

SOME TALES FROM THE UJI SHUI MONOGATARI.

About the time that England was being torn in pieces by the rivalries of the Saxons and Normans, that is to say more than eight hundred years ago, there lived at the court of the Mikado, an official of an enquiring turn of mind, named Minamoto no Takakuni. This man was in the habit of retiring from the court during the summer and spending the hot months in the rooms attached to the temple of Uji near Kioto.

There, we are told, he was to be found dressed in a *négligée* style, lying on the mats, watching the passers by whom he would frequently call in, requesting them to tell him a story. And as the passers by were of varied ranks of life so the stories also varied, "some are noble, some are sad, some are dirty, some true, some made up." Tales from India and China are to be found.

The tales thus gathered were formed into a book, but some, it appears, were omitted, and these were afterwards collected, added to and published under the title of the Uji Shui Monogatari, or the Tales omitted from the Uji Collection. The exact date of publication is unknown.

A vivid picture of life more than eight hundred years ago must be of interest to every student of national characteristics, and there is one point in which they form a curious contrast to the tales of other countries, such as the Arabian Nights or Grimm's Fairy Tales, and that is that the motif, so to speak, of love does not enter into these tales. It is difficult for Europeans to imagine a book containing about two hundred short stories, in none of which there is a love plot, but the peculiarly complicated sensation

known as "love" does not appear ever to have had very much attraction for the Japanese mind.

My attention was first called to the Uji Shui Monogatari by an article in the Transactions of the Asiatic Society* in which the writer asserted that one of the stories was unmistakably the same as an Irish legend and therefore one of the oldest traditions of the human race, belonging to the "most ancient cycle of Turanian legend, which may have existed all over Asia and Europe in times long antecedent to the dawn of history."

The writers of the article was apparently not well acquainted with the Japanese language and suggested that a translation of the Uji stories would be of interest. Without wishing to enter into the question as to whether there is a world embracing cycle of legend I still thought it worth while to get the book. It was quite beyond my powers of reading Japanese, but during the enforced leisure of a homeward voyage, a highly educated Japanese lady who was with me kindly dictated some of the tales. There are a few ambiguous sentences but I have as far as possible made a faithful translation.

90.† THE DEER OF THE FIVE COLOURS.

THIS ALSO WAS LONG AGO.

In India there lived a deer whose skin was of the five colours and whose horns were white. He dwelt in the recesses of the mountains and no one knew of his existence. Near the mountains flowed a great river. A crow also lived on the mountains who was very friendly with the deer. It happened that a man fell into the river and as he was drowning he called out—"Save me!" The

* Volume III. Page 62.

† The number refers to the number of the tale in the original.

deer hearing him was filled with pity and swimming out into the river saved him.

The man rejoiced in being saved and rubbed his hands together saying, "How can I show my gratitude?"

The deer answered, "I only ask that you will never tell anyone of my existence in these mountains. As I am of the five colours if any one knew of my existence they would cross the river and I should be killed : it is my fear that makes me live in the recesses of these mountains. No one knows of me, but when I heard your cry, forgetting where I was going, I went to your help." The man seeing this was true, promised, again and yet again, never to tell any one. And he returned to his village and though days and months passed he told no one.

Now the Queen of the country dreamt a dream in which she saw a deer of the five colours with white horns. Waking from her sleep she told the King that she had dreamt such and such a dream, and she said to him—"Now this deer must exist. Oh, King! make search for it and give it to me."

Then the King issued an order that if any one found the deer of the five colours, gold, silver and precious stones, with land, should be given to him.

Now when the man, who had been saved, heard the King's command he went to the Court and said,

"The coloured deer for whom you seek lives in the recesses of the mountains : send huntsmen with me for I know the place." The King greatly pleased went forth to the mountains himself taking many huntsmen with him and the man went as guide.

The deer was lying in a cave and knew nothing of this : but the friendly crow, seeing what was happening, called out and pecked his ear, and said,

"The King of the country is coming with many huntsmen to kill you : he has surrounded the mountains there is no escape.

What is to be done!" and weeping he flew away.

The startled deer walked up to the place where the King was with his huntsmen; they fixed their arrows and prepared to shoot. But the King said, "There must be some reason for the deer coming thus unfrightened. Do not shoot!"

The deer drew near and knelt down in front of the king's palanquin, and said, "Because of the colour of my skin I have lived thus in the mountains: Oh, King! how came you to know my dwelling place?"

Then the King answered, "The man with the spot on his face, who stands beside my carriage, told me."

The deer seeing the man who stood beside the carriage knew that it was he whom he had saved, and said to him,

"When I saved your life you said that you could not repay me, then I asked you not to tell any one of my existence; and you swore again and again not to do so. Now forgetting your obligation you come to kill me. When you were drowning in the water I swam across to save you, taking no thought of my own life: Do you remember your boundless joy? So saying the deer wept tears of anger. Then the King also weeping, said, "You are only an animal yet you showed mercy and saved this man: he from desire of gain forgets his obligation: therefore we must call him an animal. It is the duty of a man to show gratitude."

Seizing the man they cut off his head in the presence of the deer. Then the King said,

"From now it is forbidden to hunt deer: and if anyone kills a single deer, disobeying this command, he shall suffer capital punishment." And there was peace and prosperity in the land.

17. THE MEETING OF A PILGRIM WITH A HUNDRED DEMONS.

Long ago, as a pilgrim was on his way to Tsu, darkness came on and he took refuge in the large old temple of Ryu-sen-ji.

There was no one in it for it was not, like most temples, a place for people to stay in, but there was no other refuge near. "It cannot be helped" thought the pilgrim and taking his bundle from his back he entered, saying the customary prayer to Fudo. Just about midnight he heard the sound of many voices and, behold! a hundred demons each holding a light, entered the temple. Looking closely one saw that they were of various kinds; some had but one eye; they were indeed not mortals but terrible creatures. Some were indescribable monsters with horns sticking out of their heads. They were indeed terrible but there was no escape. They all sat down excepting one, for whom there was no room. [Here the narrative changes into the first person and the pilgrim says]—"The demon looked at me carefully and said—You new Mr Fudo, who are occupying my place, just for this evening go outside! and lifting me carefully by one hand he placed me under the eaves of the temple. When dawn broke the demons shouting at each other went away. It was truly terrible.

When the wished for dawn at length came, on looking round there was no temple visible: only a wide pathless plain with nothing to point out the direction I wished to take. I saw a number of men coming along on horseback. On asking them "Where does this road lead to?" they said "Why do you ask? This is Hizen." Was not this a terrible thing? [He thought he was in quite a different part of the country]. On the pilgrim telling it to the horsemen they also thought it very marvellous. They

said, "This is the depth of the country in Hizen. We are now going to the castle."

And the pilgrim said to them, much delighted, "As I do not know the road I will go with you."

They directed him how to get to Kioto, and hiring a boat he arrived there.

Now did ever such a dreadful thing happen to a man before : to take refuge in the Ryu-sen-ji of Tsu, there to meet with demons to be told, because the place was too small to hold them all, "Now Mr Fudo just sit under the eaves for a little" and to be picked up and put outside. Then to find himself in an out of the way part of Hizen !

When he arrived at Kioto he told what had happened to him.

30. THE NAME TABLET.*

The following story has the same mixture of the marvellous and the humorous. The scene is laid in China where the legend tells, a long time ago there was a mountain on the top of which stood a name-tablet. That is the ancestral tablet used in Chinese worship and known in Japanese as *Sotoba*.

Long ago in China, there was a high mountain, on the top of which was a large name tablet.

In a village at the foot of the mountain there lived an old woman of eighty who every day without fail went up the mountain to where the tablet stood. As it was a great high mountain, the road from the foot to the summit was long and steep: yet, in spite of snow and wind, thunder, ice and wet, through the trying heat of summer, without missing one day, up she climbed. The people

* In Japanese *Sotoba*.

knew nothing about this, except the young men and boys who climbed the mountain to enjoy the breeze that blew on the top, they could see the old woman wiping the sweat from her brow as she toiled upwards, with bent back, leaning on her stick.

"She has come to worship" they said.

But, not once but often, they saw her walk round the tablet and go away without having worshipped.

"What can she be taking such pains about? To-day if we meet her we will ask her."

And so when the old woman came crawling up as usual they said to her, "Why do you come up here? We come up this dreadful road to seek for coolness but it is not for that you come up: nor yet for anything in particular and yet you climb up every day. It is a strange thing for a woman to do! Tell us why do you do it?" "Well to be sure!" said the old woman, "You must be surprised! My coming up to the tablet is not a thing of yesterday. I have come up to see it every day since I was of an age to understand anything, during more than seventy years."

"But why do you do this strange thing?" they asked.

She answered them. "My parents died at a hundred and twenty and my grandparents lived to more than two hundred—they told me that when blood was seen on the tablet this mountain would crumble away and become a deep sea. So my father told me. And as I live at the foot of the mountain I shall certainly be smothered if it crumbles away: so every day I come up to see it there is blood on it, in order that I may flee in good time."

Hearing this the young men laughed and cried out—

"What a dreadful thing! Be sure and tell us when the mountain is going to fall!"

The old woman then said, not understanding that they were laughing at her,

"Of course I should never think of escaping alone, I should tell

everyone," and she went down the mountain.

Laughing the young men said, "She won't come up again to-day: tomorrow we will make her fly astonished." And they daubed the tablet with blood. Then returning to the village they said to the people, "As it is very odd that the old woman should go up every day to the name-tablet on the mountain-top, we asked her about it and she told us that when the tablet was covered with blood the mountain would crumble away and become a deep sea. So we, to give her a fright, have put blood on the tablet." And the villagers laughed and thought it all nonsense.

So when the old woman went up next day she found blood on the tablet. Turning pale she fell on the ground with fright. Then she ran back calling—

"Villagers! Escape! Escape quickly! Save your lives! The mountain is going to crumble and become a deep sea."

After telling the news to every one she returned to her own house and making her children and grandchildren take their household goods on their backs, she also helping, they escaped to another village. The men who had smeared the tablet with blood clapped their hands; laughing and jeering they cried, "Now what is to happen? Will the wind blow? Will the thunder come?" Strange to say as they spoke, the sky became black and lowering and the mountain shook.

"What is happening! What is happening!" they cried out as the mountain began to tremble.

"The old woman is right!" they cried and they fled groaning and weeping. Some escaped but some lost their parents and others their children, and all lost their household goods.

Only the old woman with her children and grandchildren escaped quietly and lost nothing. And the mountain fell and became a deep sea; and those who had jeered and laughed all perished. Truly they had done a foolish thing.

20. PRAYER FOR RAIN.

Long ago in the time of Engi there was a drought, so, the Mikado sending for sixty priests caused them to read prayers. The priests, causing clouds of incense to rise prayed for a sign, but there was no break in the weather, the sun burnt fiercely, and from the Mikado downwards, the highest officials, the farmers and the common people, all were in great distress.

Calling for the head official of the household the Mikado ordered him to send for Jokan Sojo and to tell him how the prayers of the other priests had been in vain. Jokan retiring, stood by the wall and prayed.

Now as there were three grades of priests above Jokan, to be thus summoned was a great honour for him. Coming down the steps of the south palace he stood facing the north and it was painful to the onlookers to see him raise the incense burner to his forehead. Being a hot day the incense did not at first kindle but as he wept and prayed it rose to the sky in a black cloud. The Emperor's personal attendants were assembled in the south palace; the nobles looked on from the Yuba palace; the lords watching from the Bifuku gate. As they watched, the cloud gradually covered the sky, thunder and lightning filled the universe, and heavy rain descending, the earth at once became wet. There was a good crop of the five grains and all the trees bore fruit. So every one believed in Jokan and there was a general rejoicing. Jokan was raised to a higher rank.

As it was a strange thing I write it down for the benefit of future generations.

16. A NUN SEES JIZO.

In Tamba, there lived an old nun who heard that the Buddha Jizo walked abroad at dawn. Hoping to see him she rose at break of day and wandered to and fro. It so happened that a disreputable looking gambler met her and asked her.—“Sister, what are you doing out in the cold?”

She answered,—“Hearing that Jizo walks at dawn I have come to meet him.”

“I know where he walks,” said the man, “come with me and I will show you.”

“How joyful,” cried the nun, “take me to the place.”

“Give me something?” said the man, “and I will show you the place where he is to be found.”

“I will give you the dress I wear,” the nun replied.

“Come then,” said the man, and he led her to a place near by.

Now the gambler knew the parents of a child called Jizo so he took her to their house, and he asked, “Where is Jizo?”

The parents of the child said—“He is not here. He has gone out to play. He will soon return.”

“This is where Jizo walks,” said the man to the nun: joyfully she took off her silk dress and gave it to the gambler who hurried off with it.

“I have come to see Jizo” said the nun to the parents, who were astonished at any one thus wishing to see their child.

At that moment a boy of about ten years of age came to the door. “This is Jizo” said the parents. The nun immediately fell on her knees, bowing her head to the ground.

The boy held in his hand some grass with which he had cut

himself straight down his forehead, and from the gushing wound the unspeakably blissful face of Jizo appeared.

The nun gazing, worshipped more and more and with tears in her eyes she continued to adore him and then dying she went straight to Paradise. We must believe that to those who earnestly pray the Buddha does appear.

117. THE KNIGHT OF AZUMA.

“Long ago, in the country of Sanyōdō bordering on the inland sea of Japan, the gods Chusan and Koya were worshipped by the people. Koya was a snake and Chusan was a monkey. At the yearly festival held in honour of these gods a human sacrifice was offered up. And always a maiden of fine form, with long hair, and a white skin, and of pleasing deportment was chosen.

Now it happened, as in ancient times without fail, such a maiden was chosen much to the sorrow of her parents.

“We must submit” said they, “yet the relationship of parent and child has been ordained in a former state. One does not dislike even an unsatisfactory child, while one that is perfectly praiseworthy is dearer than life itself. Yet we must submit!” The sorrowful days passed away one by one, and the time the parents and the child had together became shorter and shorter.

While they wept and counted the days there came wandering into the neighbourhood a man from Azuma. He was a hunter of great strength and valiant of heart. He could kill even the wild hog when it is maddened with anger. Arriving at the abode of the father he talked with him, and the father said—

“I spend my days in perpetual grief, for my only daughter has been chosen for the sacrifice. What sin can I have committed

in a former state that I now should meet with such adversity and my daughter have to undergo an unexpected and terrible death? It is most sad and lamentable! Moreover, unlike me, my daughter is very charming." The man from Azuma made answer—

"There is nothing one values more than life, therefore we fear the Gods. Do not give the sacrifice: give the girl to me. To offer her up before the gods would be as dreadful as to see an only daughter chopped to pieces before one's eyes. Give her to me"—he earnestly pleaded.

"Truly!" the father replied, "I would rather give her to you than see her die a painful death."

Then the Knight of Azuma went to where the maiden sat; and he saw that she was beautiful. Bending pensively she studied the art of writing, while the tears dropped on her sleeve. She seemed ashamed that anyone should see her with her hair hanging down and wet, as was also her face, with tears. As she looked round it was evident that she was indeed an elegant woman, dignified and lovely, unlike a country child.

The Knight from Azuma when he looked upon her was filled with sorrow.

Then he said to the parents—"One thing alone troubles me, that is, it would grieve me if you were to come to harm on her account." And the parents answered, "Even if we should die in order that she might live it is no matter: our lives are of no value: do not consider us but act as you think best."

"Let the sacrifice be made," said the Knight, and strictly he charged them to let no one enter the house: he also forbade them to let it be known that he was there.

And as he lived there hidden with the maiden, he chose from among the dogs, that for years had lived in the mountains, the two wisest, these he taught every day to catch and eat a monkey.

Even without training, the dog and the monkey are enemies, so that if a dog sees a monkey he flies at it and catches it and devours it.

Morning and evening the Knight sharpened his sword and talked with the maiden.

"What lay between us in a former life?" he asked, "that I should thus die for you. But what care I for life if it can be given up for you! Only it gives me pain to think that we shall be parted."

Then mournfully the maiden answered, "Alas that I should give you such anxiety."

And so the time went by until the day of the festival arrived. Then came the priests (Shinto) to the house of the maiden bearing a long new box: and a crowd of people came with them making a great noise.

"Place the sacrifice in the box according to custom," cried the priests.

"Do exactly as I tell you," whispered the Knight to the maiden. And secretly he and the two hounds hid themselves in the box. Patting the dogs as they crouched beside him he whispered to them, "I have caressed and fed you from day to day now you must save my life."

The sword which he had daily sharpened was placed in his hand: the lid of the box was shut down and a cloth was sewn round it: then the box was given back to the priests as if the maiden was in it. And they set forth from the house carrying spears and mirrors, waving branches of the sakaki, and ringing bells, as is ordained by the priests, and there was much ado.

But the maiden wept when she saw the Knight carried thus away in her place: and with sorrow she thought of the fate, as yet unknown, that would fall upon her parents.

But they said to her. "We care not whether we live or die."

The sacrifice was brought to the door of the temple, the priests chanting prayers. And the door leading into the place of the gods was opened and the box put in: then the door was shut. Outside stood the chief-priest and others in a row.

Meanwhile the Knight, with the point of his sword, cut a hole in the box, and looking through it he saw indescribably great monkeys with red faces and white hair, sitting all round the room. There were at least two hundred sitting in rows, to the right and to the left, with fierce eye-brows and red faces: and in the midst of them stood a great chopping-board and on it lay a long knife; and all round it stood bottles which apparently contained vinegar, sauce and *saki*.

The other monkeys crowded round while the greatest of them all untied the cords and opened the box.

Then the Knight shouted, "At them, hounds!" And the dogs dashed out and seized the big monkey and would have killed him; but the Knight sprang out of the box waving his sword which was as sharp as ice, and dashed the great monkey on to the chopping-board, crying, "This is the fate of all those who have killed and eaten human beings: I will cut off your head and give it to the dogs." The monkey gnashed its teeth and blinked its eyes and prayed for mercy; but the Knight took no heed. Again he shouted, "For many years you have eaten the children of men, so now I cut off your head!"

Then the other monkeys fled in crowds to the trees, screaming, and followed by the dogs. There was such an up-roar even the earth was up-set and the mountains echoed.

Then the god spoke by the mouth of the chief-priest and said, "From to-day I will not demand this sacrifice: I do not think it right to take away human life, so from hence-forth I shall not accept of it. As for the relations of the victim I shall do them no harm, on the contrary, I shall become the protector of

their descendants. All I ask is, hear my prayer, grant me life, I truly repent. Spare me!"

Then the priests followed by the people crowded into the temple: they were all greatly surprised and there was a great tumult. "Only pardon the god, he has spoken well," cried the priests. But the Knight answered, "Don't be deceived, he is a rogue! This god who has taken the lives of the people, I shall make him repent!" and he prepared to cut off the monkey's head.

But again the priests came forward and prayed that the god might be pardoned and declared that henceforth no human being should be sacrificed, and at last the Knight relented.

From that time no sacrifices were offered in the land but those of wild hog and deer.

The Knight married the maiden and took her with him to his own country; where, being a man of good position, they lived in great comfort.

