumi San.

There was a feast set in a great upper room, and when Kintaro entered and took his seat in the lowest place, as became his age and rank, he was greeted with smiles and bows from many old friends and neighbors assembled to do honor to the occasion.

The first greetings ended, — no light matter in such a company, — he had time to look about him and see what there was to be seen. On the opposite side of the room, just facing him, dressed in the dainty full dress of the modest Japanese maiden, was a vision from which he could not move his startled eyes. The quaint old-fashioned

dress was gone, so was the expression of unutterable sadness, but the face was the face of his lady of the scroll.

"Shorei!" he murmured, scarcely knowing what he said. The beautiful face lighted up. Into the bright eyes flashed just a glance of recognition. "I am Fumi," said the vision, and they bowed their faces to the floor.

X

HOW FUMI REMEMBERED

X

"Even the knot of the rope tying our boats together
Knotted was long ago by some love in a former birth."
Japanese Folk-Song, translated by Hearn.

TOKYO, February 10.

I AM Fumi, of the family of Takeda of Sendai. When I came to be sixteen, my mother said to me, "Fumi, you are too headstrong. You like to run and play out of doors like a boy. Your manners are not quiet and ladylike, but rough and noisy. Even your little sister Michi can sew and draw and play the *koto* and perform the tea ceremony better than you. Soon you will have to be married, and what family will want to receive a spoiled child like you as a daughter-in-law?" My mother shook her head and sighed, and I was very sorry, so sorry that I hid my face and cried.

[1] A stringed instrument which takes the place in a Japanese girl's education that the piano does with us.

"Oh, mother!" I said, "what shall I do? It is so hard to be good and quiet. When I sit still a long time sewing, my legs tingle, and I have to run; and when I try to learn the tea ceremony, the old master is so stiff and solemn that he makes me laugh. I am a bad girl, and I cannot be like other girls. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?" and I cried until my sleeves were all wet, and it was my best dress, too.

My mother was very good to me. She patted me gently and said softly, "Poor little girl! Poor little girl! Let us think about it, and I will talk with your father."

By and by I was tired and my face was hot, and I heard a little noise of scratching and yelping in the garden, for I was sitting close to the veranda. I looked out from behind my sleeves with one eye and saw Shiro digging. Shiro is my dog. He is all white except his ears, and they are yellow. He can't dig very well because one of his fore legs was hurt when he was a puppy, but he thinks he can, and he was digging

and yelping. He expected me to help him, and kept yelping louder and louder, so I called to him that I was coming, and ran out through the house to the door where my clogs were, and hurried as fast as I could to the garden. It was only when I was coming back to the house, all dirty myself, and carrying dirty little Shiro in my arms, that I thought again of what my mother had said. Then I suddenly dropped Shiro, and the tears came to my eyes, and I hung my head for fear some one had seen me. As I passed the parlor which opened out into the garden, I heard my mother talking with a visitor. I looked, and it was Mrs. Yamazaki, our neighbor. They were probably talking of her son Kintaro, who has been studying such a long time in Tokyo. She is very proud of him, and thinks he is the most remarkable person in the world. I hoped that she had not seen me playing with Shiro or coming back all dirty. I am afraid my mother is not so proud of me.

The next day my mother spoke to me again. She told me that I was going to Tokyo to school. My father, through our prince, had gained admission for me to the school for noble girls, and he hoped that I would do my best to use the great advantages that the school would give me. She told me that the girls there were all quiet and ladylike, that no one was ever noisy or headstrong, and that I must try and learn to be like other girls. It was very wrong of me, I know, but I cried again. I did not want to leave my home, and my parents and brothers and sisters, and poor little Shiro.

My mother patted me and comforted me. "It will not be for long," she said, "only a few months, and you will be very happy after you have made friends among the girls."

And that is why I am in Tokyo. My mother was right. I am happy and I have many friends. I live with seven or eight other girls in one big house with Mrs.

Takahashi, one of our teachers. We walk to school together every day, and we play together on our holidays.

I think that here in Tokyo it is not thought so wicked for a girl to want to run and play. At our school the teachers play with us and teach us many games, and sometimes we have a whole day with nothing but games and gymnastics, and the Empress comes and watches us as we play, and all the parents of all the children come, and we have a very good time. I have seen the Empress smile when we were at our play, so I am sure that it is not wrong.

I have been here ever since last September, and now it is February. I would like to see my home and Shiro, but I am happy, and because I am happy I am going to write every day, or sometimes, anyway, about the things I do, so that when I am at home I can read it all over and remember the dear school life. To-morrow we are invited to go out to Shinagawa, to visit the

 country house of the Princess Gojo. Her daughter is our friend, and we are to spend the afternoon. It will be beautiful, I know.

February 13.

I have been thinking, it seems to me for years, but it is really only two days, and I cannot think my way out of the strange thing that has happened to me. Perhaps if I write it all down, I shall be able to understand it better.

On February 11, which is the anniversary of Jimmu Tenno, we — that is, all the girls in our house — were invited by Princess Gojo to visit her country house at Shinagawa. We went by train to Shimbashi, and had only a little walk from Shinagawa station to the house. The situation of the place is beautiful, looking out across the bay, and there is a great garden with hills and valleys and lakes and forest trees and green lawns. Here and there an early plum-tree had begun to show its pink and white on its old gray, gnarled trunk. We played ten-

nis, and ran races on the lawn. We climbed all the hills, getting a different view from each. We sat down in the little summer-houses and cooled off after our exercise, for it was a warm, sunny day like spring. At last we were called to the house, and we sat about a great parlor and they brought us tea and cake and *o sushi*.[1]

The princess was very kind and very beautiful. She is tall and slender, and her voice is sweet and her manner very gracious even to me, who am not a nobleman's daughter, only a poor samurai girl. She spoke to me kindly, and said that she knew me because I was the fastest runner in our school. She told me that the Empress had asked my name at the last day of field sports, because I ran so fast. I felt very much ashamed, and my face grew very hot, and I wondered what my mother would think of me.

[1] A dish made of cold rice mixed with a variety of ingredients, and as usual for Japanese entertainments as sandwiches are in America.

When we had finished our tea, the princess asked us if we would like to walk about the house. We were very glad, for as we sat we could see that there were many beautiful rooms, and I had never seen such a great house before. Some of the rooms were foreign and with carpets and furniture, but most of them were Japanese, with floors of many mats and beautiful, shining wood-work, and with flowers and bronzes and paintings and ancient swords and lacquers set out in the *tokonoma*. The princess led and we followed. Uta, my dearest friend, and I went hand in hand, very quietly, looking at all the beautiful things that had been taken out of the storehouses for us to see. Suddenly, as we stood before a *kakemono* that hung in one of the rooms, a strange feeling came over me. It was a picture of a young girl, very beautiful and sad, dressed in strange flowing garments. Somewhere I had seen that picture before. I looked at it so long that the princess noticed me. "Do you like it,

O Fumi San?" she said. "If it were the original, I believe it would be the finest picture in all Japan, but it is only a copy, by a Japanese artist, of a celebrated Chinese picture that is now lost." Though I heard all she said and answered her, my mind was still at work at the picture. I had seen it before. I knew I had seen it before, but where? And then, slowly, bit by bit, a scene came before my mind. A strange garden — a young artist with a mild, smooth face and dressed in strange garments painting a picture of — *myself!* But I was not Fumi, of the family of Takeda. What was I? Then something seemed to snap in my head and I fell. The next thing I knew, Uta and the other girls were bending over me as I lay on the floor, and I heard the princess say, "Poor little thing! She has run too hard."

The princess was very kind and sent me home in her carriage with O Uta San to take care of me, and all the way home, as I lay back on the cushions, my mind went

 over and over the question, "Who was I when I was not Fumi?" Every turn of the wheels, every beat of the horses' hoofs, every shout of the running grooms, seemed to repeat the question to me.

It was dark when we reached home, and I was hurried off to bed by good Mrs. Takahashi as soon as she heard that I was tired out. There I lay and stared at the ceiling while the girls chattered about me, and then, when all was quiet at last, and dark, except for the glimmer of the night light, I still lay with my eyes wide open, asking the same question. I heard the slow tolling of the bell in the Sho-kon-sha Temple as the hours went by. And at last the answer came.

Whether I was sleeping or waking I do not know, but suddenly I was far away from the familiar little room, standing in a balcony, looking out into a green garden, and was surprised to see that the loose robes in which I was dressed were quite different from what I was used to. A young

man stood in the garden below me, looking at me with wistful eyes. "Shorei," he said, "I will paint your picture, and it will be so beautiful that when I take it to the Emperor and give it to him, he will make me a great lord, and I can marry you."

My heart was sore, and there was a terrible fear behind me, a fear of something that I could not understand. I looked into his kind eyes, and they made my heart a little restful. "Come soon," was all I had time to say, for just then a terrible, coarse, fat woman came to me and said, "Make haste, they are waiting for you. You must dance to-night before a great company," and she dragged me roughly into the house, so roughly that everything went away, and I was once more in my own bed on the matted floor and Uta was sleeping at my side.

Since then it has been coming to me little by little, — the memory of another childhood, far away in some strange land, — the memory of wars and burning houses,

 and of long hidings in rough mountain caves, and at last of a great fight in which all my friends were killed, and I, a prisoner among robbers, was led to a town and sold. And then the memory of a shameful life, — my cheeks burn at the thought of it, — of dancing before great companies of men, of their drunken smiles, their coarse jokes, their rough caresses. And I remember so clearly how the fat woman who kept the house used to tell me that I was beautiful, and how she tried to treat me kindly because my beauty was making her rich. But sometimes, when I was too sad or weak to be amusing, she would treat me roughly. She would sneer at me, and tell me that I need not think, because I was a gentleman's daughter, that I was too fine for her work. She had other work in store for me that I would not like as well, if I grew too proud to dance for her guests. The memory of that fear that she kept always in my soul is with me still. How I hated the life! How I longed for escape!

I remember that one day I found a sharp sword lying where one of the guests had laid it aside, and I took it and would have killed myself, but the old woman saw it and snatched it from me. After that she watched me carefully, and I could do nothing that she did not see.

As if through the mists of a thousand years I can see him now as he looked the first day he came. He was young, and with a good, kind face, and he did not laugh and shout and try to handle me after the dance. He only looked at me with his kind eyes, though I could see them flash sometimes when the other men grew insulting. And when the weary feast was done, and I lay resting, and wishing I could die before suffering such shame again, I heard his voice talking in low tones to my mistress.

"That dancing-girl of yours is very beautiful," he said; "I wish to have her for my wife."

The woman laughed, a great, coarse

 laugh. "Surely you are a brave fellow!" she said. "Do you know what the girl is worth to me? She brings a stream of gold nightly into this house, and you, young cock, want to take her away for your wife! She shall be no man's wife until I am paid three thousand pieces of gold," and she laughed again.

"I am not rich," he answered, "but within a month you shall have your three thousand pieces of gold;" and I heard his footsteps as he left the room.

Every day for a few days, I saw him in the garden, and he painted at his picture. Then, when it was finished, he came no more. The month went by and he did not come, and I began to fear. And then, one day, I heard his voice in the garden. I remember how sad it sounded, so sad that at first I did not know it.

"Shorei," he called softly, and I went to my balcony and looked down, and saw him standing, dressed in white and with a dagger in his hand. "I have sent the picture

to the Emperor, and I have been waiting now for days and no word has come to me. And to-day I have heard that he by whom I sent it, and whom I thought my friend, has taken the credit of it to himself, and is raised to high honor. I am going away. The next life can be no worse than this," and he unsheathed the dagger.

"Oh, take me with you where you go,' I cried. "I cannot live here!"

I heard the thumping step of my mistress coming to take me down to the dancing-room. I could not go, and I threw myself down from the balcony. That is all I can remember. Where was I when I was Shorei? And who was he who wanted to buy me in marriage? These questions are running through my head all day. I cannot talk, nor do my school work, nor play. Uta says to me, "What is the matter? Have you had bad news from home? Are you ill? Why don't you come out and play with us?" But I cannot go. I must sit in my room and think.

Where was I? Who was he? Sometimes it seems as if I was on the very edge of knowing, and then it all goes again. Last night, as I lay in bed, my soul was moving, sailing on and on through space, and I thought, "Now I shall see him. Now I shall know." And then suddenly I felt myself falling, falling, down, down, and I opened my eyes. It was dark, for the night light had burned out. I could not see Uta, but I heard her move and sigh in her sleep.

February 16.

Last night, I seemed to be dancing all night before those men, and they shouted and applauded. And one said, "There is not such another dancer in all the realm of China." And they shouted all together, "None such in China nor in all the world!" Surely I might have known before, for the princess said that her picture was a copy of one by a Chinese artist.

I have seen him again. This was the way. I was so tired that I asked Mrs. Takahashi to excuse me and let me go to bed early. She looked at me very kindly and said, "Yes, you may go. I am afraid you are very tired." By the time I had made my bed and crept into it, I was shivering, for the night was cold and damp; and I could not sleep, but lay curled up with my head covered. And then, all at once, I saw him. It was not the old balcony, or the garden that I remembered, it was a poor little Japanese room, and he sat on the floor and looked at the *tokonoma* where I stood. I tried to go to him, but I could not. I could only smile a little, and follow him with my eyes as he moved from one part of the room to another. He did not know me nor speak to me. He only looked at me, and sometimes it seemed as if he was afraid of me. Why was I there? Why was he there? Why could we not talk as we used to do long ago?

I have seen him now three nights, in the same little room. He looks at me but does not speak, and I cannot. Sometimes I smile, but often I am so sad that I can only look at him.

February 24.

Every night I go to him. He does not remember me, but perhaps he will some day.

March 10.

Last night, all at once, everything changed. When I first saw him, he was writing. He sat at his little table. Sometimes he looked at me, and then he would sigh and write. At last he came to where I stood. I smiled, for I thought he was going to speak to me. But he did not. He lifted the poem card on which he had been writing and hung it beside me, so close that I could read it. These are the words:

"If from the painted scroll thy lips smile kindly upon me,
What wouldst thou do for me, wert thou here in the body to-night?

To me from what other life comes thy sweet spirit winging?
Stay with me ever, beloved; without thee my soul is alone."

A painted scroll! That was all I was to him! A beautiful picture to hang in the *tokonoma!* He did not remember me as I did him. That other life, when I was Shorei and he a young painter, was all gone from his memory. He looked at me so sadly when he hung up the poem that I tried to speak, but I could not. Then he put out the light, and went out to his little balcony and sat watching the moonlight and listening to the noises of the street. "Oh, if I could only speak to him!" I thought, "I would tell him who I was, and perhaps he would remember." And then, suddenly, I felt that I could move and speak. I was floating toward him. I was sitting beside him. I was telling all my story. He held my hand as if to keep me, and I was glad, for I felt that I must soon slip away, it was only his strong desire that was holding me

260 to him. And then, I think it was when I spoke of my death, he drew himself away. I could not stay, and I found myself once more in my own little room with Uta asleep quietly by my side.

March 11.

All yesterday I thought about how I should meet him last night. Would he desire me again? Might I speak to him? or would he send me away as he did before? If he should, how could I bear it? I must speak to him and tell him my heart. And then, I thought, as he had written a poem to me, I would write one to him. Our teacher at school tells me sometimes that I can write prettily. If I could only tell him so that he could read it! I wrote it over and over again and again before I copied it on the card. It was not pretty when it was finished. It only said that I would stay with him always.

I held it in my hand that night when I went to bed, and I wished, oh, how I wished

that I might give it to him! I shut my eyes and held it tight, and soon I saw his little upstairs room. The table was covered with papers, and lying on top of all was my little card. How glad I was! He looked at me, but I looked at the desk and smiled. He did not speak. I could not. But after a while he too looked over at the desk and saw the card. When he had read it, he turned to me and his eyes were bright with joy. "Is it true?" he said. "Will you live with me always?" I could not speak, my heart was so full, but he must have known, for he sat and looked and looked at me, until at last I slipped away and left him still looking at my image in the *tokonoma*. This morning the card was not in my hand, nor could I find it in the bed or in the room. I did not dream last night. I really went and gave him my poem!

August 20.

It is a long time since I have written in my diary. Although school has been closed

 since July, I have been here all summer, for my father and mother have been away up in Hokkaido, and they thought it best for me to stay with Mrs. Takahashi, and learn as much as possible during the summer. I have lessons every day, and it is very dull here in Tokyo, for most of my friends are away, but I am glad I did not have to go, for perhaps if I were elsewhere I could not go, as I do now, every night to see Kintaro and talk with him. It is strange that this young artist, the same who painted my picture when I was Shorei, should be Kintaro Yamazaki of Sendai now. He does not remember when he lived in China, nor does he know that I am Fumi Takeda. He knows me only as Shorei, and though I have told him of the young artist in China, he does not like to hear of him, for he thinks of him always as another man. When I speak of him sometimes Kintaro is sad, sometimes he is cross, but he is never interested.

I have heard our old priest at home say

that to most men, when the gates of the new birth open, the gates of the old life close, but to a few the gates of the old life are left ajar, and a wind from the spirit world may open them wide some day, so that the two lives are all one memory. That is the way it is with Kintaro and me. His gates are closed, but mine blew wide open that day at Princess Gojo's, and now I have remembered all of that old life in China.

August 21.

Such news has come to me to-day! How strange that I never knew it! My mother has written me to say that long ago it was decided between my parents and his parents that Kintaro was to marry me when I grew up. And now, she writes, Mr. and Mrs. Suzuki of Sendai are to be in town for a few days, and they will invite us to a party at the Koyo Kwan, so that we may see each other. What shall I do? Will he know me? If he does not know me, I can never marry him, for I shall

 know that he cannot care for me while he loves Shorei. I cannot tell him, for if he does not know me as Fumi, I do not want him to marry her because she is Shorei. Oh, if we could only go on as we have always done!

August 24.

My mother writes that Mr. Suzuki is going to invite us for to-morrow. What shall I do?

August 25.

I must meet him this afternoon. I told him last night that he would never see Shorei again. It made me very sad, for to myself I feel almost as real as Shorei as I do as Fumi. He wept and held me, but I slipped away from him.

August 26.

I could not look at him when he came into the room, I was so ashamed. I sat at the end of the room. He did not see me at first, for he was busy bowing to all the guests. It was only when he took his place opposite me that he looked at me. I saw

that he knew me. His face grew suddenly bright, and he said very softly, "Shorei!" and I answered as well as I could, for I was nearly choking with joy, "I am Fumi." That was enough. Now he is my own in this new life, and nothing, not even death, can part us again, I believe.

GLOSSARY

Amado, lit. "rain doors," the sliding wooden shutters that close the house in stormy weather or at night.

Amazaké, a sweet, thick, slightly fermented rice soup.

Amé, a sweetmeat made from wheat gluten.

Ameya, a seller of *amé*.

Amma, a masseur.

Andon, a paper lantern used as a night-light.

Bāya, a term used in addressing an old woman servant, like "Aunty" or "Mammy" in the South.

Bon Matsuri, or *O Bon*, the annual Feast of the Dead.

Botchan, "Little Mr. Priest," the universal title of the small boy, probably on account of his shaven head.

Bōzu, Buddhist priest.

Dori, street.

Fudō, the Buddhist God of Wisdom.

Furoshiki, a square of cloth used for wrapping bundles.

Furugiya, old clothes dealer.

Futon, the heavy quilts used in making a Japanese bed.

Go chiso, "honorable entertainment," applied to especially nice food.

Go Inkyo Sama, a title given to an old person who has retired from active participation in the affairs of life.

Hachiman, the Shintō God of War.

Hai, "Yes," or "I am listening."

Heimin, the common people as distinguished from the military or samurai class.

Hibachi, a fire-box or brazier.

Inari, the God of Rice, whose messengers are foxes.

Jiiya, a title for an old man servant, used much as "Uncle" is used in the South.

Jizō, a Buddhist saint, helper especially of the souls of little children.

Kakemono, a scroll to hang on the wall.

Kitsuné, a fox.

Kotatsu, a fire-box in the floor over which is set a rack, and the whole covered by a heavy comfortable.

Koto, a stringed instrument.

Koyo Kwan, the Maple Club Inn.

Kuruma, a jinrikisha.

Kurumaya, a jinrikisha man.

Kwannon, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy.

Miya mairi, the presentation of a baby in the temple.

Mochi, rice dumpling, a festival dish.

Montzuki, the ceremonial dress, made all of one plain color, faced and lined with white, and with the monogram or family crest of the wearer on sleeves and back.

Niō, "Two Kings," Indra and Brahma, who keep guard at the outer gates of Buddhist temples to scare away demons.

Noshi, a bit of bright-colored paper folded about a piece of sea-weed and slipped under the string of a present.

Ōban, a large, oval gold coin, worth about eighty dollars, now out of use.

Obi, sash.

O Bon, see *Bon Matsuri*.

O Jo Sama, the title used in speaking to or about a young unmarried lady.

O kaeri, "Honorable return," the greeting to a returning guest or member of the family.

O Mi age, a present brought back to one who stays at home.

O Sushi, a dish made of cold rice mixed with a variety of ingredients.

O Tottsu San, Father.

Rin, a coin worth about a half mill.

Saké, rice wine.

Samurai, the military class.

Sayo de gozaimasu, "It is honorably so."

Sayo nara, "Good-by," lit. "If it must be."

Shoji, the light sliding sashes covered with paper which close in a Japanese house.

Soroban, the abacus or counting-frame used by merchants throughout the East.

Tabi, a mitten-shaped sock worn in the house, and with clogs or sandals out of doors.

Tadaima, "Just now!" the response to *O kaeri*.

Tempō sen, a large, oval copper coin worth about eight mills, now out of use.

Tengu, a wood goblin.

To chirimen, lit. "foreign crape," a thin woolen material used for the cheaper undergarments, sashes, etc.

Tokonoma, the alcove in which pictures are hung in a Japanese room.

Torii, an erection in the form of a gateway that marks the entrance to a temple or sacred place.

Uma, horse.

Yashiki, a palace or fine house.

Yen, the Japanese monetary unit, worth about fifty cents.

Yoshitsuné, a hero of the twelfth century.

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