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Tales Grotesque and Curious

Ryūnosuke Akutagawa

Translated by Glenn W. Shaw

THE AUTHOR



Ryūnosuke Akutagawa

1892 – 1927

Historical portrait. Wikimedia Commons.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ryūnosuke Akutagawa

Ryūnosuke Akutagawa was a Japanese short-story writer. He often reworked material from earlier literature, using conflicting perspectives and spare narrative frames to make a familiar incident morally uncertain.

Akutagawa studied in Tokyo. His stories include Rashōmon and The Nose. He could borrow the outline of an older narrative while changing its center of gravity, so that what seems at first a story about an event becomes a story about someone's judgment of it.

Akutagawa can turn a remembered incident or an inherited tale into a question about who is telling it. Changes in emphasis alter what a reader understands about responsibility, shame, or kindness. His economical endings often leave that change of perspective to do the work of an explicit judgment.

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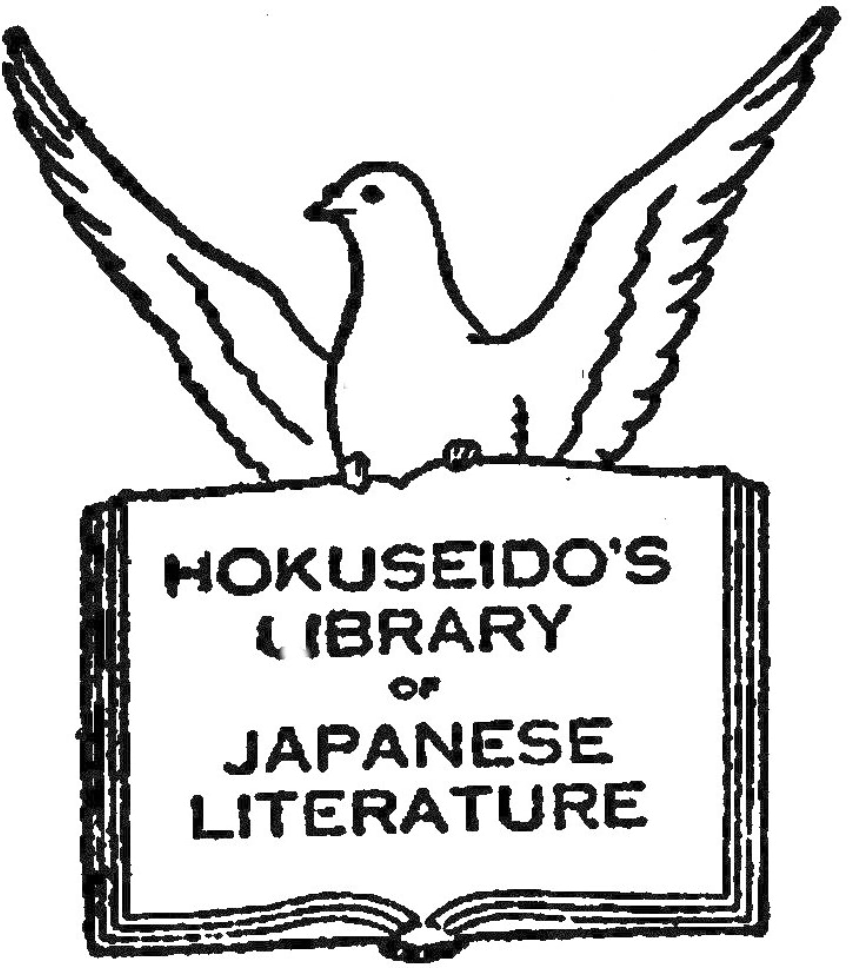
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TALES GROTESQUE AND CURIOUS

by AKUTAGAWA RYUNOSUKE

Translated from the Japanese by GLENN W. SHAW



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INTRODUCTION

AKUTAGAWA RYŪNOSUKE was born in Tōkyō on the first day of March, 1892, and drank poison and died in Tōkyō early on the morning of July 24, 1927. Of the thirty-five years of his life, lived almost entirely in that same Tōkyō, he spent some eighteen mostly in school as a young prodigy and some eleven mostly at his desk as the fashioner and polisher of perhaps 200 over-wrought short stories, of which this book contains eleven, translated into English as nearly word for word as possible.

His father, a man named Niihara Toshizō, is said to have given him the name Ryūnosuke (Dragon-helper) because he was born at the dragon hour on a dragon day in the dragon month of a dragon year. But his father's part in the story ends there. His mother was unwell, and he was given in infancy, in the Japanese way, to her childless elder brother, Akutagawa Shōdō. His adoptive mother's great uncle is reported to have been a man of fashion in the latter days of the old Edo period, but beyond this very frail hint, no home influence has been suggested as contributing to his genius.

When in the third year of primary school, bright young Ryūnosuke picked up Tokutomi Roka's book of sketches, *Shizen to Jinsei* (Nature and Man) and read it with a pleasure that is said to have turned him to literature. He went into the First High School in Tōkyō on recommendation without examination, passed through the school an honor student and entered the Imperial University of Tōkyō, where he studied English literature, graduating in 1916. His graduation thesis was entitled, *Wiriamu Morisu Kenkyū* (A Study of William Morris).

He was like Morris in his surrender to the fascination of the Middle Ages, but he had none of the practical reforming tendencies of that artist socialist. He has been more aptly compared to Flaubert for the seriousness with which he took his art and the preciousness of his style. And the post-bellum point of view has been expressed by a Japanese social worker who, at his death, compared him, as a

man with a keen sense of humor and knowledge of human nature and "an arbiter of elegance in the vicious society in which he lived," to Petronius.

He says of himself while at the University that he did not attend classes very well and was an idle student, but we may take this for the expression of a sincere wish to be more like some of his hardier classmates, for Kikuchi Kan, one of them and to-day the literary Crœsus of Japan, says that Akutagawa went to his classes faithfully and had the confidence of his professors.

Writing some time after 1921, Kikuchi said of his friend Akutagawa that, when he thought of him as he was during their school days together, the first thing he always saw was the bright spot his red lips made in his pale white face. Akutagawa was very quiet and self-contained as an honor student. He was always buying new literary books, and always carried one with him wherever he went. Kikuchi envied him the books but thought at first that he was trying to show off when he carried them about with him. And he disliked the clever remarks and paradoxes with which Akutagawa was wont to pepper his conversation. Later he admired him as a writer. His life, like his writing, was most meticulous. He had a good memory and was full of ideas and of a delicate understanding. He was doing, Kikuchi felt, the most artistic work then being produced in Japan, but he was too cold and intellectual. He played with life with silver tweezers, but never touched it and had no real experience of it.

In 1923 Kikuchi was writing again that he thought Akutagawa, who had turned down an offer of a professorship at the Kyūshū Imperial University, should be given the recently vacated chair of English literature at the Kyōto Imperial University. It was his opinion that Akutagawa, who always had hanging on his door the sign, "Sick, Compliments to Callers," that he might have more time to read, was the most scholarly of the literary men of Japan. He expressed a wish, however, that Akutagawa would forsake Persia and Greece and their curios and devote more time to men like Marx and Shaw.

Kikuchi first came to admire Akutagawa when, with a few others at the University, they began in 1914 the publication of the third series of the magazine *Shinshichō*. His maiden effort appeared in the first issue, attracting no particular attention. But in the following year he published in the magazine *Teikoku Bungaku* two stories, the second of which, Rashōmon, became the title story of his first volume, published in May, 1917, and is now always associated with his name. It is a gruesome thing concerning the old two-storied south gate of Kyōto in the days when that landmark was falling into decay with the rest of the ancient capital toward the end of the twelfth century. By way of lame extenuation, this much, at least, may be said for the story (which is the fourth in this volume), that in other tales, Akutagawa has written with even more disgusting realism of this truly distressing period.

In December, 1915, while still at the University, Akutagawa became a disciple of the preëminent writer of the day, Natsume Soseki, who probably had a greater influence than any other man on his literary life. Mori Ogai, the versatile army surgeon, who tried his hand at so many things in the literary field during the periods of Meiji and Taishō, has been credited with having had the next greatest influence on him.

In 1916, in a fourth revival of the magazine *Shinshichō*, Akutagawa published *Hana* (The Nose), the second story in this book, which drew from Natsume the highest praise. He told his young disciple that if he would write twenty or thirty more stories like it, he would find himself occupying a unique position among the writers of his country, a prophecy which came true. Out of old material, with the greatest attention to detail and to the atmosphere of the period of which he wrote, Akutagawa had produced a grotesquely amusing thing, writing into it some modern psychology and the little lesson that ideals are precious only so long as they remain ideals. This new way of treating historical material in Japan attracted the attention of his countrymen and became characteristic of much of Akutagawa's work. Of this sort of tale, "Lice" and the Chinese story, "The Wine Worm," go one step further in grotesquery, while "The Pipe" turns to lighter and more wholesome humor.

In 1917, when Akutagawa published his second volume of short stories, *Tobako to Akuma* (The Devil and Tobacco), he had already established himself as one of the foremost writers of the day. The title story of the volume is the opening story in this book. In it we see an Oriental saturated with western literature playing with an old theme in a highly amusing and clever way. (Incidentally Akutagawa was himself an inveterate cigarette smoker.) It is one of the many stories he wrote about the early Catholic missionaries of the sixteenth century, one of them so cleverly that it fooled Japanese students of the period into believing that it was a translation from an old Latin text, non-existent, but called by Akutagawa *Legenda Aurea*.

Of the other stories in this volume of translations, a few comments may be of interest. Prof. Hasegawa in "The Handkerchief" is generally recognized as the distinguished author of *Bushidō*, Dr. Nitobe Inazō. "The Spider's Thread" was written for a young peoples' magazine. "The Badger" is one of those comic bits in which Akutagawa, making extravagant use of his wide reading, loved to play with a quaint idea in make-believe seriousness. "The Ball" is a re-creation of a fragment of that strange and romantic period in Japanese history when, soon after the Restoration, the West was being swallowed whole, only to be cast up again in revulsion in the inevitable reaction of the nineties. The Rokumeikan was the, to later eyes ridiculous, center of the social phase of this effort, and Pierre Loti, fresh from the sordid little transaction in Nagasaki out of which he made his best-known book on Japan, makes quite a respectable hero there. Who could have been the original of Mōri Sensei in the character study at the end of the volume, I do not know, but I have seen so many Mōri Senseis like him during my years in Japanese schools that I cannot read it without a doubtless gratuitous, but none the less poignant, feeling of the futility of many men's lives, or should I, in a very general sense, say, "of all our lives?"

Just before he killed himself, Akutagawa coolly set down at considerable length an explanation of the ending of his short life (naming all the suicides of Eastern and Western history, including even Christ) on highly reasoned and philosophical grounds, which

do not matter much here, for the simple truth seems to be that he was at the time a physical and nervous wreck, having been all his life a high-strung and frail man. Though he mentions an unnamed woman as furnishing some immediate excuse for it (he was a normal husband and father), and though the poetess Byakuren has gone out of her way to drop a hint that this woman was her own very good friend Kujō Takeko, the poetess and woman of letters whom public sentiment has made the ideal woman of modern Japan, Akutagawa seems simply to have been world-weary and, after coldly contemplating death for years, not able himself to say exactly what did drive him to it. All that can be said surely about it is that it took the vast majority of his countrymen greatly by surprise.

Then here ends the story of a sort of literary ascetic, whose history, as one biographer puts it, is really little more than a list of the dates on which he published his stories and the names of the magazines in which they appeared. But there can be no doubt that he had more individuality than any other writer of his time and has left in Japanese literature a mass of artistic work, often grotesque and curious, that, while it undoubtedly angers the proletarian experimenters who now hold the stage and fight with lusty pens and a highly developed class consciousness against all that he stood for, will continue to live as long as men go on treasuring the fancies their fellows from time to time set down with care on paper.

The translation of *Rashōmon* here given was first published in the English study magazine, *Eigo Seinen*, in 1920, three years after Akutagawa published the original in his first book. “Lice” was published in the same magazine in 1921. I am grateful to the magazine for permission to republish them in this volume. I am once more grateful, too, to my very sympathetic Japanese colleagues, whom I have always used freely when, from time to time, dictionaries and my own imagination have failed me. And finally I am grateful to the author, whom, though his days of seeing and hearing are over, I here address as would a Japanese: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, at last I am publishing the book I started with your approval years ago. May you find it pleasing.

Glenn W. Shaw

Osaka, June 10, 1930.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Tobacco and the Devil	1
The Nose	15
The Handkerchief	29
Rashōmon	45
Lice	57
The Spider's Thread	67
The Wine Worm	75
The Badger	89
The Ball	97
The Pipe	109
Mōri Sensei	123

TOBACCO AND THE DEVIL

Tobacco did not grow in Japan in the beginning. And the records do not agree as to when it was introduced. Some put it in the Keichō Period (1596–1615) and some in the Tembun Period (1532–55). But the plant seems to have been already widely under cultivation by about the tenth year of Keichō. And in the Bunroku Period (1592–96), smoking was so widespread as to give rise to the pasquinade,

Things without effect
On men are the smoking law,
The counterfeit law,
The imperial voice secluded
And Gentaku the physician.

To the question, "By whom was tobacco introduced?" any historian would answer that it was by the Portuguese or the Spaniards. But these are not necessarily the only answers. There is, besides, one more in the form of a tradition. According to it, tobacco was brought here from somewhere by the Devil. And the Devil was brought all the way over to Japan by a Catholic Padre, perhaps St. Francis.

When I say this, Catholic believers may find fault with me for slandering their Padres. But for myself, I cannot but believe it probable. For it is most natural that when the god of the "Southern barbarians" came to us from across the sea, their devil should come with him,—that is, when the good of the West was brought in, the evil should be brought in too.

But I cannot say positively whether the Devil truly brought tobacco to this land or not. Of course, according to a book by Anatole France, the Devil once tried to tempt a certain priest with mignonette. Then surely we cannot simply say that the story that he brought tobacco into Japan is a mere lie. Even if it is a lie, it may be, in a certain sense, surprisingly near the truth. With this thought, I have decided to try writing here this tradition concerning the introduction of tobacco.

In the eighteenth year of Tembun, the Devil, assuming the form of a Brother in St. Francis Xavier's company, came safely across the wide seas to Japan. He was able to change himself into this Brother because, while the genuine Brother was ashore at Amakawa or somewhere, the "black ship" which carried the party sailed away and left him behind without knowing it. Then the Devil, who had up to this time been hanging head down with his tail wrapped round a spar secretly watching what was going on in the ship, instantly took on the appearance of this man and began to wait on St. Francis constantly. Of course such a trick was nothing for him, since he was the expert who, when he called on Dr. Faust, could assume the shape of a splendid red-cloaked knight.

But when he reached Japan, he found things quite different from what he had read of them in Marco Polo's Travels while still in the West. In the first place, in the Travels, the whole country seemed to be overflowing with gold, but look where he might, there was nothing of the kind to be seen. Then he might be able to tempt people a good deal by scratching crosses with his nail and turning them into gold. And it was said that the Japanese knew a way of raising the dead by the power of pearls or something, but this also seemed to be one of Marco Polo's lies. If it was a lie and he should spit into all their wells and spread a plague among them, practically all men would forget the coming Paradise in their agony. Laudably following St. Francis about here and there sight-seeing, the Devil secretly thought such thoughts and smiled to himself with satisfaction.

But there was one thing that troubled him. Even he did not know what to do about that one thing. Francis Xavier having just reached Japan and it being necessary for him to preach widely before he could make any converts to Christianity, there was not a single all-important believer for him to tempt. With all his being the Devil, this perplexed him not a little. In the first place, for the time being, he did not know how to while away his tedious leisure hours.

So after considering many things, he thought he would kill some time gardening anyway, for he had been carrying various kinds of seeds in the hollow of his ear ever since his departure from the West. As for land, if he borrowed a neighboring field, he would have no trouble about that. Moreover, even St. Francis gave his hearty approval. Of course he supposed that one of the Brothers in his company was going to introduce western medicinal herbs or some such plants into Japan.

The Devil immediately borrowed a spade and a hoe and began energetically to till a roadside field.

It was just at the vapor-laden beginning of spring, and the bell of a far-off temple sent its sleepy boom through the floating mist. The sound was ever so tranquil and did not strike him on the crown of the head with the disagreeable sharp clang of the church bells of the West to which he was accustomed. But if you suppose that the Devil felt calm in these peaceful surroundings, you are quite wrong.

When he once heard the sound of this temple bell, he scowled more unhappily than he had when he heard the bell of St. Paul's and began to dig furiously in the field. For when, bathed in the warm sunshine, he heard this calm bell, his heart was strangely relaxed. He had no more mind to work evil than to do good. At this rate, his crossing the sea on purpose to tempt the Japanese would be all in vain. The only reason the Devil, who hated work so much that he was once scolded by the sister of Ivan for having no blisters on his palms, was willing to toil away with a hoe like this was simply that he was madly determined to drive away the moral sleepiness that threatened to overcome him.

After some days the Devil at last finished his work and sowed in furrows the seeds he had in his ear.

During the following months, the seeds the Devil had sown sprouted and grew into high plants and, at the end of the summer, broad green leaves completely hid all the earth of the field. But there

was no one who knew the name of the plants. Even when St. Francis asked him, the Devil only grinned and held his tongue, vouchsafing no reply.

Meanwhile the plants put out clusters of flowers on the ends of their stems. They were funnel-shaped and light purple. The Devil seemed to be delighted with the flowering of the plants in proportion to the trouble he had taken with them. So every day, after the morning and evening services, he always came out into the field and cultivated them devotedly.

Then one day (St. Francis had gone off on a preaching tour for several days and was absent) a cattle dealer passed by the field leading a yellow cow. There across the fence in the field full of purple flowers stood a southern barbarian Brother in his black priest's robe and broad-brimmed hat busily picking worms off the leaves. The flowers were so curious that the cattle dealer involuntarily stopped, took off his mushroom hat and called to the Brother politely,

"I say, holy one, what are those flowers?"

The Brother looked round. He had a flat nose and small eyes and was an altogether good-natured looking "red-head."

"These?"

"Yes."

The "red-head," leaning on the fence, shook his head. Then he said in awkward Japanese,

"I'm sorry, but I can't tell that one thing to anybody."

"Oh, then did Francis Sama say that you shouldn't tell?"

"No, not that."

"Then won't you just tell me once, for I've recently been instructed by Francis Sama and become a believer in your religion, as you see."

The cattle dealer pointed proudly to his breast. The Devil looked, and sure enough, there was a little brass cross hanging from his neck and shining in the sun. Then, perhaps dazzled by it, the Brother screwed up his face a little and dropped his eyes to the ground, but quickly in a more familiar tone than before and so that you could not tell whether he was joking or not, he said,

"Still I can't. For by the law of our country, it's forbidden to tell. Better still, you make a guess at it yourself. The Japanese are clever, so you're sure to hit it. If you do, I'll give you all the plants in this field."

The cattle dealer probably thought the Brother was making fun of him. With a smile on his sun-burnt face, he gave his head an exaggerated tilt.

"What can it be, I wonder. To save me, I can't guess it right off."

"Oh, you needn't do it to-day. Think it over for three days. I don't care if you consult others about it. If you guess it, I'll give you all these. Besides, I'll give you some rare wine. Or shall I give you a picture of the Heavenly Paradise."

The cattle dealer seemed to be surprised at his earnestness.

"Then if I don't guess it, what'll I have to do?"

Pushing his hat back on his head, the Brother waved his hand and laughed. He laughed in a sharp voice like a crow's, that took the cattle dealer a little by surprise.

"If you fail to guess it, I'll take something of yours. It's a gamble. It's a gamble whether you can guess it or not. If you guess it, I give you all these plants."

As he talked, the red-head's voice again took on a friendly tone.

"All right. Then I'll do my best, too, and give you anything you say."

"Will you give me anything? Even that cow?"

"If she'll do, I'll give her to you right now."

Smiling, the cattle dealer patted the yellow cow on the forehead. He seemed to be taking everything the good-natured Brother said for a joke.

"And in exchange, if I win, I'll thank you for those flowering plants."

"Good. Good. Then it's a real bargain, isn't it?"

"It's a real bargain. I swear in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

When he heard this, the Brother flashed his little eyes and snorted twice or thrice as if with satisfaction. Then putting his left hand on his hip and leaning a little back, he put his right hand out

and touched the purple flowers.

"Well then, if you don't guess it—I'll take you, body and soul."

With this, the red-head made a large circle with his right hand and took off his hat. There were two horns like a goat's in his shaggy hair. The cattle dealer, changing color, dropped his hat from his hand. Perhaps because the sun was obscured, the brightness of the flowers and leaves in the field all at once vanished. Even the cow, as if in fear of something, lowered her horns and gave a bellow like the rumbling of the earth.

"Even a promise made to me is a promise. You've sworn in the name of one to me unmentionable. Don't forget. You have three days. Good-bye."

Speaking thus in the courteous tone of one who has made a fool of somebody, the Devil deliberately made the cattle dealer a very polite bow.

The cattle dealer regretted that he had fallen into the Devil's trap so carelessly. If he left things as they were, he would finally be seized by that "shag-pate" and have to burn body and soul in the everlasting fires of hell. Then his having forsaken his former religion and having been baptized would be of no avail.

Since, however, he had sworn in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he could not break the promise he had made. Of course if St. Francis had only been there, something might have been done yet, but unfortunately he was away. Then for three days, during which he could not sleep a wink, he tried to think how to outwit the Devil. To do so, there was absolutely no way but to learn the name of the plant. But where could there be anybody who knew a name unknown even to St. Francis?

Finally, on the last night, the cattle dealer, again leading his yellow cow, stole up to the house in which the Brother lived. It stood beside the field facing the road. When he got there, it seemed that the Brother had already gone to bed, and no light shone from the windows. There was a moon, but it was a hazy night, and here and

there in the lonely field the purple flowers showed faintly and lonesomely in the gloom. Of course the cattle dealer had finally crept up here because he had thought of a sort of doubtful plan, but as soon as he saw this quiet scene, he was somehow afraid and felt that it might be best to go back home as he was. Especially when he thought of that demon in the house with horns like a goat's, perhaps dreaming of the Inferno, all the courage he had worked up melted weakly away. But when he thought of handing himself over, body and soul, to that shag-pate, of course it was no time to squeal and give up.

So the cattle dealer, beseeching the help of the Virgin Mary, boldly carried out the plan he had formed. It was no very great plan. It was only to take off the halter of the yellow cow he was leading and, beating her roundly behind, drive her madly into the field.

The cow, jumping with the pain, broke down the fence and trampled the field. She ran against the weather-boarding of the house with her horns many times. And the noise of her hoofs and her bellowing, stirred the light mist of the night and echoed fearfully through the neighborhood. Then somebody opened a window shutter and stuck out his head. Because of the darkness the face was not recognizable, but it was surely that of the Devil in the form of the Brother. It may have been nerves, but the horns on his head were distinctly visible even in the night.

"You dirty cur, you, what do you mean by tearing up my tobacco field?" yelled the Devil in a sleepy voice, shaking his fist. He seemed extremely angry at being disturbed just after falling asleep.

But to the cattle dealer, who was hiding and watching on the other side of the field, these words of the Devil sounded like the voice of his God.

"You dirty cur, you, what do you mean by tearing up my tobacco field?"

After that everything ended most harmoniously, as always in stories of this kind. The cattle dealer guessed the name "tobacco" successfully and got the best of the Devil. And he took all the

tobacco growing in the field. Thus ends the story.

But I have always wondered whether this tradition may not have in it a deeper meaning. For though the Devil was not able to make the cattle dealer's body and soul his own, he managed instead to disseminate tobacco throughout all Japan. Wherefore, as the escape of the cattle dealer was coupled with his fall, was not the failure of the Devil accompanied by success? Though the Devil falls, he does not simply rise again. May it not be true that when a man thinks he has won out against temptation he finds to his surprise that he has met defeat?

And here let me add a brief account of what became of the Devil after that. When St. Francis came back, he was finally driven off of the land by the virtue of the holy pentagram. But he seems to have wandered about here and there after that still disguised as a Brother. In a certain record, he is said to have appeared occasionally in Kyōto at about the time of the erection of the temple Nambanji. There is also a theory that Kashin Koji, the notorious fellow who made sport of Matsunaga Danjo, was the Devil, but since this has already been written about by Lafcadio Hearn, I shall not repeat it here. And then when the foreign religion was prohibited by Toyotomi and Tokugawa, he still showed himself at first, but finally in the end he left Japan altogether. The records give practically no further information on the Devil. Only it is exceedingly regrettable that we are unable to learn of his movements since he came back to Japan a second time after the Restoration of Meiji.

THE NOSE

THERE was nobody at Ike-no-O who did not know about the nose of Zenchi Naigu. It was five or six inches long and hung down from above his upper lip to below his chin. As for its shape, it was equally thick at base and tip. A long and slender sausage, so to speak, dangled from the middle of his face.

The Naigu, who was over fifty, had always grieved in secret at this nose of his from the far-off days when he was an acolyte to the present, when he had reached the position of an attendant at the palace chapel. Of course outwardly he even now wore an expression that proclaimed his lack of any particular concern about it. This was not merely because he thought it wrong for a priest who ought to devote his whole heart to the adoration of the anticipated Western Paradise to trouble himself about his nose. Rather it was because he hated to have people know that he was fretting to himself about it. In ordinary daily conversations, he feared above all else the appearance of the word "nose."

There were two reasons why the Naigu found his nose too much for him. One was that in a practical way the length of it was inconvenient. In the first place, when he ate, he could not do it by himself. If he did, the tip of his nose got into the boiled rice in his metal bowl. So when taking his meals, he had one of his disciples sit across the dining-tray from him and hold his nose up with a piece of wood an inch wide and two feet long while he ate. But for him to dine in this way was by no means an easy thing for either the Naigu, whose nose was held up, or the disciple who held it. In those days a story got abroad even in Kyōto of how a Chūdōji, who once took the place of this disciple, let his hand shake when he sneezed and dropped the nose into a dish of gruel. But for the Naigu, this was not at all the main reason he grieved over his nose. The truth is, he was troubled over his self-respect, which was injured by his nose.

The people in the town of Ike-no-O said it was fortunate for Zenchi Naigu, with such a nose, that he was not a layman. For with him carrying that nose, they thought there would have been no

woman willing to become his wife. And some of them even gave it as their opinion that he had probably taken to the priesthood on account of that nose. But the Naigu himself did not feel that his troubles over his nose were the least bit lessened through his being a priest. His self-respect was too delicately strung to be influenced one way or the other by such an ultimate fact as matrimony. So he tried both constructively and destructively to correct the injury done to his self-respect.

The first thing he took thought for was some means by which to make his long nose look shorter than it really was. When nobody was about, he took a mirror, and reflecting his face in it at all sorts of angles, earnestly exercised his ingenuity. Sometimes he could not be satisfied with only changing the position of his face, so first resting his head in his hands, then putting his finger to the tip of his chin, he would peer persistently into the glass. But not once up to this time had his nose looked short enough to satisfy even himself. Sometimes he even thought that the more he worried about it, the longer it seemed. At such times the Naigu always put the mirror back into the box, sighed as if it were something new, and returned reluctantly to his reading stand to go on reading the Kannon Sutra.

And again the Naigu was always paying attention to other people's noses. The Ike-no-O temple often held preaching services. At the temple there were lines of closely built monks' cells, and in the bath-room, the resident priests boiled up water daily. Accordingly the priests and laymen frequenting the place were many. The Naigu examined their faces patiently. For he wanted to put himself at ease by finding out at least one nose like his own. So he noticed neither their wide-sleeved hunting coats of deep blue nor their white summer garments. Naturally the orange-colored caps and the sober brown robes of the priests, in that he was accustomed to them, did not exist for him at all. He did not see the people; he only saw their noses. But though there were hooked noses, he failed to find a single one like his own. With the repetition of his failure, his heart became more and more unhappy. His unconsciously taking hold of the end of his dangling nose while in conversation with others, and blushing out of all keeping with his years, was simply the consequence of his being moved by this unhappiness.

Finally he even thought of obtaining some solace at least by finding some man with a nose like his own in the Buddhist scriptures or other books. But it was not written in any scripture that either Mokuren or Sharihotsu had a long nose. Of course Lung Shu and Ma Ming were both Boddhisatvas with ordinary noses. When he heard, apropos of Chinese story, that the ears of Lin Hsuan-ti of the Chu-Han were long, he thought how relieved he would have felt if it had been that worthy's nose instead of his ears.

It is needless to say that while the Naigu thus troubled himself negatively, he, at the same time, tried positive ways to make his nose grow short. He did just about everything he could in this direction, too. Once he tried drinking a decoction of snake-gourd and once applying rat urine to his nose. But in spite of all his efforts, it still dangled its five or six inches down over his lips as before.

But one year in the autumn, one of his disciples, while in Kyōto on the Naigu's business, was told by a doctor of his acquaintance of a way to shorten noses. This doctor was a man who had come originally from China and was at that time a priest at Chōrakuji.

The Naigu as usual pretended not to care about his nose and deliberately refrained from proposing an immediate trial of the method. But on the other hand, he dropped cheerful remarks about being sorry to give his disciple so much trouble every time he took his meals. In his heart, of course, he was waiting for his disciple to talk him over and get him to try it. And naturally the disciple could not be unaware of the Naigu's scheme. But the feelings that made him adopt such a scheme must have moved the disciple's sympathy more strongly than did his own antipathy to it. The disciple, as the Naigu had expected, began eagerly to urge him to try the method. And the Naigu himself, also in accordance with his expectation, finally followed this earnest counsel.

The method was the very simple one of just boiling his nose in hot water and letting someone trample on it.

Water was boiled daily in the temple bath-room. So the disciple poured water so hot that he could not stand his finger in it directly into a bucket and brought it from the bath-room. But there was a fear of the steam scalding the Naigu's face if he dipped his nose directly into the bucket. So they decided to make a hole in a tray

and, putting it on the bucket for a cover, to insert his nose through the hole into the hot water. If he soaked only his nose in the water, it did not feel hot at all. After a while, the disciple said,

"It must be boiled now, I think."

The Naigu smiled a forced smile. This was because he thought that if any one heard only that, he would never imagine that it was a remark about a nose. After being steamed in the boiling water, it itched as if it had been bitten by fleas.

When the Naigu had drawn his nose out of the hole in the tray, the disciple began with all his might to trample it, still steaming, with both his feet. The Naigu, lying on his side and stretching out his nose on the floor boards, watched the disciple's feet moving up and down before his eyes. From time to time the disciple looked down with a pitying face on the Naigu's bald head and said,

"Doesn't it hurt? The doctor said to trample it torturingly. But doesn't it hurt?"

The Naigu tried to shake his head to show that it was not hurting him. But since his nose was being trampled on, he could not move his head as he wished. So, rolling up his eyes and fastening them on the cracks in the disciple's chapped feet, he answered in an angry-sounding voice,

"No, it doesn't!"

As his nose was being trampled on where it itched, he really found it more comfortable than painful.

After a while, something that looked like grains of millet began to come out on his nose. It looked, so to speak, like a bird plucked and roasted whole. The disciple, seeing this, stopped moving his feet and observed as if to himself,

"He told me to pull these out with hair-tweezers."

The Naigu, puffing out his cheeks with dissatisfaction, without a word, left his nose to the disciple to deal with as he wished. Of course it was not because he was unaware of his disciple's kindness. But though he was aware of that, he was displeased at having his nose treated just as if it were a commodity. Reluctantly, with the expression of a patient being operated on by a doctor in whom he

has no faith, he watched the disciple with hair-tweezers pulling the fat out of the pores of his nose. The fat came out in the shape of bird quills half an inch long.

Finally when the nose had once been gone over, the disciple looked relieved and said,

"If you boil it once more, it'll be all right, I think."

The Naigu, still knitting his brows and looking dissatisfied, did as the disciple told him.

Well, when he took his boiled nose out the second time, indeed it was short as it had never been before. Now it was not greatly different from the ordinary hooked nose. The Naigu, stroking his shortened nose, peered shame-facedly and nervously into the mirror the disciple gave him.

His nose, that nose which had hung down below his chin, had shrunk up almost unbelievably and now simply clung on spiritless above his upper lip. The red blotches on it here and there were probably bruises left by the trampling. Now surely nobody would laugh at him. The Naigu's face in the mirror looked at the face outside and blinked its eyes contentedly.

But during all that day, he was uneasy for fear his nose might become long again. So while he read the sutras and while he ate his meals, whenever opportunity offered, he put up his hand and stealthily felt the tip of his nose. But it simply kept its place decently above his lips, and there was no sign of its getting any longer. Then after a night's sleep, when he awoke early the next morning, he felt his nose the very first thing. It was still as short as ever. Whereupon, for the first time in many years, the Naigu experienced the same sense of relief he had enjoyed when he had finished heaping up merit for himself by copying out the Hoke Sutra.

But within the next two or three days, the Naigu discovered a surprising fact. It was that a samurai who was at the temple at Ike-no-O on business at that time looked more amused than ever and, unable to talk as he wished, did nothing but stare at the Naigu's nose. Moreover, the Chūdōji who had once dropped his nose in the gruel kept his eyes on the ground at first, and stifled a laugh when he met the Naigu outside the hall, but finally burst out laughing as if

he could restrain himself no longer. It happened not only once or twice that the under priests who were being given orders listened respectfully while face to face with him, but fell to tittering whenever he so much as looked around behind him.

At first the Naigu interpreted this as being due to the change in his features. But by this interpretation it seemed by no means possible to arrive at a full explanation. Of course the reason for the Chūdōji's and under priests' laughing must have lain in that. But all the same, there was in the way they laughed something that had not been there in the days when his nose was long. If his unfamiliar short nose looked more ridiculous than his familiar long nose, so much for that. But there seemed to be something more to it.

"They didn't laugh so constantly before," the Naigu would murmur sometimes, interrupting the sutra he had started to recite and cocking his bald head on one side. On such occasions, the amiable Naigu was sure to look absent-mindedly at a picture of Fugen hanging beside him and, thinking of the time a few days back when his nose was still long, fall into low spirits, thinking, "like unto a man utterly ruined pondering the time of his glory." Unfortunately he was lacking in the perspicacity to solve this problem.

In the human heart there are two feelings mutually contradictory. Of course there is no one who does not sympathize at the misfortune of another. But if that other somehow manages to escape from that misfortune, then he who has sympathized somehow feels unsatisfied. To exaggerate a little, he is even disposed to cast the sufferer back into the same misfortune once more. And before he is aware of it, he unconsciously comes to harbor a certain hostility against him. What somehow displeased the Naigu, though he did not know the reason, was nothing other than the egoism he indefinably perceived in the attitude of those onlookers, both priests and laymen, at Ike-no-O.

So the Naigu's humor became worse every day. He scolded everybody ill-naturedly at the slightest provocation. Even the disciple who had operated on his nose finally came to say behind his back that he would be punished for his avarice and cruelty. It was that mischievous Chūdōji who enraged the Naigu most.

One day, hearing a dog yelping noisily, he went out casually and found the Chūdōji brandishing a stick about two feet long and chasing a thin shaggy dog with long hair. And he was not simply chasing the dog around. He was running after it crying tauntingly, “Watch out for your nose there! Watch out for your nose there!” The Naigu snatched the stick from his hand and gave him a hard thwack in the face with it. The stick was the one with which his own nose had formerly been held up.

The Naigu came to feel angry regret that he had thoughtlessly shortened his nose.

Then one night the wind seemed to have suddenly begun blowing after sunset and the ringing of the wind-bells on the pagoda came to his pillow annoyingly. Moreover, as the cold increased perceptibly, the old Naigu could not get to sleep, try as he might. Then as he lay blinking in bed, he suddenly became aware of an unaccustomed itching in his nose. When he felt it with his hand, it was swollen as if a little dropsical. There even seemed to be fever in that part only.

“Since I shortened it against nature, it may have got diseased,” he murmured, pressing his nose with his hand as reverently as he was accustomed to offer incense and flowers to the Buddhas.

The next morning when the Naigu awoke early as usual, the leaves of the maidenhair trees and horse chestnuts in the temple grounds had fallen over night, and the garden was as bright as if carpeted with gold. It may have been because of the frost which lay on the roof of the pagoda that the nine metal rings in its spire sparkled dazzlingly in the still faint light of the morning sun. Zenchi Naigu stood on the veranda with the shutters up and drew a deep breath.

It was at just about this moment that a certain sensation which he had all but forgotten came back to him again.

He put his hand to his nose excitedly. What it touched was not the short nose of the night before. It was his long old nose dangling some five or six inches from above his upper lip to below his chin. He found that it had grown again in one night as long as it was before. And at the same time he realized that a light-hearted feeling similar to that which he had felt when his nose became short had come back to him from somewhere.

"Now nobody will laugh at me surely," murmured the Naigu in the depths of his heart, the while he dangled his long nose in the wind of the early autumn morning.

THE HANDKERCHIEF

PROF. Hasegawa Kinzō, of the Law College of the Imperial University, was sitting in a cane chair on his veranda reading Strindberg's "Dramaturgy."

His special study was colonial policy. Wherefore the fact that he was reading "Dramaturgy" may cause the reader some surprise. But he, a professor noted not only as a scholar but as an educator, even if the books were not necessary for his special investigations, always, so far as his leisure permitted, looked through any books that were connected in any sense with the thought or feelings of present-day students. In truth, not long before, he had read Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis" and "Intentions" only because the students of a certain college of which, along with his other work, he acted as president, were fond of them.

Since he was such a man, we need not marvel that the book he was now reading was a treatise on the modern drama and players of Europe. For among the students under him there were not only those who wrote criticisms on Ibsen, Strindberg and Maeterlinck, but even some enthusiasts who intended to follow in the footsteps of such modern dramatists and make play writing their life work.

Every time he finished one of the excellent chapters, he put the yellow cloth-covered book on his lap and glanced carelessly at the Gifu paper lantern hanging on the veranda. Strange to say, no sooner would he do this than his thoughts would part company with Strindberg. And in place of Strindberg, he would begin to think of his wife, with whom he had gone to buy the Gifu lantern. He had married in America while studying there. So his wife was of course an American. But she loved Japan and the Japanese not a whit less than he did. Especially was she fond of Japan's exquisite objects of industrial art. Wherefore, that the Gifu lantern hung on the veranda should be looked upon rather as an expression of one phase of her taste for things Japanese than of his own predilections.

Whenever he put down his book, he thought of his wife and the Gifu lantern, and of the Japanese civilization represented by that lantern. In his belief, Japanese civilization had made rather remarkable progress during the last fifty years in material things. But spiritually it was practically impossible to find any progress worth mentioning. Nay, rather, in a sense, it was degenerating. Then what (and this was the urgent task of the day's thinkers) was to be done to develop a way of saving it from this decline? He concluded that there was nothing for it but to rely upon Japan's peculiar Bushidō. Bushidō should by no means be regarded as the narrow-minded morality of an insular nation. Rather there was even that in it which should be identified with the Christian spirit in the nations of Europe and America. If through this Bushidō a trend could be shown in the modern current of thought in Japan, it would not only be a contribution to the spiritual civilization of Japan alone, but it would be, in addition, advantageous in making easy a mutual understanding between the Japanese people and the peoples of Europe and America. Or international peace would be promoted by it.

For some time he had been thinking, in this sense, of becoming a bridge between East and West. For such a professor it was by no means unpleasant that the thoughts of his wife, the Gifu lantern and the Japanese civilization represented by it should arise in his consciousness with a certain harmony. But, as he enjoyed such satisfaction again and again, he gradually realized, even as he read, that his thoughts were getting far away from Strindberg. Then he shook his head, a little provoked, and began to pore diligently over the fine type again, and just where he had begun to read, the following passage occurred: "When an actor discovers a suitable expression for a most common sentiment and gains some popularity for himself by means of this expression, because, on the one hand, it is easy and, on the other, because he has succeeded with it, he is apt, without regard for its suitability or unsuitability, to incline toward this means. And this is a mannerism."

The professor had always been indifferent to art, especially to drama. Even Japanese plays he had seen only a few times in his life. Once the name of "Baiko" appeared in a story by a certain student.

Even this professor, who prided himself on his encyclopaedic knowledge, did not know what this name meant. So when he had an opportunity, he called the student to him and asked him.

"I say, what's 'Baiko'?"

"Baiko? Baiko is an actor at present attached to the Imperial Theatre at Maru-no-uchi and now taking the part of Misao in 'Taikoki Judanme'."

Thus politely replied this student dressed in a hakama of Kokura duck. Hence the professor had no opinions of his own at all on the various rules of stage presentation on which Strindberg pithily commented. Only, he was able to take some interest in it in so far as it reminded him of certain things he had seen in western theatres while studying abroad. There was, so to speak, not much difference between him and a middle school English teacher who reads Bernard Shaw's dramas to hunt for idioms. But interest is interest anyhow.

The still unlighted Gifu lantern hung from the ceiling of the veranda. And Prof. Hasegawa sat in the cane chair reading Strindberg's "Dramaturgy." If I write only this, I believe the reader can easily imagine what a long early-summer afternoon it was. But by this I do not mean at all that the professor was overcome with ennui. If anybody should try to interpret it thus, he would be deliberately trying to give it a cynical and perverse interpretation.

Actually he was forced to leave off in the midst of his reading even Strindberg. For the maid suddenly interrupted his innocent amusement by announcing a caller. Be the day as long as it might, it seemed that the world would never stop working him to death.

The professor put down his book and glanced at the small calling card the maid had just brought him. On the ivory paper was printed small the name, Nishiyama Atsuko. He felt sure that she was no one he had ever met. But all the same, as he left his chair, the widely acquainted professor, just to make sure, ran over the name-list he kept in his head. But still no face that seemed as if it might be hers came into his memory. Therefore, putting the card into the book for a marker, he laid the book down on the chair and, ill at ease, adjusted the front of his unlined kimono of coarse silk, giving the while, another little glance at the Gifu lantern in front of his nose. It

is probably always true in such cases that the host who keeps the visitor waiting is more impatient than the visitor who is kept waiting. Of course I need not go out of my way to explain that, since the professor had always been an austere man, this would be true in this case even if his visitor had not been such an unknown woman as had come this day.

Finally, calculating the time, the professor opened the door of his reception room. At practically the same moment that he entered the room and let go the knob, a lady who appeared to be about forty arose from a chair in which she was sitting. She went beyond his ability to make her out, being dressed in an elegant unlined garment of steel grey satin, with, where her haori of black silk finely striped in the fabric hung a little open at the front, a chrysoprase sash-fastener embossed in a chaste diamond-shaped design. Even the professor, who usually took no notice of such trifles, at once saw that her hair was done up in the coiffure of a married woman. With the round face and amber skin peculiar to Japanese, she seemed to be a so-called “wise mother.”

“I’m Hasegawa,” the professor said, bowing amiably. For he thought that if he spoke thus, she would probably say something, if they had ever met before.

“I’m Nishiyama Kenichirō’s mother,” said the lady in a clear voice, politely returning his bow.

At the name, “Nishiyama Kenichirō,” the professor remembered. Nishiyama was one of those students who wrote critical articles on Ibsen and Strindberg, whose special study, he seemed to remember, was German Law, and who, even after he entered the university, had often come to the professor’s house with problems of thought to discuss. In the spring, he had fallen ill of peritonitis and entered the university hospital, and the professor had taken advantage of some opportunities and inquired after him once or twice. It was not mere accident that the professor thought he had seen the lady’s face somewhere. That cheerful youth with heavy eyebrows and this woman were as surprisingly alike as the two melons in the Japanese popular saying.

“Ah, Nishiyama Kun’s,—is that so?”

The professor, nodding to himself, pointed to a chair on the opposite side of a small table.

"Please—take that chair."

The lady, after first apologizing for her abrupt visit, again bowed politely and sat down in the chair indicated. As she did so, she took something white, which seemed to be a handkerchief, out of her sleeve. When he saw this, the professor quickly offered her a Korean fan that lay on the table and sat down in the chair opposite.

"This is a fine house," said the lady, looking round the room a little unnaturally.

"Oh, no, it's only big, and I don't take any care of it at all."

The professor, who was accustomed to such greetings, having the maid put the chilled tea she had just brought before his guest, immediately turned the subject of conversation toward her.

"How is Nishiyama Kun? Is there any change in his condition?"

"Yes."

The lady paused for a moment modestly, putting her hands, one on the other, on her knees, and then spoke quietly. Her tone continued to be calm and smooth.

"In truth it was about my son that I came to-day; finally nothing could be done for him. While he was alive, you were very kind to him and—"

The professor, who had taken it for reserve in her that the lady did not touch her tea, was at this moment just going to put his cup to his lips. For he thought it would be better to set an example by sipping his own tea than to urge her repeatedly and importunately to take hers. But before the cup had reached his soft mustache, her words suddenly smote his ears. Should he drink or should he not? This question, entirely independent of the youth's death, plagued him for a moment. But he could not go on holding the cup where it was forever. So he resolutely swallowed half his tea and, knitting his brows the least bit, said in a choked voice, "That's too bad."

"He often spoke of you while he was in the hospital, so though I felt that you must be busy, thinking that, by way of letting you know, I'd express my thanks,—"

"Oh, not at all."

The professor put the cup down and, taking up a green waxed fan, said in a daze,

"So finally nothing could be done for him, you say. He was just at the promising age, but,—not having visited the hospital for some time, I never imagined anything but that probably he was just about well. Then when was it—his death?"

"The first seventh-day was just yesterday."

"And at the hospital—?"

"Yes."

"Indeed, this is a surprise to me."

"Anyway, as we did everything that could be done, there's nothing to do but be resigned, but nevertheless, when I think how we raised him, I can't keep myself from fits of complaining."

While conversing thus, the professor became aware of a surprising fact. It was the fact that in neither her attitude nor her demeanor did she seem in the least to be talking about her own son's death. She had no tears in her eyes. Her voice was natural. Besides, a smile played about the corners of her mouth. So if anybody had simply seen her outward appearance without hearing her words, he surely could have thought nothing but that she was talking of ordinary everyday affairs. To the professor, this was surprising.

Once long before when he was studying in Berlin, it happened that Wilhelm I, the father of the present Kaiser, died. He heard of it at a café he usually frequented, and of course experienced no more than an ordinary impression. Then with a cheerful face and his stick under his arm, he returned to the boarding house as usual, but as soon as he opened the door, the two children who lived there suddenly threw themselves on his neck and burst out crying together. One was a girl of twelve in a brown jacket and the other a boy of nine in dark blue knickers. As the professor, who was fond of children, did not understand, he consoled them, patting their shining hair and eagerly asking them over and over what was the matter. But they simply would not stop crying. Then swallowing their tears, they sobbed, "Our grandpa Emperor is dead."

The professor thought it strange that the death of the emperor of a country should bring so much sorrow even to the children. It was not only of the question of the relation existing between the imperial house and the people that he was made to think. The impulsive expression of their emotions by occidentals, which had impressed him ever since he came to the West, now surprised, as if it were something new, this professor, a Japanese and a believer in Bushidō. He had never forgotten the feeling, seemingly compounded of suspicion and sympathy, that he experienced at that time. Conversely, he now felt precisely the same degree of surprise at this lady's not weeping. But a second discovery followed on the heels of the first. It was just as their conversation, after having gone from reminiscences of the dead youth into details of his daily life, was about to turn back again to more reminiscences. The Korean fan chanced to slip from the professor's hand and fell of a sudden on the marquetry floor. The conversation, of course, was not so urgent as not to permit of a momentary interruption. So, bending forward from his chair and looking down, he stretched out his hand toward the floor. The fan was lying beneath the little table just beside the lady's white tabi concealed in her slippers.

Then he chanced to notice the lady's knees. On them, rested her hands holding the handkerchief. Of course this alone was no discovery. But at the same instant he realized that her hands were trembling fearfully. And he noticed that, probably due to her endeavor to suppress the agitation of her emotions, her hands, as they trembled, grasped the handkerchief on her knees so hard that they all but tore it in two. Finally he perceived that the embroidered edge of the wrinkled silk handkerchief moved between her delicate fingers as if stirred by a light breeze. The lady smiled with her face, indeed, but the truth was that she had been weeping with her whole body from the first.

When the professor had picked up the fan and raised his face, there was an expression on it which had not been there before. It was a very complicated expression, as if a reverent feeling at having seen what he should not have seen and a certain satisfaction arising from the consciousness of that feeling had been exaggerated by more or less theatricality.

"Ah, even I who have no children can understand your grief perfectly," said the professor in a low voice full of feeling, tilting his head back a little as if dazzled by something.

"Thank you. But, whatever we say, it's beyond help now, so—"

The lady lowered her head the least little bit. A bright smile beamed from her unclouded face as before.

It was two hours later. The professor had taken a bath, finished his supper, eaten some cherries for dessert and settled down comfortably in the cane chair on the veranda.

The twilight of the long summer evening lingered on and, in the large veranda, with its glass windows wide open, there was yet no sign of darkness falling. The professor, with his left knee crossed over his right and his head resting on the back of the chair, was gazing at the tassels of the Gifu lantern in the dim light. Though he had that same book of Strindberg's in his hand, he appeared not yet to have read another page of it. That was natural. His head was still full of the brave behavior of Nishiyama Atsuko.

During supper, he had told his wife the whole story. And he had praised it as an illustration of the Bushidō of the women of Japan. On hearing it, this lover of Japan and the Japanese could not but sympathize. He had been pleased to find an eager listener in her. His wife, the lady and the Gifu lantern—these three now floated in his consciousness with a certain ethical background.

I do not know how long he was absorbed in such agreeable reflections. But while still in their grasp, he suddenly remembered that he had been asked to send a contribution to a certain magazine. Under the caption, "Letters to the Youth of Today," that magazine was getting together the opinions on general morality of distinguished men all over the country. Using that day's incident as material, he would write and send his impressions at once, he thought, and scratched his head a little.

The hand with which the professor scratched his head was the one in which he held the book. Becoming aware of the book, which he had up till now neglected, he opened it where he had inserted the card a while before at the page he had already begun to read. Just then the maid came and lighted the Gifu lantern above his head, so it was not very difficult for him to read the fine type. He cast his eyes casually on the page without any great desire to read. Strindberg said,

"In my youth, people told about Madame Heiberg's handkerchief, a story which had probably come out of Paris. It was about her double performance of tearing her handkerchief in two with her hands while a smile played over her face. Now we call this claptrap."

The professor put the book down on his knees. As he put it down open, the card with the name Nishiyama Atsuko on it still lay between its pages. But what was in his mind was no longer the lady. Nor was it either his wife or Japanese civilization. It was a nondescript something that threatened to break the calm harmony of these. The stage trick that Strindberg had scorned was not, of course, the same thing as a question of practical morality. But in the hint he had got from what he had just read, there was something threatening to disturb the care-free feeling he had had since taking his bath. Bushidō and its mannerisms—

The professor shook his head unhappily two or three times and then, with upturned eyes, began again to gaze intently at the bright light of the Gifu lantern covered with pictures of autumn flowers.

RASHŌMON

It was evening. A solitary lackey sat under Rashōmon waiting for the rain to clear.

Beneath the broad gate, there was not another soul. Only, on a big round pillar, from which the vermilion lacquer had peeled off here and there, sat one lone cricket. Since Rashōmon was in the great thoroughfare Sujaku Ōji, it would seem that there should also have been two or three tradeswomen in wide straw hats and men in citizen's caps sheltering there from the rain. All the same, besides this single man, there was no one.

This was because for the past two or three years in Kyōto one calamity after another—earthquakes, cyclones, fires and famines—had followed each other in rapid succession. Wherefore, throughout the capital the desolation was extraordinary. According to the old records, things had come to such a pass that Buddhist images and temple furniture were broken up and, with their red lacquer and gold and silver foil clinging to them, were heaped along the streets and sold for fire wood. With the whole town in such a state, of course no one took the least thought for the upkeep of Rashōmon. So turning its abandonment to their profit, foxes and badgers found habitation there. Thieves abode there. And finally it even became a custom with men to bring unclaimed bodies there and leave them in the gate. Whence, when day had closed his eye, the place was abhorred of all, and no man would set foot in the neighborhood.

Instead, swarms of ravens from nobody knows where congregated there. By day the innumerable rout described a circle and wheeled crying about the ornamental grampuses high on the roof. Especially when the sky above the gate was aflare with the sunset glow, did they stand out distinctly like a scattering of sesamum seeds. Of course, they were there to pick the flesh from the corpses up in the gate. However, on this day, perhaps because of the lateness of the hour, not a bird was to be seen. Only here and there on the crumbling stone steps, where grass grew long in the crevices, their

droppings shone in white splashes. The lackey sat in a threadbare coat of dark blue on the topmost of the seven steps and, fingering a great carbuncle on his right cheek, looked vacantly at the falling rain.

I have said that he was waiting for the rain to clear. But even if it did clear, he had nothing in particular he wished to do. Ordinarily, of course, he must have gone back to his master's house. But four or five days before, he had been turned out. As I have already said, Kyōto was in unprecedented decay. And the dismissal of this man by a master whom he had served for years was one small ripple on this sea of troubles. Wherefore, rather than that he was waiting for the rain to clear, it would be more to the point to say that, driven to shelter by the storm, this lackey who had no place to go was at a loss what to do. Besides, the gloomy sky that day had no small effect on the sentimentalism of this man of the Heian period. The rain, which had been falling since a little after the hour of the monkey, still showed no sign of letting up. So the servant sat following a rambling train of thought on the one vital and immediate question of how he could ever manage to live through the morrow—that is, how he could ever do the impossible—and listened listlessly to the long rain that kept pounding down in Sujaku Ōji.

The rain, enveloping Rashōmon, mustered a rattling roar from afar. Darkness gradually lowered in the sky, and overhead the roof of the gate supported a heavy leaden cloud on a point of its obliquely projecting tiles.

For the accomplishment of the impossible, there was no time left in which to choose a plan. If he took time, he could but choose between starvation under some wall and starvation by some road. And then he would simply be brought to the loft in this gate and thrown away like a dog. If he did not choose,—again and again the man's thoughts went over the same winding way and arrived finally at this same place. But no matter how often this "if" came up, it remained still in the end but "if." Even though he did not choose any plan, yet he had not the courage to make the positive admission naturally necessary to the settlement of the "if," that there was nothing for it but to turn thief.

He sneezed a great sneeze and then got up laboriously. Night-chilled Kyōto was cold enough to suggest the comfort of a fire. The pitiless wind swept with the deepening darkness between the pillars of the gate. And the cricket that had clung to the red lacquer of one of them had disappeared.

Drawing in his neck and lifting his shoulders high in the bright yellow shirt which he wore under his dark blue coat, the lackey looked all about the gate. If he could find a place, out of the wind and rain and free from the gaze of men, where he could pass one night in peaceful sleep, there anyway, he fain would rest until the dawn. Then fortunately his eyes fell upon a wide ladder, likewise red, mounting up into the tower of the gate. Above, though there might be men, they were but dead men after all. Then, taking heed lest the great plain-handled sword swinging at his side should slip in its scabbard, he planted a straw-sandaled foot on the bottom step of the ladder.

A few minutes elapsed. In the middle of the wide ladder leading to the tower of Rashōmon the man crouched like a cat and, holding his breath, took in the state of affairs above. A ray of light shining from the tower faintly illumined his right cheek. It was the cheek on which the festering red carbuncle gleamed in his short beard. He had lightly calculated from the first that everybody up there was dead. But when he had climbed up two or three steps, it appeared that not only had some one above struck a light but that he was moving it to and fro. This was at once made evident by the dull yellow gleam that danced in reflection on the cobwebs hanging in the corners of the ceiling. Whoever had struck this light in Rashōmon on this rainy night was surely no ordinary being!

At last, stealing up with muffled steps like a gecko, the lackey, crouching, scaled the ladder to the topmost step. Then lying as flat as he could and craning his neck forward as far as it would go, he peered with dread into the loft.

He peered, and the loft, as rumor had it, was full of corpses flung carelessly away, but, the circle illuminated by the light being smaller than had at first seemed apparent, he was not able to judge how many there might be. Only, he could make out vaguely that there were among them both clothed and unclothed cadavers. Of course,

men and women appeared all to be jumbled up together. And like so many dolls of kneaded clay, these bodies sprawled on the floor with open mouths and out-thrown arms in such confusion as to make one doubt even that they had once been living beings. Moreover, while the wan light played on their shoulders, breasts and more elevated parts, the shadows of their depressions were intensified, and they lay in silence like eternal mutes that had never known speech.

In the stench of decaying flesh, the lackey involuntarily covered his nose. But the next moment his hand had forgotten its work. Excess of feeling had almost completely deprived him of his olfactory sense.

For the first time he had just caught sight of a living mortal squatting down among the dead. It was a monkey-like old hag in a dark brown kimono, short, skinny and white-headed. With a blazing splinter of pine in her right hand, she was peering fixedly into the face of one of the corpses. From its long hair, it seemed to be the body of a woman.

For a space, the lackey, moved by six parts of horror and four of curiosity, forgot even to breathe. To borrow the words of an old writer, he felt that “the hair on his head and body swelled.” Then sticking the pine splinter into a crack in the floor, the hag took the head at which she had been gazing and, just like an old monkey picking lice from its young, began to pull out the long hairs one by one. They seemed to yield to her pull.

With every hair that came out, the dread seemed to depart appreciably from the heart of the lackey. And at the same time, intense hatred of the old hag was little by little engendered. No, “of the old hag” may not be just the right words. Rather his antipathy to all evil grew stronger every minute. If some one at that time had broached afresh the question which this man had been considering under the gate a little while before, whether he should starve or turn thief, in all likelihood he would have unhesitatingly chosen starvation. Thus fiercely, like the splint of pine the old hag had stuck in the floor, blazed up this man’s detestation of evil.

The lackey, of course, did not know why the old hag was pulling out the hair of the dead. Consequently, he did not know, rationally, whether her conduct should be set down as good or evil. But to him the pulling of hair from the heads of the dead on that rainy night up in Rashōmon was, on the face of it, an unpardonable crime. Naturally he had already forgot that a little before he had had half a mind to turn thief himself.

So, bracing his two feet firmly, he suddenly sprang from the ladder up into the room. Then, grasping the plain handle of his sword, he advanced with great strides up to the hag. Naturally she was startled out of her wits.

With a glance at the lackey, she sprang up as if shot from a catapult.

"Wretch! Where are you going?" cursed the man, blocking her way, as she stumbled among the corpses in a panic-stricken effort to escape.

All the same, she struggled to push him aside and get by. But peremptorily he forced her back. For a moment, the pair scuffled in silence among the corpses. But from the first there was no doubt of the victor.

In the end, seizing one of her arms, the lackey twisted it and threw her violently down. It was nothing but skin and bone, just like the leg of a hen.

"What are you up to? Look you, what are you up to? Out with it! If you don't speak, you get this, see!"

And casting her away, he suddenly unsheathed his sword and brandished the white flash of steel before her eyes. But the old hag held her tongue. Her hands trembling, her shoulders heaving as she gasped for breath, and her eyes so wide open that it seemed the balls must burst from their sockets, she persisted in her silence like a mute. At this, the lackey realized clearly for the first time that this old woman's life and death depended entirely upon his will. And before he was aware, this realization had cooled the fires of detestation that up to this time had blazed so fiercely in his heart.

What remained was simply that comfortable pride and satisfaction that follow upon a piece of work wholly carried to completion. Then, looking down upon her, he said in a slightly milder tone:

"I'm no official from the police commissioner's office. I'm a wanderer who happened to pass under this gate a little while ago. So you won't be tied with a rope and arrested. All I demand is that you tell me what you're doing up in this gate at this hour."

At this, the old hag's wide-staring eyes grew all the larger, and she fastened them intently on the face of the lackey. They were sharp red-lidded eyes like those of some bird of prey. Then she moved her lips, practically one with her nose among the wrinkles, as if she were chewing something. A sharply projecting Adam's apple slid up and down in her skinny throat. And at the same time, a voice like the croak of a raven came pantingly from that throat and struck harshly upon his ears.

"I'm pulling out hair, pulling out this woman's hair, because I'm going to make wigs."

The servant was disappointed at the unexpected ordinariness of her answer. And at the same time, the hatred he had felt before, mingled with a cold disdain, crept back into his heart again. And its manifestations probably transmitted themselves to the hag. For still holding in one hand the long hair she had pulled from the corpse's head, she mumbled her case in the croaking voice of a toad.

To be sure, it might be wicked to pull hair from dead bodies, for all she knew. But these dead were mostly people who could well be treated in such a way. For instance, this woman from whose head she had just been pulling hair had cut snakes up into four-inch lengths and sold them for dried fish in the military camps. Had she not fallen prey to the epidemic and died, she might have been selling them yet. What was more, the samurai had found her dried fish tasty and bought them all up to eat with their rice. The hag did not find the woman's conduct blameworthy. Since she must otherwise have starved to death, she could not well have helped it. Therefore, what she herself now did could not be called bad either. Since this, too, must be done or she would starve, it could not well

be helped, and she thought this woman, who well knew her dilemma, would surely forgive her for what she did. Thus, by the large, ran the old hag's explanation.

The lackey sheathed his sword and, with his left hand on the hilt, listened in cold blood to her recital. Of course, his right hand was busy fingering the festering carbuncle on his fiery cheek. But as he listened, a certain courage was born within him. It was the courage he had lacked under the gate a while before. And, moreover, it was a courage tending to move in just the opposite direction from the courage with which he had a little before mounted up into the gate and seized the old woman. It was not only that he was no longer at a loss whether to starve or turn thief. His emotions were now such that the idea of starving to death had been driven from his consciousness as well-nigh unthinkable.

"Really? Is that true?"

When the old woman had finished her tale, he questioned her in a sneering voice. Then advancing one step forward, he suddenly removed his right hand from his carbuncle and, seizing the hag by the collar, said,

"Then I guess you won't blame me for turning highwayman, will you? I, too, must starve else."

Like a flash he stripped off her kimono. Then, as she tried to cling to his legs, he violently kicked her down upon the corpses. It was but five paces to the head of the ladder. With the dark brown kimono under his arm, he ran in a twinkling down the steep steps into the depths of the night.

It was not long before the old woman, who had lain for a space like one dead, raised her naked body up from among the corpses. Murmuring and groaning, she crawled by the help of the light that still burned to the top of the ladder. And from there, with her short white hair hanging about her face, she peered down under the gate. Outside there was nothing but black and cavernous night.

The lackey had already braved the rain and hurried away into the streets of Kyōto to rob.

LICE

I

On the twenty-sixth day of the eleventh month of the first year of Genji (Dec. 25, 1864), the followers of the daimyō of Kaga, who had been engaged in the safeguarding of Kyōto, put to sea under the leadership of Chō Osumi-no-kami, from the mouth of the Ajikawa in Ōsaka, to take part in the impending chastisement of Chōshū.

There were two sub-commanders, Tsukuda Kyudayu and Yamagishi Sanjurō, and white standards were set up in Tsukuda's boats and red in Yamagishi's. History records that it was a most brave scene as their Kompira vessels, each of 500 *koku* burden, left the estuary for the deep, all with their red and white banners flapping in the wind.

But the men in the boats did not feel at all gallant. In the first place, every boat was loaded with thirty-four of the party and four sailors, a total of thirty-eight men. Wherefore, they were so closely packed together that free movement was impossible. Moreover, in the waist of each vessel stood so many loach tubs full of pickled radishes that there was almost no place left to step. Until they got used to it, the evil odor of the things filled every man who breathed it with a sudden nausea. Finally, as it was the end of the eleventh month of the old calendar (December), the wind blowing on the sea was so cold that it seemed to fairly cut their flesh. Especially when the sun had set, what with the winds blowing down from Maya and the chill of the sea, the teeth of most even of these young samurai from the north chattered.

Moreover, in the boats there was an abundance of lice. And they were not the simple sort of lice that hide themselves in the seams of garments. They swarmed upon the sails. They swarmed upon the masts. They swarmed upon the anchors. To exaggerate slightly, it was hard to tell whether the boats were for men or for lice. Of course in such a plethora, scores of the pests swarmed upon their clothes. And whenever they so much as touched the skin of a man, they were

straightway elated and fell to till he tingled. Had there been but some five or ten of the vermin, they might somehow or other have been brought under control, but since, as already stated, there were so many that they looked like a sprinkling of white sesame, there was no possible hope of cleaning them out. Wherefore, in the Tsukuda party and the Yamagishi party alike, the bodies of all the samurai in the boats swelled red with bites all over on breast and abdomen and everywhere, just as if they had the measles.

But impossible as it was to bring the lice under control, it was still more impossible to let them go on unmolested. So the people in the boats spent their leisure time hunting. All of them, from the chief retainers to the sandal bearers, stripped themselves and went about, each with a teacup, picking up the ubiquitous lice and putting them into it. Were he to imagine thirty-odd samurai, each dressed in but a loin-cloth, with his teacup in his hand, searching with all his might here and there under the rigging and beneath the anchor in each Kompira boat with sails alight in the winter sunshine of the Inland Sea, any man in these days would at once think it a great joke, but it was no less true before the Restoration than it is now that in the face of necessity everything becomes serious. So these boats full of naked samurai, each one himself like a great louse, abode the cold and went about patiently day after day diligently crushing the lice on the decks.

II

But there was one odd fellow on the Tsukuda boat. He was an eccentric middle-aged man named Mori Gonnoshin, an officer of foot with an allowance of seventy bales of rice and rations for five men. Strangely this man alone did not catch lice. Therefore, of course, he was covered with them all over. While some mounted to the knot on his queued hair, others crossed over on the edge of the plate at the back of his divided skirt. Yet he paid no special attention to them.

Then if you think that this man alone was not bitten by the lice, still you are mistaken. Just like the rest, he was covered with so many red blotches all over his body that he might well be described

as spotted with coins. Moreover, from the way he scratched them, it did not look as if they were itchless. But no matter whether they itched or what they did, he affected utter indifference.

If it had all been affectation, it would not have been so strange, but when he saw the others diligently gathering lice, he called to them,

"If you catch 'em, don't kill 'em. Put 'em in teacups alive, an' I'll take 'em."

"When you get 'em, what'll you do with 'em?" asked one of his fellows, with a look of surprise.

"When I get 'em? Then I'll go so far as to raise 'em," Mori calmly replied.

"Then we'll take 'em alive and give 'em to you."

The officer, because he thought it a joke, worked half a day with two or three others and collected several cupfuls of living lice. He thought in his heart that if he handed them over thus and said, "Well, raise 'em," even Mori, despite his contrariness, would be stumped.

Then, before he had time to utter a word, Mori spoke up and said,

"You've got 'em, haven't you? Then I'll take 'em."

His fellows were all taken aback.

"Then put 'em in here," said Mori calmly, opening the neck of his garment.

"Don't go makin' yourself put up with it now and afterwards gettin' into trouble for it," said the others, but he would not listen.

Then one at a time, they turned their teacups upside down, like ricemen measuring rice in half-gallon measures, and poured the lice down Mori's neck, whereupon he, maintaining his composure and carefully picking up those that had spilled outside, said, as if to himself,

"Thanks. With these I can sleep warm from this night on."

"When you have lice, is it warm?" said the dumbfounded officers to nobody in particular, all looking into each other's faces.

Then Mori, adjusting with particularity the neck of his dress which had received the lice, gave one triumphant look around at each of their faces and proceeded to express himself to this effect:

"Each and every one of you caught cold in this recent snap, but what of this Gonnoshin? He doesn't sneeze. He doesn't run at the nose. More, not once has he felt feverish or cold in the hands or feet. Whose good work do you s'pose this is? It's all the good work of the lice."

According to Mori's explanation, it seems that when there are lice on the body, they are bound to bite and make it itch. When they bite, one is sure to want to scratch. Then, when the whole body is bitten all over, one wants to scratch all over the whole body, too. But man is wonderfully made, so that while he scratches where he feels himself itch, the scratched places naturally get warm as with a fever. Then, when he is warm, he gets sleepy. When he is sleepy, he no longer feels the itch. In this way, if one but have many lice on one's body, one falls asleep easily and catches no colds. Wherefore, we should by all means keep lice and by no means kill them out.

"Sure enough, it's like that, ain't it?" said several of his fellows approvingly when they had heard Mori's argument.

III

After that there came to be a group in that boat that followed the example of Mori and kept lice. In the matter of going about in pursuit of lice whenever they had leisure, this group was not different from the rest of the party. The only difference was that all they caught, they put one by one faithfully into their bosoms and carefully kept.

But it is seldom in any country in any age that the precursor's teaching is accepted in its first form by all the people. In this boat, too, there were many Pharisees who set themselves up against Mori's doctrines on lice.

At the forefront of these stood a captain of foot called Inoue Tenzo. He, too, was an eccentric, and he always ate all the lice he caught. When he had finished his evening meal, he would place a

teacup before him and sit slowly munching something that was evidently delicious, so somebody looked into the cup and saw that it was full of the lice he had caught and asked,

"What do they taste like?"

"Let's see. Like oily parched rice, I guess," said he.

Those who use their mouths to crush lice are to be found everywhere, but this man was not of their number. As light refreshment pure and simple, he ate them every day. He was the first to oppose Mori.

There was not another soul who took after Inoue and ate lice, but a considerable number joined him in his opposition. According to them, men's bodies certainly could not be warmed by the presence of lice. Moreover, in the Book of Filial Piety, it is written that we receive our bodies, hair and hide, from our fathers and mothers, and the very beginning of filial duty lies in not injuring them. Of one's own choice to feed these bodies to such things as lice was egregiously unfilial. Whence lice should by all means be hunted out. They should not be raised.

Under these circumstances, disputes arose from time to time between the Mori and Inoue groups. And so long as they simply ended in argument, there was no harm. But in the end things developed unexpectedly from such beginnings even unto the starting of an appeal to the sword.

It came about in this way. One day Mori received from the others a lot of lice which he put into a teacup and set aside, intending to raise them carefully as usual, when Inoue, taking advantage of his incaution, ate them up before he noticed. When Mori came to look for them, there was not one left. Then this precursor flared into anger.

"What'd you eat 'em for?" he demanded, edging up to Inoue with his arms akimbo and his eyes blazing.

"Fact is, it's idiotic to keep lice," said Inoue indifferently, showing absolutely no desire to take him up.

"It's idiotic to eat 'em."

Mori flew into a fury and, pounding the plank deck shouted,

“Look here! Is there anybody in this ship who isn’t indebted to lice? Takin’ these lice an’ eatin’ ’em is just like payin’ kindness with hate!”

“I haven’t the least recollection of ever receivin’ any favor from lice.”

“Nay, even if you haven’t, to wantonly take the lives of livin’ things is unspeakable.”

After two or three more remarks had been exchanged with increasing vehemence, Mori suddenly saw red and put his hand on the hilt of his maroon-sheathed sword. Of course Inoue did not back down. He quickly snatched up his long blade in its cinnabar scabbard and sprang to his feet. Had not the naked men who were going about catching lice excitedly forced the two apart, it would probably have meant the life of one or the other of them.

According to the story of one who saw this flurry with his own eyes, the two men, held fast in the arms of the whole party, still foamed at the mouth and shouted, “Lice—Lice—”

IV

And while the samurai in the ships thus came almost to bloodshed over the lice, the 500-*koku* Kompira vessels, as if alone indifferent utterly to all this, ran on farther and farther west with their red and white banners flapping in the cold wind under the snowy sky on the long, long road leading to the chastisement of Chōshū.

THE SPIDER'S THREAD

I

One day the Buddha was sauntering alone on the brink of the lotus pond of Paradise.

The lotus flowers in bloom in the pond were all as white as pearls, and the golden pistils and stamens in their centers ceaselessly filled all the air with ineffable fragrance.

It was morning in Paradise.

Presently the Buddha stood still on the brink of the pond, and through an opening among the leaves which covered the face of the water, suddenly beheld the scene below.

As the floor of Hell lay directly beneath the lotus pond of Paradise, the Sanzu-no-Kawa and Hari-no-Yama were distinctly visible through the crystal water, as through a sterioptiscope.

Then his eye fell on a man named Kandata, who was squirming with the other sinners in the bottom of Hell.

This Kandata was a great robber who had done many evil things, murdering and setting fire to houses, but he had to his credit one good action. Once while on his way through a deep forest, he had noticed a little spider creeping along beside the road.

So quickly lifting his foot, he was about to trample it to death, when he suddenly thought, "No, no, as small as this thing is, it, too, has a soul: it would be rather a shame to recklessly kill it," and spared the spider's life.

As he looked down into Hell, the Buddha remembered how this Kandata had spared the spider's life. And in return for that good deed, he thought, if possible, he would like to deliver him out of Hell. Fortunately when he looked around, he saw a spider of Paradise spinning a beautiful silvery thread on the halcyon-colored lotus leaves.

The Buddha quietly took up the spider's thread in his hand. And he let it straight down to the bottom of Hell far below through the opening among the pearly white lotus flowers.

II

Here Kandata was rising and sinking with the other sinners in the Pond of Blood on the floor of Hell.

It was pitch black everywhere, and when sometimes a glimpse was caught of something rising from that darkness, it turned out to be the gleam of the needle of the dread Hari-no-Yama, so it was inexpressibly forbidding. Moreover the stillness of the grave reigned everywhere, and the only thing that could at times be heard was the faint sighing of the sinners.

This was because such sinners as had come down to this spot had already been tired out by the other manifold tortures of Hell and had lost even the strength to cry aloud.

So, great robber though he was, Kandata, also suffocated with the blood, could do nothing but struggle in the pond like a dying frog.

But his time came. One day when Kandata lifted his head by chance and looked up at the sky above the Pond of Blood, he saw a silver spider's thread slipping down toward him from the high, high heavens, glittering slightly in the silent darkness just as if it feared the eyes of man.

When he saw this, his hands clapped themselves for joy. If, clinging to this thread, he climbed as far as it went, he could surely escape from Hell.

Nay, if all went well, he might even enter Paradise. Then he would never be driven on to Hari-no-Yama nor sunk in the Pond of Blood.

As soon as these thoughts came into his mind, he grasped the thread tightly in his two hands and began to climb up and up with all his might.

Because he was a great robber, he had long been thoroughly familiar with such things.

But Hell is nobody-knows-how-many myriads of miles removed from Paradise and, strive as he might, he could not easily get out. After climbing for a while, he was finally exhausted and could not ascend an inch higher.

So since he could do nothing else, he stopped to rest and, hanging to the thread, looked far, far down below him. Now since he had climbed with all his might, the Pond of Blood where he had just been was already, much to his surprise, hidden deep down in the darkness. And the dread Hari-no-Yama glittered dimly under him. If he went up at this rate, he might get out of Hell more easily than he had thought.

With his hand twisted into the spider's thread, Kandata laughed and cried out in a voice such as he had not uttered during all the years since coming here, "Success! Success!"

But suddenly he noticed that below on the thread countless sinners were climbing eagerly after him, up and up, just like a procession of ants.

When he saw this, Kandata simply blinked his eyes for a moment, with his big mouth hanging foolishly open in surprise and terror.

How could that slender spider's thread, which seemed as if it must break even with him alone, ever support the weight of all those people?

If it should break in midair, even he himself, after all his effort in reaching this spot, would have to fall headlong back into Hell. It would be terrible if such a thing happened.

But meanwhile hundreds and thousands of sinners were squirming out of the dark Pond of Blood and climbing with all their might in a line up the slender glittering thread. If he did not do something quickly, the thread was sure to break in two and fall. So Kandata cried out in a loud voice,

"Here, you sinners! This spider's thread is mine. Who on earth gave you permission to come up it? Get down! Get down!"

Just at that moment, the spider's thread, which had shown no sign of breaking up to that time, suddenly broke with a snap at the point where Kandata was hanging.

So he was helpless. Without time to utter a cry, he shot down and fell headlong into the darkness, spinning swiftly round and round like a top.

Afterwards, only the spider's thread of Paradise, glittering and slender, hung short in the moonless and starless sky.

III

Standing on the brink of the Lotus Pond of Paradise, the Buddha watched closely all that happened, and when Kandata sank like a stone to the bottom of the Pond of Blood, he began to saunter again with a sad expression on his face.

Doubtless Kandata's cold heart that would have saved only himself from Hell and his having received proper punishment and fallen back into Hell, had appeared to the Buddha's eyes most pitiful. But the lotuses in the lotus pond of Paradise cared nothing at all about such things.

The pearly white flowers were swaying about the Buddha's feet. As they swayed, from the golden pistils in their centers, their ineffable fragrance ceaselessly filled all the air.

It was near noon in Paradise.

THE WINE WORM

I

It was the hottest it had been for years. On every hand the roof tiles of the stone-floored houses reflected the sunlight dully like lead, and it seemed that, if this kept up, the little swallows and eggs in the nests under them must be steamed to death. In addition, in every field, the hemp and millet plants all hung their heads limply in the radiation from the soil, and there was not one, though they were still green, that did not droop. And the sky above the fields, probably because of the hot weather, seemed dull, although the sun was shining bright, and cloud masses floated here and there like bits of rice cake puffed up in an earthen pan. This story of the wine worm begins with three men out deliberately on a blistering flailing floor under the burning sun.

Strange to say, one of them not only was lying naked on his back on the ground, but, for some reason or other, had his hands and his feet bound up in a long cord. However, he seemed not to be greatly troubled about it. He was a short and sanguine man, fat as a pig, who somehow gave an impression of dullness. An unglazed jar of moderate size stood by his head, but it was impossible to say what was in it.

The second was a man in a yellow robe with little rings of bronze in his ears, who at a glance was recognizable as an eccentric Buddhist priest. From his exceptionally dark skin and his frizzled hair and beard, he seemed certainly to be from west of T'sung-ling. He had for some time been moving a whip of long white hairs with a red handle patiently back and forth to drive away the horse-flies and common house-flies that swarmed about the naked man, but now seeming naturally to have grown a little tired, he had come to the unglazed jar and was squatting solemnly beside it like a turkey cock.

The remaining man was standing under the eaves of a thatched house in a corner of the flailing floor far from the other two. He had on the tip of his chin a mere excuse for a beard like a rat's tail and

was dressed in a long black gown reaching to the ground, tied with an untidily knotted brown sash. Since he now and then fanned himself importantly with a fan of white feathers, he was, of course, a Confucian scholar or something of the kind.

All three held their tongues as if by agreement. Moreover they did not even move freely, and it seemed as if, deeply interested in something that was about to happen, they were all holding their breath.

It seemed to be just noon. Not a dog's bark was to be heard, doubtless because the dogs were all taking their midday naps. The hemp and millet plants around the flailing floor stood still and motionless, with their green leaves shining in the sunlight. In all the sky beyond them, a sultry mist floated stiflingly hot, and it seemed that even the cloud masses were gasping for breath in this drought. As far as eye could see, the only things that seemed to be alive were these three men. And they kept silent like the clay figures in the shrines of Kwanti.

Of course this is not a Japanese story. It is an account of what happened one summer's day on the flailing floor of a man named Liu at Changshan in China.

II

The man who lay naked under the blazing sun was the owner of the flailing floor, Liu Tai-cheng, one of the prominent rich men of Changshan. His only pleasure was drinking, and all day long he and his cup were practically inseparable. And since "he drank up a jar of wine every time he helped himself," he was no ordinary drinker. But as has already been intimated, he owned "three hundred acres of rich suburban fields, of which one half was planted to millet," there was no fear whatever of his drinking playing havoc with his fortune.

And the reason he was lying naked in the hot sun was this: That day as Liu leaned on a Dutch wife of bamboo in an airy room playing checkers with Master Sun, one of his fellow tipplers (the Confucian scholar with the white fan), a little girl servant had come to him and said,

"A priest who says he's from Pao Chang S'su or some such temple has just come and says he must see you. What shall I do?"

"What? Pao Chang S'su?" said Liu, and he blinked his little eyes as if dazzled; then raising his hot-looking fat body, he said, "Well, then, show him in here." Then glancing at Master Sun, he added, "It's probably that priest."

The priest of Pao Chang S'su was a mountain priest from Hsisu. He was famous in the neighborhood for his healing ability and the administering of aphrodisiacs. For instance, there were afloat many all but miraculous rumors of the sudden change for the better of this man's amaurosis or of the immediate recovery of that man from sterility. Both Liu and Sun had heard these rumors. On what errand could this mountain priest have deliberately called at Liu's? Of course Liu himself had not the least recollection of ever having sent for him.

You should know that Liu was not at all such a man as to be pleased at the arrival of a caller. But if, when he had one guest, another came, he usually received him quite gladly. This was because he had a childish vanity that we may even say made him proud to have one visitor in the presence of another. Moreover, this mountain priest was highly spoken of everywhere at that time. He was by no means a visitor to be ashamed of. The motives that moved Liu to say he would see him lay for the greater part in such considerations.

"I wonder what he wants."

"Well, he's a beggar. He'll probably ask for alms."

The visitor who was shown in by the little girl servant while the two were talking was a grotesque Buddhist priest, tall and with eyes like amethysts. He was in a yellow robe, and his frizzly hair hung down over his shoulders troublesomely. With his red-handled fly-whisk in his hand, he stood ungainly in the center of the room. He neither made any sign of greeting nor opened his mouth.

Liu waited for a little, but meanwhile somehow becoming uneasy, he asked,

"Is there something you want with me?"

Then the mountain priest said, “You’re the man, aren’t you? The one that’s fond of wine?”

“Uh,” said Liu vaguely, the question being so sudden, and he looked at Master Sun as if asking help. That worthy was coolly placing men on the checker board all by himself. He showed no signs of taking any notice.

“You’re suffering from a strange disease. Do you know that?” said the mountain priest emphatically.

At the word “disease,” Liu looked dubious and, stroking his Dutch wife of bamboo, said,

“Disease, did you say?”

“Yes.”

“No, not since my infancy—,” Liu began, when the bonze interrupted him.

“You never get drunk when you drink, do you?”

Staring at the priest’s face, Liu closed his mouth. In truth, however much he drank, this man had never been drunk.

“That proves it’s a disease,” said the mountain priest, and then, smiling a little, he added, “There’s a wine worm in your belly. Unless you get rid of it, you’ll never get well. I’ve come to cure you.”

“Can you?” asked Liu involuntarily in an uncertain voice. Then he was ashamed of it himself.

“That’s just why I’ve come.”

Then Sun, who up till now had sat silently listening to the dialogue, put in a word.

“Will you use some sort of medicine?”

“No, there’s no need to use medicine,” answered the mountain priest curtly.

Master Sun had always despised both Buddhism and Taoism almost beyond reason. So when he was with Taoist or Buddhist priests he seldom talked. The reason he now suddenly spoke was that his interest was aroused by the name, “wine worm,” for when he heard it, being fond of wine himself, he grew a little uneasy lest there might be such a worm in his own belly. But when he heard the mountain priest’s grudging answer, he felt as if he had been made a

fool of and, frowning, began to place the men silently on the board again. And at the same time, he began to feel in his own mind that his host Liu was a fool ever to have seen such an arrogant priest.

Of course Liu payed no attention.

"Then will you use a needle?"

"No, it's easier than that."

"Then is it magic?"

"No, it's not magic either."

After this little colloquy, the mountain priest briefly explained the treatment. According to his explanation, the only thing necessary was to strip naked and remain motionless in the sunshine. This seemed to Liu very easy. If he could be cured that easily, nothing could be better than to have himself cured. Moreover, though unconsciously, he had a little curiosity to see how it would feel to be cured by this mountain priest.

So at last, making a little bow with his head, he said,

"Then please just cure me once."

Thus Liu came to be lying naked in the broiling sun on the flailing floor.

And as the mountain priest said that he must not move, he was all wound round with a cord. Then one of Liu's servants was ordered to bring an unglazed jar with wine in it and put it near Liu's head. Of course, since he happened to be present, it was decided that Master Sun, his good drinking companion, should remain in attendance at this curious cure.

No one except the mountain priest knew what a wine worm was, or what would happen when it was no longer in the stomach, or what the jar by Liu's head was for. Then you may think that Liu lying out in the burning heat naked without knowing what he was doing was a stupid fellow, but ordinary people receiving a school education are really doing very much the same sort of thing.

III

It was hot. Sweat came out on his forehead little by little, and no sooner would it form into beads than they would suddenly run warmly into his eyes. Unfortunately, being tied up with the cord, he of course could not wipe them away with his hands. Then he tried to change their course by moving his head, but the effort made him feel as if he was going to be violently dizzy, so he regretfully gave up this plan, too. Meanwhile the sweat, without the least ceremony, wet his eyelids, and going around his nose and mouth, ran down under his chin. It was extremely disagreeable.

Until then, he had kept his eyes open blinking at the scorching white sky and the field of hemp with its drooping leaves, but after the sweat began to run profusely, he was obliged to give up even that. Then Liu became aware for the first time that when sweat gets into the eyes, it smarts. So closing his eyes meekly with the expression of a sheep about to be slaughtered, he steadfastly let himself be burned by the sun, and now all over his face and body, every inch of skin on the side that was up began little by little to pain. Over the whole surface of his skin, a force was at work trying to move in every direction, but the skin itself had not an iota of elasticity. So to say that he was one big smart probably best describes his pain. The sweat was nothing compared to this pain. Liu regretted a little that he had submitted himself to the mountain priest's treatment.

But considered afterwards, this was still one of the less painful parts. While it was going on, he began to feel thirsty. He knew that Tsao Mêng-tê or somebody had once quenched his soldiers' thirst by telling them that there was a plum orchard ahead of them. But no matter how hard he thought of the sweet sourness of plums, he felt just as thirsty as ever. He tried moving his chin and biting his tongue, but his mouth remained as feverish as ever. And it would certainly have been somewhat easier for him to bear had the unglazed jar not been sitting by his head. But from the mouth of the jar, the sweet fragrance of the wine assaulted his nose incessantly. Moreover, perhaps because of his state of mind, he even felt the fragrance of the wine growing stronger and stronger every minute.

Thinking that at least he would have a look at the jar, he raised his eyes. Rolling them up, he saw the mouth of the jar and the upper half of its generously bulging side. This was all he saw with his eyes, but at the same time there floated into his imagination the brimming golden wine in its shadowy interior. Unconsciously he licked his chapped lips once around with his parched tongue, but there was not the least indication of any saliva. Even the sweat, dried up by the sun, now ceased to flow.

Then followed in succession two or three severe attacks of dizziness. His head had ached incessantly for some time. In his heart, he gradually came to hate the mountain priest. He wondered why he, in his position, had ever allowed himself to be taken in by such a man's fair speeches and made to suffer such fool's pain. Meanwhile his throat became drier and drier. His chest became strangely queasy. He could bear to lie still no longer. So at last he boldly determined to ask the priest to stop operations and, panting, opened his mouth.

Then the thing happened. Liu began to feel an indescribable mass creeping up little by little from his breast into his throat. Sometimes it seemed to be wriggling like an earthworm and sometimes to be crawling step by step like a gecko. Anyhow some soft thing, in all its softness, was slowly making its way up along his gullet. At last, just as he felt that it had forced its way past his Adam's apple, something like a loach suddenly slipped out of the dark interior and sprang energetically into the outer world.

At that instant from the jar was heard a sound like something dropping with a flop into the wine.

Then the mountain priest suddenly got up from where he had been calmly squatting and began to untie the cord wound round Liu's body. Now that the wine worm was out, they might feel easy.

"Did it come out?" said Liu in a voice like a groan, and raising his dizzy head and in the greatness of his curiosity forgetting even his thirst, he crawled naked as he was to the jar. When Master Sun saw this, he hurried to the others protecting himself against the sun with his fan of white feathers. There, when the three peeped into the jar together, they saw something like a small salamander, flesh-colored

like cinnabar, swimming about in the wine. It was some three inches long. It had both mouth and eyes. As it swam, it seemed to be drinking the wine. When Liu saw this, he suddenly felt sick.

IV

The effect of the mountain priest's treatment was immediately evident. From that day, Liu Tai-cheng never drank another drop of wine. Now he hates even the smell of it. But, strange to say, his health has declined little by little ever since. This is the third year since he vomited the wine worm, and there is left no shadow of his former plump round form. His sallow greasy skin is stretched over his bony face and only a little grizzled hair remains above his temples, and it is said that he takes to his bed innumerable times during the year.

But it is not only Liu's health that has declined ever since that time. His fortune also has declined rapidly, and his three hundred acres of rich suburban fields have almost all passed into other hands. He himself has been compelled to take the spade in his own unaccustomed hands and lead a miserable day-to-day existence.

Why has Liu's health declined ever since he vomited the wine worm? Why has his fortune declined? Such questions are likely to occur to any one who considers his ruin in the light of cause and effect. In truth these questions are considered and reconsidered by people in all sorts of occupations in Changshan and are given all sorts of answers by them. The three answers I now give here are only those I have chosen as the most representative among them.

First. The wine worm was Liu's blessing and not his affliction. Because he chanced to meet the idiotic mountain priest, he had deliberately lost this heaven-sent blessing.

Second. The wine worm was Liu's affliction and not his blessing. For it is quite beyond the understanding of any ordinary man that Liu should be able to drink a jar of wine at a time. If, therefore, he had not got rid of the wine worm, he would certainly have died before long. Consequently that he fell into poverty and illness one after the other should be called his good fortune.

Third. The wine worm was neither Liu's affliction nor his good fortune. He had always been a heavy drinker. When wine was taken from his life, there was nothing left. So Liu was himself the wine worm, and the wine worm was Liu. Therefore, getting rid of the wine worm was quite the same as killing himself. In short, the day Liu stopped drinking wine, he was Liu without being Liu. If Liu himself was already dead, it was most natural that the health and fortune of the Liu of other days should have been lost.

Which of these answers is most nearly right, I do not know. I have only set down such moral judgments at the end of this story in imitation of the didacticism of Chinese novelists.

THE BADGER

According to the "Shoki," it was in the second month of the thirty-fifth year of the Emperor Suiko in Michinoku that a badger first assumed the shape of a man. True, according to one copyist's version, the badger was mistaken for a man instead of taking a man's shape, but since it is written in both copies afterwards that it sang, it seems that, whether it took a man's shape or was mistaken for a man, it is a fact that it sang songs like an ordinary man.

Earlier than this, it was written in the "Suininki" under date of the eighty-seventh year, that after the dog of a man named Mikaso in the province of Tamba had eaten a badger, there was found in its belly the curved Yasakani jewel. The story of this curved jewel was later made use of by Bakin in "Hakkenden" where he introduced Yao Bikuni Myōchin. But the badger of the time of the Emperor Suinin only had a brilliant gem in its belly and could not change itself at will into other shapes, as could the badgers of later days. Then after all, it was probably in the second month of the thirty-fifth year of Suiko that the badger first assumed the form of man.

Of course the badger had lived in the fields and mountains of Japan ever since the eastern expedition of the Emperor Jimmu. And it began to bewitch people for the first time in the year 1288 of the Japanese calendar. At this, you may at first be surprised. But it probably began in some such way as the following:

In those days a Michinoku girl who carried water up from the sea was in love with a salt maker of the same village. But she lived alone with her mother. And since they tried to meet nightly without her mother knowing it, there was no slight worry.

Every night the man crossed over a hill by the sea and came near the girl's house. And she, her mind on the time appointed, would slip stealthily out. But out of regard for her mother's feelings, she was likely to be late. Sometimes she would finally come as the moon was beginning to decline. Sometimes she had not yet come even when it was time for the first cock to lift his voice far and near.

It was one night after things had gone on thus for some time. The man, squatting under a high rock like a folding screen, sang a song to beguile his loneliness as he waited. He gathered up his impatience in his salty throat and sang with all his might against the surging waves.

The mother, hearing the song, asked her daughter lying beside her what it was. The girl shammed sleep at first, but after she had been asked a second and third time, she could not but answer. “It doesn’t seem to be a man’s voice, does it?” she said deceitfully, frightened out of her wits.

Then the mother came back with the question what could sing save a man. And through sheer quickness of wit, the girl replied that it might be a badger. Through the ages, time and again, has love taught such wit to women.

When morning came, the mother spoke of having heard the song to an old woman of the neighborhood who wove straw mats. And the old woman was one of those who had heard the song. She expressed her doubt that a badger could sing but handed the story on to a man who gathered reeds.

When, after passing from mouth to mouth, the story came to the ears of a mendicant priest who had come to the village, he explained with reason how a badger could sing a song. In Buddhist teaching there is a thing called metempsychosis. So the soul of the badger might originally have been the soul of a man. In which case, what the man could do, the badger could do. Such a thing as singing a song on a moonlight night was not greatly to be wondered at.

After that in this village any number of people came to say that they had heard the song of the badger. And then at last appeared even a man who said he had seen the badger. He said that one night, while on his way home along the beach from gathering seagulls’ eggs, he had seen distinctly by the light of some remaining patches of snow a badger hulking along singing a song at the foot of a seaside hill.

Already even its form had been seen. It was natural that after that practically everybody in the village, young and old, male and female, should have heard the song. Sometimes it came from the hills. Sometimes it came from the sea. And sometimes, besides, it came

from over the roofs of the rush-thatched huts scattered about between the hills and the sea. And that was not all. At last one night the girl who drew sea-water was herself suddenly startled by the song.

She, of course, thought it was the man singing. She listened to her mother's breathing and thought that she was fast asleep. Then she stole from her bed, and opening the door the least bit, peeped out. But outside there was only a dim moon and the sound of the waves, and no man's form anywhere. Involuntarily, in the chilly spring-night wind, she pressed her hand to her cheek and stood transfixed. There in the sand before the door were dimly visible the scattered footprints of a badger.

This story was immediately carried across hundreds of miles of mountain and river to the district of the capital. Then the badgers of Yamashiro changed their shapes. The badgers of Omi changed theirs. Finally the related racoon dog began to assume human form, and in Tokugawa days, a fellow called Sado-no-Danzaburō, who was neither a racoon dog nor a badger, began to bewitch even the people of Echizen Province across the sea.

He did not begin to bewitch them, but it came to be thought that he did, you may say. But how much difference is there after all between being bewitched and believing that one is bewitched?

This is true not only in the case of badgers. Is it not a fact that all things that exist for us are in the end but things in the existence of which we believe?

It is written in "The Celtic Twilight," by Yeats, that some children on Lake Gill believed without a doubt that a little Protestant girl in blue and white garments was the Holy Mother Mary herself. When we think of them as both living in the human mind just the same, there is no difference between Mary on the lake and the badger in the wilds.

Should we not believe in that which lives within us just as our forefathers believed that the badger bewitched men? And should we not live as bidden by that in which we believe?

Herein lies reason why we should not despise the badger.

THE BALL

I

It was the night of the third day of the eleventh month of the nineteenth year of Meiji (1886). Akiko, the seventeen-year-old daughter of the distinguished family of ——, accompanied by her bald-headed father, climbed the stairs of the Rokumeikan, where the ball that night was to be held. Great chrysanthemum blossoms, which seemed almost to be artificial, formed threefold hedges up the sides of the broad, brightly gas-lighted stairs. The petals of the chrysanthemums, those at the back pink, those in the middle deep yellow, and those in front pure white, were all tousled like flag tassels. And near where the banks of chrysanthemums came to an end, already floated out incessantly from the ball-room at the top of the stairs lively orchestra music like an irrepressible sigh of happiness.

Akiko had early been taught to speak French and dance. But to-night she was going to attend a formal ball for the first time in her life. Wherefore in the carriage, when her father spoke to her from time to time, she returned only absent-minded answers. Thus deeply had an unsettled feeling that may well be defined as a glad uneasiness taken root in her breast. Till the carriage finally came to a stop in front of the Rokumeikan, time and again she lifted impatient eyes and gazed out of the window at the scanty lights of the Tōkyō streets drifting by outside.

But immediately she entered the Rokumeikan, she experienced that which made her forget her uneasiness. When half way up the stairs, she and her father overtook some Chinese officials ascending just ahead of them. And as the officials separated in their fatness to let them go ahead, they cast surprised glances at Akiko. In good truth, with her simple rose-colored ball gown, a light blue ribbon around her well-formed neck and a single rose exhaling perfume from her dark hair, Akiko that night was fully possessed of the beauty of the girls of enlightened Japan, a beauty that might well

startle the eyes of these Chinese officials with their long pigtails hanging down their backs. And just as she noticed this, a young Japanese in swallow-tails came hurrying down the steps and, as he passed them, turned his head in a slight reflex action and likewise gave a glance of surprise after Akiko as she went on. Then for some reason, as if suddenly having an idea, he put his hand up to his white necktie and went on hurriedly down through the chrysanthemums toward the entrance.

When they got to the top of the stairs, at the door of the ball-room on the second floor they found a count with gray whiskers, who was the host of the evening, with his chest covered with decorations, and the countess, older than himself, dressed to the last degree of perfection in a Louis XV gown, extending a dignified welcome to the guests of the evening. Akiko did not fail to see the momentary look of naïve admiration that appeared and faded away somewhere in the crafty old face even of this count when he saw her. Her good-natured father, with a happy smile, introduced her briefly to the count and countess. She experienced a succession of the feelings of shame and pride. But meanwhile she had just time to notice that there was a touch of vulgarity in the haughty features of the countess.

In the ball-room, too, chrysanthemums blossomed in beautiful profusion everywhere. And everywhere the lace and flowers and ivory fans of the ladies waiting for their partners moved like soundless waves in the refreshing sweetness of perfume. Akiko soon separated from her father and joined one of the groups of gorgeous women. They were all girls of about the same age dressed in similar light blue and rose-colored ball gowns. When they turned to welcome her, they chirped softly like birds and spoke with admiration of her beauty that night.

But no sooner had she joined the group than a French naval officer she had never seen before walked quietly up to her. And with his two arms hanging down to his knees, he politely made her a Japanese bow. Akiko was faintly conscious of the blood mounting to her cheeks. But the meaning of that bow was clear without any asking. So she looked round at the girl standing beside her in a light

blue gown to get her to hold her fan. As she turned, to her surprise, the French naval officer, with a smile flitting across his cheek, said distinctly to her in Japanese with a strange accent,

"Won't you dance with me?"

In a moment Akiko was dancing the Blue Danube Waltz with the French naval officer. He had tanned cheeks, clear-cut features and a heavy mustache. She was too short to reach up and put her long-gloved hand on the left shoulder of his uniform. But the experienced officer handled her deftly and danced her lightly through the crowd. And at times he even whispered amiable flatteries into her ear in French.

Repaying his gentle words with a bashful smile, she looked from time to time about the ball-room in which they danced. She could see between the sea of people flashes of curtains of purple silk crape with the Imperial crest dyed into them, and the gay silver or sober gold of the chrysanthemums in the vases under Chinese flags on which blue claw-spread dragons writhed. And the sea of people, stirred up by the wind of gay melody from the German orchestra that came bubbling over it like champagne, never stopped for a moment its dizzy commotion. When she and one of her friends, also dancing, saw each other, they nodded happily as they went busily by. But at that moment, another dancer, whirling like a big moth, appeared between them from nowhere in particular.

But meanwhile, she realized that the naval officer was watching her every movement. This simply showed how much interest this foreigner, unaccustomed to Japan, took in her vivacious dancing. Did this beautiful young lady, too, live like a doll in a house of paper and bamboo? And with slender metal chopsticks did she pick up grains of rice out of a teacup as big as the palm of your hand with a blue flower painted on it and eat them? Such doubts, together with an affectionate smile, seemed ever and anon to come and go in his eyes. If this was amusing to Akiko, it was at the same time gratifying. So every time his surprised gaze fell to her feet, her slender little rose-colored dancing pumps went sliding the more lightly over the slippery floor.

But finally the officer seemed to notice that this kitten-like young lady showed signs of fatigue, and peering into her face with kindly eyes, he asked,

"Shall we go on dancing?"

"*Non, merci*," said Akiko in excitement, this time clearly.

Then the French naval officer, continuing the steps of the waltz, wove his way through the waves of lace and flowers moving back and forth and right and left, and guided her leisurely up to the chrysanthemums in vases by the wall. And after the last revolution, he seated her neatly in a chair there and, having once thrown out his chest in his military uniform, again respectfully made her a deep Japanese bow.

Then after dancing a polka and a mazurka, Akiko took the arm of this French naval officer and went down the stairs between the walls of white and yellow and pink chrysanthemums to a large hall.

Here in the midst of swallow-tails and white shoulders moving to and fro unceasingly, many tables loaded with silver and glass utensils were piled high with meat and truffles, or pinnacled with towers of sandwiches and ice-cream, or built up into pyramids of pomegranates and figs. Especially beautiful was a gilt lattice with skilfully made artificial grape vines twining their green leaves through it on the wall at one side of the room above the piled-up chrysanthemums. And among the leaves, bunches of grapes like wasps' nests hung in purple abundance. In front of this gilt lattice, Akiko found her bald-headed father, with another gentleman of the same age, smoking a cigar. When he saw her, he nodded slightly with evident satisfaction, and without taking further notice of her, turned to his companion and went on smoking.

The French naval officer went to one of the tables with Akiko, and they began to eat ice-cream. As they ate, she noticed that ever and anon his eyes were drawn to her hands or her hair or her neck with the light blue ribbon round it. This did not, of course, make her unhappy. But at one moment a womanly doubt could not but flash forth in her. Then, as two young women who looked like Germans went by with red camellias on their black velvet breasts, in order to hint at this doubt, she exclaimed,

"Really how beautiful western women are!"

When the naval officer heard this, contrary to her expectation, he shook his head seriously.

"Japanese women are beautiful, too. Especially you—"

"I'm no such thing."

"No, I'm not flattering. You could appear at a Parisian ball just as you are. If you did, everybody would be surprised. For you're like the princess in Watteau's picture."

Akiko did not know who Watteau was. So the beautiful vision of the past called up for the naval officer by his words—the vision of a fountain in a dusky grove and a fading rose—could only disappear without a trace and be lost. But this girl of unusual sensibility, as she plied her ice-cream spoon, did not forget to stick to just one more thing she wanted to speak of.

"I should like to go to a Parisian ball and see what they're like."

"No, a Parisian ball is exactly the same as this."

As he said this, the naval officer looked round at the sea of people and the chrysanthemums surrounding the table where they stood; then suddenly, as a cynical smile seemed to move like a little wave in the depths of his eyes, he put down his ice-cream spoon and added as if half to himself,

"Not only Paris. Balls are just the same everywhere."

An hour later, Akiko and the French naval officer stood arm in arm on a balcony off the ball-room under the starlight with many other Japanese and foreigners.

Out beyond the balcony railing the pines that covered the extensive garden stood hushed with their branches interwoven, and here and there among their twigs shone the lights of little red paper lanterns.

In the bottom of the chilly air the fragrance of the moss and fallen leaves rising from the garden below seemed to set adrift faintly the breath of lonely autumn. And in the ball-room behind them, that same sea of lace and flowers went on ceaselessly moving under the curtains of purple silk crape with the sixteen petaled

chrysanthemums dyed into them. And still up over the sea of people, the whirlwind of high-pitched orchestra music mercilessly goaded them on.

Of course from the balcony, too, lively talk and laughter stirred the night air ceaselessly. More, when beautiful fireworks shot up into the sky over the pines, a sound almost like a shout came from the throats of the people on the balcony. Standing in their midst, Akiko had been exchanging light chit-chat with some young lady friends of hers near them. But she finally bethought herself, and turning to the French naval officer, found him with his arm still supporting hers, gazing silently into the starry sky up over the garden. It seemed to her somehow that he was experiencing a touch of homesickness. So looking furtively up into his face, she said half teasingly,

"You're thinking of your own country, aren't you?"

Then the naval officer, with a smile in his eyes as always, looked round at her quietly. And instead of saying "*Non*," he shook his head like a child.

"But you seem to be musing on something."

"Guess what."

Just then among the people on the veranda arose again for a time a noise like a wind. As if by agreement, Akiko and the naval officer stopped talking and looked up into the night sky that pressed down heavily on the pines of the garden. There a red and blue firework, throwing its spider legs out against the darkness, was just on the verge of dying away. To Akiko, for some reason or other, that firework was so beautiful that it almost made her sad. "I was thinking of the fireworks. The fireworks, like our lives," said the French naval officer, looking gently down into Akiko's face and speaking as if teaching her.

II

It was autumn in the seventh year of Taisho (1918). The Akiko of that time, on her way back to her villa at Kamakura, met by chance on the train a young novelist with whom she was slightly

acquainted. The young man put a bunch of chrysanthemums which he was taking to a friend in Kamakura up into the rack. Then Akiko, who was now the elderly Madame H——, told him that there was a story of which she was always reminded whenever she saw chrysanthemums and recounted to him in detail her reminiscences of the ball at the Rokumeikan. He could not but feel a deep interest when he heard such reminiscences from the mouth of the woman herself.

When the story was over, he casually asked,

"Madame, do you not know the name of that French naval officer?"

Then old Madame H—— gave him an unexpected answer.

"Of course I do. His name was Julian Viaud."

"Then it was Loti, wasn't it? It was Pierre Loti, who wrote 'Madame Chrysantheme', wasn't it?"

The young man felt an agreeable excitement. But old Madame H —— simply looked into his face wonderingly and murmured over and over,

"No, his name wasn't Loti. It was Julian Viaud."

THE PIPE

I

MAEDA Narihiro, Lord of Kanazawa Castle in Ishikawa District of Kaga Province, every time he went up to the Honmaru in Yedo Castle to serve the Shōgun, was sure to take his favorite pipe along. Made by Sumiyoshiya Shichibei, a then famous pipe maker, it was an elegant piece of workmanship of pure gold with the plum-blossom-and-spear-point crest scattered over it.

Under the system of the Tokugawa government, the Maedas, when on duty at the Shōgun's castle, had taken precedence immediately after the three families of Owari, Kii and Mito ever since the time of the fifth lord of Kaga, Tsunanori. Of course, in riches too they were practically without a peer among the greater and lesser lords of the time. So it was only to have an ornament suitable to his station that Narihiro, the head of the family at that time, carried a pipe of pure gold.

But Narihiro was exceedingly proud of carrying that pipe. I should explain, however, that his pride was due in no sense to a fondness for the thing itself. He was delighted because the power which enabled him to use such a pipe daily was superior to that of the other lords. In short we may say that he was proud of being able to carry about with him everywhere the million *koku* of rice of Kaga Province in the form of this pure gold pipe.

So Narihiro was almost never without his pipe while in attendance at the Shōgun's castle. Of course when conversing with others and even when alone, he was sure to take it from the bosom of his kimono, and putting it in his mouth vaingloriously, puff calmly away at Nagasaki or some such fragrant tobacco.

Of course this feeling of pride may not have been of such an arrogant nature as to make him deliberately show off the pipe and the million *koku* represented by it. But even though he did not show it off himself, it was clearly evident that the attention of the whole

palace was concentrated on it. And the consciousness of that attention gave Narihiro a rather pleasant feeling. Indeed after he had been asked by other lords present just to show them the pipe, as it was such a splendid one, he felt that even the familiar smoke of the tobacco bit his tongue more agreeably.

II

Among those astonished at the pure gold pipe carried by Narihiro, those who liked to talk about it most were the shave-pate attendants called *obōzu*. Whenever they met, they put their noses together and chattered away at each other, as they loved to, on the subject of Kaga's pipe.

"It's an article fit for a lord."

"And what's more, such a thing has intrinsic value."

"If you pawned it, how much do you suppose it would bring?"

"Who but you would ever pawn it?"

In general, such was the tone of their conversations.

Then one day when five or six of them had their round heads together smoking and talking about the pipe as usual, Kōchiyama Sōshun, attendant of the Osukiya, came by chance where they were. (He was the man who came in later years to play the chief rôle among the "Six Poetical Geniuses of the Tempō Period.")

"H'm, that pipe again?" he grunted, looking askance at the group.

"It's a splendid thing both as to carving and the metal of which it's made. To us who haven't even silver pipes, it's an eyesore—"

The attendant Ryōtetsu, who was letting himself go for a little speech, suddenly noticed that Sōshun had drawn over his tobacco pouch and, having filled his own pipe from it, was calmly blowing smoke rings into the air.

"Here, here, that's not your pouch!"

"That's all right."

Without so much as looking at Ryōtetsu, Sōshun filled his pipe again. And when he had smoked it up, he threw back the pouch with a suppressed yawn and said,

"Faw, that's bad tobacco. A nice pipe-fancier, you!"

Ryōtetsu put away his tobacco pouch hurriedly.

"Nonsense! In a gold pipe, it'd taste pretty good, all right."

"H'm, that pipe again?" said Sōshun for the second time. "If you think so much of pure gold, why don't you go and ask him to give you the pipe?"

"Ask him to give me the pipe?"

"Yes."

Even Ryōtetsu seemed surprised at Sōshun's audacity.

"However avaricious I may be,—at least, if it were silver, it would be different. But it's pure gold, that pipe."

"Of course it is. That's just why you ought to ask for it. Who'd ever go and get anybody to give him a brass pipe?"

"But I'd be a bit ashamed."

Ryōtetsu gave his closely shaven pate one tap and struck a posture of reverential awe.

"If you don't get it, I will. See? Don't be envious afterwards."

So saying, Kōchiyama, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, shrugged his shoulders and laughed derisively.

III

While Narihiro was smoking as usual in a room in the palace, one of the golden doors with a picture of Seiōbo painted on it slid quietly open and an attendant clad in a darkish kimono of *kihachijō* silk and a crested black *haori* crawled reverentially into his presence. As he did not raise his face, it was not yet evident who he was. Narihiro, as he thought the man had come on some business, rapped his pipe and said generously,

"What is it?"

"Er,—Sōshun has a request to make."

So saying, Kōchiyama paused for a moment. Then, as he went on, he slowly raised his head and finally fixed his eyes on Narihiro's face. He fixed them there like a snake charming its victim,

overflowing the while with that peculiar amiability possessed only by men of his sort.

"It's only this, that I should like very much to have you give me that pipe there in your hand."

Narihiro unconsciously dropped his eyes to the pipe in his hand. At practically the same moment, Kōchiyama went on as if following him up,

"What do you say? Will you give it to me?"

Sōshun's words had in them something that was not simply a feeling of supplication but also that sense of overbearing peculiar to the attendant class in their relations with all daimyō. In the palace, where complicated ceremony was held in high esteem, every lord of the land had to follow the guidance of the attendants. On the one hand, Narihiro was at this disadvantage. And on the other hand, for the sake of his good name, he felt that he would not like to be called miserly. Besides, a pure gold pipe was by no means a difficult thing for him to obtain. When these two motives became one, his hand of itself placed the pipe before Kōchiyama.

"Certainly I'll give it to you. Take it along."

"Thank you."

Sōshun took the pipe and, raising it reverentially to his head, hastily withdrew again beyond the sliding door with Seiōbo on it. Then just as he turned to go away, somebody pulled at his sleeve from behind. He looked round, and there was Ryōtetsu with a grin on his pock-marked face pointing covetously at the pipe resting on Sōshun's palm.

"Here, have a look," whispered Kōchiyama, holding the bowl of the pipe under Ryōtetsu's nose.

"You finally got it out of him, didn't you?"

"Didn't I tell you? It's no use your being envious now."

"Next I'll go and get him to give me one."

"H'm, do as you like."

Kōchiyama tried the weight of the pipe once and then, with a glance toward Narihiro beyond the sliding door, again shrugged his shoulders and laughed derisively.

IV

As for Narihiro, who had been wheedled out of his pipe, he was not so unhappy as you might suppose. This was evident from the fact that when he retired from the castle, the samurai attending him were surprised to find an expression on his face which seemed to indicate an unusually pleasant frame of mind.

He felt a sort of satisfaction at having given the pipe to Sōshun. Perhaps this satisfaction was greater in degree than that he had felt when he had the pipe. But this was most natural. Because, as has already been explained, his pride in the pipe lay not in his fondness for the thing itself. Really he was proud of his million *koku* in the form of the pipe. Wherefore, just as his vanity was satisfied by the using of this pure gold pipe, would it not be the more fully satisfied by the giving of it willingly to another? Even if he was somewhat governed by outside circumstances when he gave it to Kōchiyama, his satisfaction was not the least bit lessened by that fact.

So when Narihiro returned to his residence in Hongo, he pleasantly said to the retainers nearest him,

"I gave the attendant Sōshun my pipe."

V

When Narihiro's household heard this, everybody was surprised at his generosity. But just three men, Yamazaki Kanzaemon, chamberlain, Iwata Kuranosuke, keeper of the stores, and Ueki Kurouemon, treasurer, involuntarily knit their brows.

Of course the cost of one pure gold pipe was nothing to the finances of the Kaga Clan. But if one had to be given to an attendant every time Narihiro went to the castle on festival days, and the first, the fifteenth, and the twenty-eighth of every month, it would entail an alarming expenditure. There was no denying that the taxes might have to be increased to pay for the pipes. That would be terrible, and the three loyal samurai were one in their anticipatory fear.

Therefore they decided to hold a council at once and devise remedial measures. But of course there was only one possible remedial measure, and that was to change entirely the material of which the pipe was made and use some metal that the attendants would not covet. But Iwata and Ueki differed in their opinions as to what metal should be used.

Iwata said it would be derogatory to the honor of their lord to use any metal cheaper than silver. Ueki thought that, if they wanted to put a stop to the avarice of the attendants, nothing could be better than the use of brass. To regard honor now was temporizing. Each stuck to his own opinion and argued for it hotly.

Then the experienced Yamazaki said that there was the greatest reason in both opinions and offered a compromise, suggesting that they might try silver first, and then, if the attendants were still covetous, it would not be too late to use brass afterwards. Of course neither could make objection to this. So the council at last decided to order Sumiyoshiya Shichibei to make a silver pipe.

VI

Thereafter Narihiro carried a silver pipe with him every time he went to the castle. It, too, was a most elaborate pipe with the plum-blossom-and-spear-point crest scattered over it.

Of course he was not so proud of the new pipe as he had been of the old one. In the first place, he seldom took it in his hand even when he was conversing with others. Even when he did, he put it away again immediately. This was because the same Nagasaki tobacco did not taste so good to him as it had when he smoked it in his pure gold pipe. But the changing of the metal of which the pipe was made did not affect only Narihiro. As the three loyal retainers had expected, it had an effect on the attendants as well. However, in the end, this effect utterly betrayed their expectation. For when the attendants saw that the gold had been replaced with silver, even those of them who had up to this time stood back because of the pure gold raced to ask for a pipe. Moreover, Narihiro, who begrudged not even a pure gold pipe, naturally was not averse to giving away a silver pipe. Whenever he was asked for one, he

promptly tossed it away ungrudgingly. Finally even he himself could not say whether he gave away a pipe when he went to the castle or went to the castle to give away a pipe,—at least, he hardly could.

At this, Yamazaki, Iwata and Ueki knit their brows and conferred again. Now at last there was nothing for it but to make brass pipes as Ueki had proposed. Then when they were just on the verge of sending an order to Sumiyoshiya Shichibei as usual, a personal attendant came to them with a message from Narihiro.

"Our liege lord says that when he carries a silver pipe, he's tormented by the attendants' importunities. Henceforward you are to make his pipes of gold as heretofore."

The three were struck dumb and knew not what to do.

VII

Kōchiyama Sōshun sourly watched the other attendants vying with one another each to get a silver pipe from Narihiro. Especially when he saw Ryōtetsu overjoyed at getting one when Narihiro went to the castle on the first of the eighth month, he went so far as to abuse him roundly and call him a fool in his usual sharp and peevish voice. It was by no means that he was not covetous of a silver pipe, but he felt his dignity too much to run after one with the other attendants. Troubled by the conflict between his pride and his avarice, he kept his eye on Narihiro's pipe constantly, pretending indifference, the while he was saying to himself, "Wait and see. I'll soon put their noses out of joint."

Then one day he noticed that Narihiro was calmly puffing away at a pure gold pipe again. But it seemed that not an attendant was going to ask for it. So he stopped Ryōtetsu, who was just then passing, and slyly pointing in Narihiro's direction with his chin, whispered,

"He's got a pure gold one again, hasn't he?"

When Ryōtetsu heard this, he looked at Sōshun with an amazed expression on his face.

"You'd better show some moderation in your greed. When, even with silver pipes, he's importuned so much, why would he want to carry a pure gold pipe again?"

"Then what is it?"

"Brass, I should say."

Sōshun shrugged his shoulders. He looked all about him carefully and did not raise his voice in laughter.

"All right, if it's brass, let it be brass. I'm going to get it."

"Why do you think it's gold again?" asked Ryōtetsu, his assurance seeming to weaken.

"He knows your minds. Pretending that it's brass, he's brought a pure gold one. To begin with, a lord with a million *koku* of rice wouldn't meekly carry a brass pipe."

Sōshun said this rapidly and went in alone to Narihiro, leaving the astonished Ryōtetsu outside that golden sliding door on which was the picture of Seiōbo.

An hour later, Ryōtetsu met Kōchiyama in the matted corridor and asked,

"What happened, Sōshun, in that matter?"

"What do you mean, that matter?"

Ryōtetsu, sticking out his lower lip, stared into his face and said,

"Don't sham. The matter of the pipe, of course."

"Oh, the pipe? If it's the pipe you mean, I'll give it to you."

Kōchiyama took a shiny yellow pipe out of the bosom of his kimono and, throwing it into Ryōtetsu's face before he had more than caught a glimpse of it, walked hastily away.

Ryōtetsu, rubbing the place where the pipe had hit him, grumblingly picked it up from where it had fallen and, looking at it, found it to be an elegant piece of workmanship with the plum-blossom-and-spear-point crest scattered over it and made of—brass! With a gesture of detestation, he threw it down on the mats again and, lifting a foot inclosed in a one-toed shoe of white cloth, went with exaggeration through the motion of stamping on it.

VIII

After that the attendants' begging of pipes from Narihiro came to an abrupt end. This was because Sōshun and Ryōtetsu proved to them that the pipe he carried was made of brass.

Then Narihiro's three faithful retainers, who had temporarily deceived him with a brass pipe made to look like gold, after conferring together again, commanded Sumiyoshiya Shichibei to make a pure gold pipe. It had the plum-blossom-and-spear-point crest scattered over it and did not differ in the least from the one Kōchiyama had received in the beginning. In his heart looking forward to the importunities of the attendants, Narihiro went triumphantly to the castle with the pipe.

But not a single attendant came to ask him for it. Even Kōchiyama, who had already begged two of them out of him, took but a single glance at this one and, with a slight bow, went away. The other daimyō present maintained silence and, of course, never asked to see it. This seemed strange to Narihiro.

No, it was not just strange. In the end, it made him vaguely uneasy. So when he saw Kōchiyama coming again, he spoke first himself this time.

"Sōshun, don't you want me to give you a pipe?"

"No, thank you, I've already had one."

Sōshun probably thought to make sport of Narihiro. There was a sharpness in the way these polite words were spoken.

When Narihiro heard them, his face clouded with displeasure. The flavor of his Nagasaki tobacco was no longer sweet in his mouth. For suddenly he felt that the power of his million *koku*, of which he had been sensible up to this time, was vanishing away utterly like the smoke rising from the end of his pure gold pipe.

According to men now grown old, in the Maeda family, after Narihiro, both Nariyasu and Noriyasu used only brass pipes, and this may well have been the result of a death-bed warning left to his descendants by Narihiro, whose pure gold pipe had taught him a lesson.

MŌRI SENSEI

One evening in December, I was walking with a critic friend of mine under the bare willows along the so-called Koshiben Kaidō (Lunch-on-Hip Highway) toward Kanda Bridge. To right and left of us staggered through the light still lingering in the gloaming men who seemed to be those petty officials to whom Shimazaki Tōson long ago said in patriotic indignation, "Walk with your heads held higher." Perhaps it was because we ourselves, try as we might, could not quickly shake off a similar melancholy feeling that, walking so near together that the shoulders of our overcoats touched and quickening our steps a thought, we said hardly a word till we were passing the Ote Machi car stop. Then my friend the critic glanced at a group of chilly-looking people waiting for a car by a red post there and, suddenly giving a shiver, mumbled as if to himself,

"They remind me of Mōri Sensei."

"Who's Mōri Sensei?"

"He was a teacher of mine in middle school. Haven't I ever told you about him?"

In place of a negative answer, I silently pulled down the brim of my hat. What here follows is the story of Mōri Sensei then told me by that friend.

It was about ten years ago, when I was yet in the third year class of a certain prefectural middle school. During the winter vacation, Adachi Sensei, a young teacher who taught our class English, died of acute pneumonia brought on by influenza. It all happened so suddenly that there was no time to choose a suitable successor to take his place, so it must have been as a last expedient. At any rate, for the time being, our middle school gave the work Adachi Sensei had been doing to an old man called Mōri Sensei, who was at that time teaching English in a certain private middle school.

It was on the afternoon of the day he took up his work that I saw him for the first time. We students of the third year class were overcome with curiosity at the prospect of meeting the new teacher and, from the time his steps resounded in the hall, awaited the beginning of the lesson in unwonted silence. But when they stopped outside the cold and sunless class-room and the door finally opened, —ah, even in these surroundings, the scene at that moment stands clearly before my eyes. Mōri Sensei, who opened the door and entered, first of all reminded me by his shortness of the spider men often seen in side-shows at festivals. But what took the gloom out of the feeling he inspired was his smooth and shining bald head, which might almost be called beautiful, and on the back of which there barely clung some slight wisps of grizzled hair, but which for the most part looked just like such ostrich eggs as are pictured in text books on natural history. And finally, that which gave him a mien distinct from that of ordinary men was his strange morning coat, which was literally so green and rusty as almost to make one doubt that it had ever been black. And I have even a surprising recollection of an extremely gay purple necktie showily tied just like a moth with outspread wings in his slightly soiled turn-down collar. Wherefore it was of course not surprising that, the minute he entered, sounds of suppressed laughter suddenly arose here and there all over the room.

However, with a reader and the roll book clasped in his arms and with an air of perfect composure, as if not having the least regard for us students, he stepped up on to the low platform, returned our bow and, with an amiable smile on his very good-natured, sallow round face, began in a shrill voice,

“Gentlemen.”

We had never once during the past three years been addressed as gentlemen by the teachers of that school. So Mōri Sensei’s “Gentlemen” naturally made us all involuntarily open eyes of wonder. And at the same time, expecting that, now that he had already begun with “Gentlemen,” there would instantly follow a great speech on teaching methods or something, we waited with bated breath.

However, Mōri Sensei, having said “Gentlemen,” looked round the room and spoke not another word for some time. In spite of the calm smile on his flaccid face, the corners of his mouth twitched nervously. At the same time an uneasy light continually came and went in his eyes, which were clear and somehow like the eyes of a domestic animal. Although he did not express it in words, it seemed that he had something that he wished to beg of us, but unfortunately could not himself tell clearly what it was.

“Gentlemen,” he finally repeated in the same tone. And then this time, afterwards, as if he would catch the echo of the voice in which he said it, he added greatly flustered,

“I am hereafter to teach you the ‘Choice Reader’.”

Feeling our curiosity grow more and more intense, we became absolutely still and fastened our eyes on his face. But as he said this, he looked round the room again with that pleading expression in his eyes, and without another word, sat down suddenly in the chair, as if a spring had given way in him. And he began to look at the roll, which he opened beside the “Choice Reader,” already lying open. I probably need not tell you how this abrupt way of ending his greetings disappointed us, or rather how it went further and impressed us with a sense of its ridiculousness.

But fortunately, before we had begun to laugh, he lifted those eyes like a domestic animal’s from the roll and called the name of one of us, adding to it the title, “San.” Of course this was the signal to stand up and translate from the reader. So the student stood up and translated a paragraph of “Robinson Crusoe” or something, in the smart tone peculiar to Tōkyō Middle School boys. And as he read, Mōri Sensei, putting his hand now and then to his purple necktie, went along carefully correcting his every wrong translation, of course, and even his slightest mispronunciation. There was something strangely affected in his pronunciation, but it was for the most part accurate and distinct, and he seemed in his own heart to have special confidence in himself in this direction.

But after the student had taken his seat and Mōri Sensei began his own translation of the passage, laughter arose again here and there among us. For this teacher, who was such a master in pronunciation, when he came to translate, knew so few Japanese

words as hardly to seem like a Japanese. Or it may have been that, even if he did know them, he was not able to find them on the spur of the moment. For instance, to translate only one line, he said, “So at last Robinson Crusoe decided to keep it. As for why he decided to keep it, it was one of these queer animals—there are many of them at the zoo—what do you call them? Er—they’re clever at tricks—you all must know what I mean, don’t you? You know, they have red faces—what? Monkeys? Yes, yes, it was one of those monkeys. He decided to keep one of those monkeys.”

Of course, since he had that much trouble with the word “monkey,” when it came to any word that was a little difficult, he could not strike upon a suitable translation till he had gone all around it many times. Besides, he was at such times greatly flustered, and putting his hand to his throat so frequently that it seemed he must tear off his purple necktie, he lifted his anxious face and looked at us with panic-stricken eyes. And then, pressing his bald head in his two hands, he would put his face down on the desk and come to an abashed stop. At such times his naturally small body shrank up timidly exactly like a deflated rubber balloon, and even his legs, hanging down from the chair, seemed to float danglingly in space. And again, we students found that funny and tittered. Then while he was repeating his translation two or three times, the laughing voices gradually became audacious and, at last, even from the front row, welled up openly. As for how much this laughter of ours hurt the good Mōri Sensei,—the truth is that of late years even I have many times involuntarily wished to cover my ears at the recollection of that pitiless sound.

Yet Mōri Sensei went bravely on with his translation till the bugle announced recess. And when he had finished the last paragraph, he again assumed his original air of composure and, returning our bow, went out of the room with a show of calmness, as if he had forgotten entirely the dismal struggle he had had up to that minute. Scarcely had he gone out when there arose in our midst a great burst of laughter like a tempest and the noise of deliberately opening and shutting the lids of desks, and then one student jumped up on the platform and quickly mimicked his gestures and voice,—ah, must I remember even the fact that I, decorated with the

monitor's mark and surrounded by five or six students, proudly pointed out his mistakes in translation. And what of those mistakes? To tell the truth, I was showing off, even then not knowing in the least whether they were really mistakes or not.

It was a noon hour three or four days later. Gathered in the sand pit by the turning bars, five or six of us students were chatting glibly about such things as the coming terminal examinations, as we exposed the backs of our serge uniforms to the warm winter sun. Then Tamba Sensei, who weighed a hundred and fifty pounds and had up to that moment been hanging to the horizontal bar with a student, dropped down into the sand with a loud, "One, two!" and appearing among us in his vest and athletic cap, said,

"How's the new teacher, Mōri Sensei?"

Tamba Sensei also taught us English, but being a famous lover of athletics, and, at the same time, being credited with ability in the reciting of Chinese poems, he seemed to be very popular even with those stalwarts, the jujitsu and single-sticking champions, who hated English itself. So when he said this, one of those stalwarts, fingering a mitt, replied with a shyness unnatural to him,

"Er—he's not too—what shall I say? Everybody says he's not too good."

Then Tamba Sensei, dusting the sand off his trousers with his handkerchief, smiled proudly and said,

"Is he worse than you are?"

"Of course he's better than I am."

"Then you have nothing to complain of, have you?"

The stalwart, scratching his head with his mitted hand, withdrew weakly. But the English genius of our class, adjusting his strong myopic spectacles, protested in a pert tone, unbecoming his years,

"But Sensei, as most of us mean to take the entrance examinations to higher schools, we want to be taught by the very best teachers."

But Tamba Sensei, laughing spiritedly as always, said,

“Nonsense! it’s all the same whoever teaches you only for a term or so.”

“Then is Mōri Sensei to teach us only one term?”

This question seemed to touch Tamba Sensei a little near home. But this worldly-wise teacher, purposely giving no reply, took off his athletic cap, and energetically knocking the dust out of his closely cropped hair, suddenly looked all around at us and, cleverly changing the subject, said,

“Of course, Mōri Sensei’s a very old man, so he’s a little different from us. This morning when I got on a car he was seated in the very middle of it, and when we got near the place to change, he called out, ‘Conductor, conductor!’ It was so funny I nearly died laughing. Anyhow, he’s certainly different.”

But when it came to things of that sort about Mōri Sensei, there were more than enough that had astonished us without our waiting to be told about them by Tamba Sensei.

“And they say Mōri Sensei, when it rains, comes to school in his foreign clothes with wooden clogs on his feet!”

“Isn’t that his lunch that always hangs from his belt wrapped in a white cloth wrapper?”

“Somebody said that when he saw him hanging to a strap in a car, his woolen gloves were full of holes.”

Gathering about Tamba Sensei, we chattered such nonsense noisily from every side. Then, perhaps drawn in by these remarks, when our voices became louder, Tamba Sensei finally spoke up gaily, and twirling his athletic cap on his finger, said thoughtlessly,

“Better yet, that hat’s an antique.”

Just at that moment, Mōri Sensei, thinking I know not what, made his appearance composedly with his small body, that antique derby hat on his head and his hand gravely fingering that same old purple necktie, at the door of the two-storied school building facing the turning bar but ten paces away. In front of the door six or seven boys, probably of the first year class, were playing pickaback or something, and when they saw him, they all scrambled to be first and saluted him politely. Mōri Sensei, standing in the sunshine on the stone steps before the door, seemed to be lifting his derby and

returning their bows with a smile. When we saw this, naturally feeling a sort of shame, we all suspended our merry laughter and were silent for a moment. But with Tamba Sensei, this was probably because of a combination of shame and confusion that was more than enough to shut his mouth. Slightly sticking out the tongue that was just saying, “That hat’s an antique,” and suddenly putting his cap on his head, he swung himself round quickly and, with a loud “One!” threw his fat body in its vest at the horizontal bar. And then when he had stretched his legs up into space for a “lobster snap” and shouted “Two!”, he cut neatly through the blue winter sky and was up on the bar without effort. It was natural that his funny covering of his shame should make us all titter. We students around him, who had restrained ourselves for a moment, looking up at Tamba Sensei on the bar, clapped our hands and yelled exactly as if we were rooting at a baseball game.

Of course I myself joined in the applause with the rest. While I was applauding, however, I began, half instinctively, to hate Tamba Sensei up on the bar. But this does not mean that I sympathized with Mōri Sensei. For the applause we gave Tamba Sensei then had, at the same time, the indirect object of showing our bad will toward Mōri Sensei. Analyzing it to-day, my feeling at that moment is susceptible of explanation as scorn for Tamba Sensei morally, combined with scorn for Mōri Sensei intellectually. Or I may think of my scorn as having had added to it an impertinence from its having been given proper indorsement by Tamba Sensei’s words, “That hat’s an antique.” So while applauding him, I looked triumphantly across my elevated shoulders at the entrance of the school-house. There stood our Mōri Sensei yet motionless on the stone steps like a winter fly or something that covets the sunshine, watching with absorption the innocent play of the first year students. That derby hat and that purple necktie,—why now can I never forget that scene which I then, rather as an object of derision, took in at a glance?

The feeling of scorn aroused in us by Mōri Sensei's costume and attainments on the day he took up his work grew stronger and stronger throughout all the class after Tamba Sensei's slip. Then came a certain morning less than a week later. Snow had been falling since the night before, and the roof of the drill-shed stretching out below the windows was covered so deep that no shade of the tiles showed through, but in the class-room a coal fire blazed red in the stove, and even the snow that fell on the window panes melted away before it had time to throw in its pale blue reflected light. Sitting in a chair in front of the stove, Mōri Sensei was squeezing out his shrill voice as usual, earnestly teaching us the "Psalm of Life" from the "Choice Reader," but of course not a single student was seriously listening. Worse yet, a certain jujitsu champion seated beside me had all along been reading a story of adventure by Oshikawa Shunro in the "Chivalrous World" spread out under his reader.

This went on for probably twenty or thirty minutes. Then Mōri Sensei, suddenly getting up from his chair, began to discuss the question of life in connection with the Longfellow poem he was reading. I do not remember the gist of his talk at all, but I think that, rather than an argument, it was something impressionistic built around his own life. For I faintly remember that he said something like this as he babbled on in an agitated tone, lifting and lowering his arms constantly just like a plucked bird:

"You don't understand life yet. Do you? Even if you want to, you can't. That itself doubtless makes you happy. When you get like me, you know life perfectly. You know it, but it's mostly hardships. Understand? It's mostly hardships. I myself have two children. Well, I must send them to school. When I send them,—er—when I send them—tuition? Yes, that's it. Tuition is necessary. Isn't it? So it's mostly hardships all right."

But of course we could not be expected to understand the feelings of this teacher who, whether he intended to or not, actually appealed against the troubles of life even to us unsophisticated middle school students. Rather, we who saw only the ridiculous side of the fact that he was making the appeal as he went on speaking, all began to snicker. Only our laughter did not turn into its usual

guffaw, which was perhaps due to the fact that his shabby clothes and his expression as he ran shrilly on aroused in us a certain amount of sympathy, as if they were the hardships of life themselves. But though our laughter did not grow louder, after a moment the jujitsu champion sitting beside me suddenly put aside his "Chivalrous World" and stood up with the fierceness of a tiger. And as I wondered what he was going to do, he said,

"Sensei, we attend this class to be taught English. So if you don't teach it to us, there's no need of our staying in this class-room. If you go on talking like that, I shall go at once to the gymnasium."

With that, he made as sour a face as he could and took his seat again most fiercely. I have never seen a man look so strange as Mōri Sensei did then. With his mouth still half open as if he had been struck by lightning, he simply stood like a poker by the stove for a minute or two gazing into that impetuous student's face. But finally that imploring expression rushed into his animalish eyes and set them alight, and he suddenly put his hand to that purple necktie of his and lowering his bald head two or three times, said,

"Yes, I'm at fault. I've done wrong, so I apologize sincerely. To be sure, you're all here to study English. I did wrong not to teach you English. Since I've done wrong, I apologize sincerely. You understand, don't you? I apologize sincerely."

And he repeated the same sort of thing over and over again, smiling such a smile that he seemed almost to be weeping. Through the door of the stove, the fire cast a red light aslant across his figure, making the worn places on his coat at the shoulders and waist stand out more clearly. At the same time, his bald head, every time he ducked it, shone with a fine coppery gloss and looked even more like an ostrich egg.

But this pitiful scene then seemed to me but the exposing of this teacher's essential inferiority. Now he was trying to escape the danger of losing his job even by humoring his students. So he was a teacher because he had to be to make a living and not because he had any interest in education itself. While hazily making such criticism, I now felt contempt not only for his clothes and scholarship, but for his character as well, and I rested my chin in my hands on my "Choice Reader" and hurled at him one impertinent

laugh after another, as he stood in front of the blazing stove being burned at the stake, as it were, both in spirit and in the flesh. Of course I was not the only one. The jujitsu champion who had cornered him, when he turned red and apologized, cast a momentary glance my way and, smiling a cunning smile, promptly began again to "study" that adventure story of Oshikawa Shunro's under his reader.

And until the bugle sounded for recess, our Mōri Sensei, more confused than ever, went on trying desperately to translate poor Longfellow. Deep down in my ears still rings his shrill, almost choking, voice, as with the perspiration beading his sallow round face and his eyes constantly pleading for something unknown, he read, "Life is real, life is earnest." But the cry of millions of miserable human beings hidden in that shrill voice was too deep to stimulate our ear drums in those days. So there were many besides myself who even yawned brazenly aloud as we grew more and more weary during that hour. But Mōri Sensei, holding his small body erect in front of the stove, and utterly oblivious of the flying snow coating the window panes, went on brandishing his reader incessantly and shouting desperately as if a spring in his head had suddenly unwound. "Life is real, life is earnest! Life is real, life is earnest!"

Consequently, when the school term for which he had been employed was over and we could see Mōri Sensei no more, we were glad and never felt the least regret. No, I might better say that we were so indifferent to his going that we did not even feel glad. I, especially, was so entirely lacking in graciousness that, as I grew to manhood during seven or eight years, passing through the middle school, the high school and the university, I practically forgot the very existence of such a teacher.

Then in the autumn of the year of my graduation from the university,—I say the autumn, but it was the night of one of those rainy days toward the beginning of December when dense mist often comes down in the evening, and when the willows and plane

trees along the avenues had long since shed their yellow leaves. After diligently searching at the second-hand book stores in Kanda for some German books, which had become most scarce since the beginning of the European war, and finally buying one or two, suddenly as I was passing the Nakanishiya, keeping out the all but motionless chill night air of late autumn with my turned-up overcoat collar, I somehow felt a longing for noisy human voices and warm drinks and stepped casually into a café there.

But when I once got in, I found that the room, though small, was bare-looking, and there was not a single customer. On the marble-topped tables sitting in rows, only the gilding on the sugar bowls reflected the electric light coldly. With a lonely feeling, as if I had been deceived by some one, I went over to a table in front of a built-in mirror on the wall and sat down. Then I ordered a cup of coffee from the waiter who came to me and, taking out a cigar abruptly, finally, after striking many matches, got it lighted. And soon there stood on the table before me a steaming cup of coffee, but still my spirits, having once fallen, seemed, like the low-hanging mist outside, not easily to be dissipated. The books I had just bought at the second-hand book stores were books on philosophy printed in fine type, and here it would have been painful for me to read a single page even of such distinguished discourses. Wherefore, because I could do nothing else, I rested my head on the back of my chair and, sipping Brazilian coffee and puffing my Havana by turns, allowed my purposeless gaze to stray at random into the mirror just in front of my nose.

In it were reflected distinctly and coldly just like a part of a stage setting, first of all the side of a staircase leading up to the second floor, then the opposite wall, a door painted white and the advertisement of a concert hung up on the wall. Yes, and besides, the marble-topped tables. And there was a big potted pine, and an electric lamp hanging from the ceiling. A big gas heating stove of porcelain was also visible. And I could see in front of the stove in a circle three or four waiters talking together earnestly. And then,—it was just as, inspecting the objects in the mirror one by one, I came to these waiters in front of the stove. I was startled by the sight of a guest who, surrounded by the waiters, was seated at a table. The

reason he had not attracted my attention up to that time was probably that, with the waiters all around him, I had unconsciously taken him for a cook of the café or something. But what startled me then was not only the fact that I had found a guest where I had thought there was none. It was that although only the profile of the man in the mirror was visible, from the shape of that bald head like an ostrich egg, the look of that green and rusty morning coat and the shade of that everlasting purple necktie, I knew at a glance that he was Mōri Sensei.

As soon as I recognized him, the seven or eight years that had passed since we parted came suddenly into my mind. A class monitor in a middle school studying the "Choice Reader" and myself there then calmly blowing the smoke of a cigar through my nose, —for me, those years could by no means be thought short. But could it be true that the current of time, which sweeps away all things, had not been able to do anything to this Mōri Sensei, who had already risen above time? He who was now sharing a table with these waiters in a night café was unmistakably the teacher who had in days long past taught reading in that class-room into which the westering sun never shone. Nor had his bald head changed. And his purple necktie was the same. And then that shrill voice,—even now, was he not lifting that shrill voice up and busily explaining something to the waiters? Smiling unconsciously and forgetting all unawares the melancholy I had not been able to escape, I listened attentively.

"Look, this adjective here modifies that noun. You see, Napoleon is the name of a person, so it's called a noun. You see, don't you? Then if you look at that noun, directly after it,—do you know what this is directly after it? Eh? You, what do you think?"

"It's a relative—a relative noun," ventured one of the waiters stammering.

"What, a relative noun? There's no such thing as a relative noun. It's a relative—er—a relative pronoun? Yes, that's it, a relative pronoun, you see. It's a pronoun, so look, it stands for the noun 'Napoleon!' Doesn't it? The word 'pronoun' means 'for a name', doesn't it?"

From the talk, it seemed that Mōri Sensei was teaching English to the café waiters. Then I edged my chair over and looked into the mirror at a different angle. As I expected, a book that looked like a reader lay open on the table. Mōri Sensei, busily pointing with his finger to the page, seemed never to get tired of explaining. And in this, too, he was the same as of old. Only the waiters now standing around him, different from the students of that time, were listening attentively to his excited explanations, all with their eyes shining and their shoulders crowded together.

While I looked for a few minutes at the scene in the mirror, a warm feeling for Mōri Sensei floated gradually to the surface of my consciousness. Should I go to him and compare notes with him after our long separation? But he probably would not remember me, whom he had seen only in a class-room during one short term. Even if he did remember me,—I suddenly recalled that malicious laughter which we had showered upon him in those days and thought it would be showing more respect for him not to introduce myself after all. So having finished my coffee, I threw away the stub of my cigar and got up stealthily, when, though I had tried to move quietly, I seemed after all to have attracted his attention. At the moment I left my chair, all at once he turned that sallow round face, that slightly soiled turn-down collar and that purple necktie my way. At that instant his animalish eyes met mine in the mirror. But as I had expected, there was no sign in them that he had met an old acquaintance. The only thing glittering in them was that same old sorrowful glance that seemed always to be pleading for something.

With my eyes cast down, I took the bill the waiter brought and went silently to the desk by the door to pay it. There the head waiter, with whom I was slightly acquainted, was sitting languidly with his hair sprucely parted.

“There’s a man over there teaching English. Is he employed to teach in this café?”, I asked as I paid my bill, and he, gazing out into the street and looking bored, replied,

“No, he’s not employed. He only comes every night and teaches like that. They say he’s an old has-been English teacher whom nobody will employ anywhere, so he probably comes here to kill

time. He orders a cup of coffee and sits in on us all evening, so we're not over-pleased."

When I heard this, Mōri Sensei's sorrowful glance always pleading for something unknown came suddenly before my eyes. Ah, Mōri Sensei! At that moment I felt that I had been able for the first time dimly to understand him, to understand his sturdy character. If there is such a thing as a born educator, he was surely one. It was as impossible for him to stop teaching English as to stop breathing. If he were forced to stop, his splendid vitality would droop instantly just like a plant deprived of water. So, urged on by his interest in teaching English, he deliberately came alone to this café every evening to sip a cup of coffee. Of course his was no such leisure as to deserve being taken for time-killing by the head waiter. More, our mistaking him long before and deriding him for working only for a living, now was proven a shameful blunder. How he must have been tormented by the vulgar construction put upon his actions by the world, which credited him only with killing time or making a living! Of course, even in such torment, always assuming an attitude of serenity and caparisoned in that purple necktie and derby hat, he went on translating unflinchingly, braver than Don Quixote. But still in his eyes was there not sometimes that sorrowful gleam entreating the sympathy of the students he was teaching, —nay, the sympathy of all the world he was facing?

Thinking such thoughts momentarily and deeply moved till I did not know whether I should laugh or cry, I buried my face in my overcoat collar and hurried out of the café. And still Mōri Sensei, taking advantage of the absence of customers, raised his shrill voice and went on teaching English to the eager waiters under the cold and over-bright electric lights.

"As it's a word that stands for a name, it's called a pronoun. Isn't it? A pronoun. You see that, don't you?"

Colophon

Tales Grotesque and Curious
Ryūnosuke Akutagawa

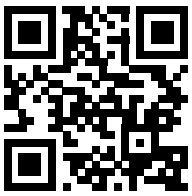
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