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Note:

The author, Algernon Bertram Freeman-Mitford (1837-1916), Lord Redesdale, was in the British Foreign Service as a young man. He was assigned to the legation in Japan for several years and acquired a life-long fascination with Japanese culture. This book has been a standard source of information about Japanese folklore and customs since its original publication in 1871 and has been in print ever since.



THE RÔNINS INVITE KÔTSUKÉ NO SUKÉ TO PERFORM HARA-KIRI.

TALES OF OLD JAPAN

by

LORD REDESDALE, G.C.V.O., K.C.B.

FORMERLY SECOND SECRETARY TO THE BRITISH LEGATION IN JAPAN

**WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
*DRAWN AND CUT ON WOOD BY JAPANESE ARTISTS***

1910

PREFACE

In the Introduction to the story of the Forty-seven Rônins, I have said almost as much as is needful by way of preface to my stories.

Those of my readers who are most capable of pointing out the many shortcomings and faults of my work, will also be the most indulgent towards me; for any one who has been in Japan, and studied Japanese, knows the great difficulties by which the learner is beset.

For the illustrations, at least, I feel that I need make no apology. Drawn, in the first instance, by one Ôdaké, an artist in my employ, they were cut on wood by a famous wood-engraver at Yedo, and are therefore genuine specimens of Japanese art. Messrs. Dalziel, on examining the wood blocks, pointed out to me, as an interesting fact, that the lines are cut with the grain of the wood, after the manner of Albert Dürer and some of the old German masters,—a process which has been abandoned by modern European wood-engravers.

It will be noticed that very little allusion is made in these Tales to the Emperor and his Court. Although I searched diligently, I was able to find no story in which they played a conspicuous part.

Another class to which no allusion is made is that of the Gôshi. The Gôshi are a kind of yeomen, or bonnet-lairds, as they would be called over the border, living on their own land, and owning no allegiance to any feudal lord. Their rank is inferior to that of the Samurai, or men of the military class, between whom and the peasantry they hold a middle place. Like the Samurai, they wear two swords, and are in many cases prosperous and wealthy men claiming a descent more ancient than that of many of the feudal Princes. A large number of them are enrolled among the Emperor's body-guard; and these have played a conspicuous part in the recent political changes in Japan, as the most conservative and anti-foreign element in the nation.

With these exceptions, I think that all classes are fairly represented in my stories.

The feudal system has passed away like a dissolving view before the eyes of those who have lived in Japan during the last few years. But when they arrived there it was in full force, and there is not an incident narrated in the following pages, however strange it may appear to Europeans, for the possibility and probability of which those most competent to judge will not vouch. Nor, as many a recent event can prove, have heroism, chivalry, and devotion gone out of the land altogether. We may deplore and inveigh against the Yamato Damashi, or Spirit of Old Japan, which still breathes in the soul of the Samurai, but we cannot withhold our admiration from the self-sacrifices which men will still make for the love of their country.

The first two of the Tales have already appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, and two of the Sermons, with a portion of the Appendix on the subject of the Hara-Kiri, in the pages of the *Cornhill Magazine*. I have to thank the editors of those periodicals for permission to reprint them here.

LONDON, *January 7, 1871.*

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	1
THE FORTY-SEVEN RÔNINS	1
THE LOVES OF GOMPACHI AND KOMURASAKI	20
KAZUMA'S REVENGE	38
A STORY OF THE OTOKODATÉ OF YEDO	54
THE WONDERFUL ADVENTURES OF FUNAKOSHI JIUYÉMON	91
THE ETA MAIDEN AND THE HATAMOTO	115
FAIRY TALES	133
THE TONGUE-CUT SPARROW	135
THE ACCOMPLISHED AND LUCKY TEA-KETTLE	138
THE CRACKLING MOUNTAIN	141
THE STORY OF THE OLD MAN WHO MADE WITHERED TREES TO BLOSSOM	145
THE BATTLE OF THE APE AND THE CRAB	149
THE ADVENTURES OF LITTLE PEACHLING	152
THE FOXES' WEDDING	155
THE HISTORY OF SAKATA KINTOKI	158
THE ELVES AND THE ENVIOUS NEIGHBOUR	160
THE GHOST OF SAKURA	161
HOW TAJIMA SHUMÉ WAS TORMENTED BY A DEVIL OF HIS OWN CREATION	192
CONCERNING CERTAIN SUPERSTITIONS	197
THE VAMPIRE CAT OF NABÉSHIMA	200
THE STORY OF THE FAITHFUL CAT	207
HOW A MAN WAS BEWITCHED AND HAD HIS HEAD SHAVED BY THE FOXES	209
THE GRATEFUL FOXES	213
THE BADGER'S MONEY	220
THE PRINCE AND THE BADGER	224
JAPANESE SERMONS	227
THE SERMONS OF KIU-Ô, VOL. I. SERMON I.	235
THE SERMONS OF KIU-Ô, VOL. I. SERMON II.	244

THE SERMONS OF KIU-Ô, VOL. I. SERMON III. [253](#)

APPENDICES:—

AN ACCOUNT OF THE HARA-KIRI [263](#)THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY [288](#)ON THE BIRTH AND REARING OF CHILDREN [296](#)FUNERAL RITES [301](#)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

[THE RÔNINS INVITE RÔTSUKÉ NO SUKÉ TO PERFORM HARA-KIRI](#)[THE WELL IN WHICH THE HEAD WAS WASHED](#)[THE SATSUMA MAN INSULTS OISHI KURANOSUKÉ](#)[THE TOMBS OF THE RÔNINS](#)[THE TOMB OF THE SHIYOKU](#)[GOMPACHI AWAKENED BY THE MAIDEN IN THE ROBBERS' DEN](#)[FORGING THE SWORD](#)[MATAGORÔ KILLS YUKIYÉ](#)[THE DEATH OF DANYÉMON](#)[TRICKS OF SWORDSMANSHIP AT ASAKUSA](#)[THE DEATH OF CHÔBEI OF BANDZUIN](#)[FUNAKOSHI JIUYÉMON ON BOARD THE PIRATE SHIP](#)[JIUYÉMON PUNISHES HIS WIFE AND THE WRESTLER](#)[FUNAKOSHI JIUYÉMON AND THE GOBLINS](#)["GOKUMON"](#)[CHAMPION WRESTLER](#)[A WRESTLING MATCH](#)[GENZABURÔ'S MEETING WITH THE ETA MAIDEN](#)[THE TONGUE-CUT SPARROW](#)[THE TONGUE-CUT SPARROW \(2\)](#)[THE ACCOMPLISHED AND LUCKY TEA-KETTLE](#)[THE ACCOMPLISHED AND LUCKY TEA-KETTLE \(2\)](#)[THE HARE AND THE BADGER](#)[THE HARE AND THE BADGER \(2\)](#)[THE OLD MAN WHO CAUSED WITHERED TREES TO FLOWER](#)[THE OLD MAN WHO CAUSED WITHERED TREES TO FLOWER \(2\)](#)[THE APE AND THE CRAB](#)[THE APE AND THE CRAB \(2\)](#)[LITTLE PEACHLING](#)

LITTLE PEACHLING (2)

THE FOXES' WEDDING

THE FOXES' WEDDING (2)

THE DEPUTATION OF PEASANTS AT THEIR LORD'S GATE

THE GHOST OF SAKURA

SÔGORÔ THRUSTING THE PETITION INTO THE SHOGUN'S LITTER

THE CAT OF NABÉSHIMA

THE FEAST OF INARI SAMA

A JAPANESE SERMON

[pg 1]

TALES OF OLD JAPAN

THE FORTY-SEVEN RÔNINS

The books which have been written of late years about Japan have either been compiled from official records, or have contained the sketchy impressions of passing travellers. Of the inner life of the Japanese the world at large knows but little: their religion, their superstitions, their ways of thought, the hidden springs by which they move—all these are as yet mysteries. Nor is this to be wondered at. The first Western men who came in contact with Japan—I am speaking not of the old Dutch and Portuguese traders and priests, but of the diplomatists and merchants of eleven years ago—met with a cold reception. Above all things, the native Government threw obstacles in the way of any inquiry into their language, literature, and history. The fact was that the Tycoon's Government—with whom alone, so long as the Mikado remained in seclusion in his sacred capital at Kiôto, any relations were maintained—knew that the Imperial purple with which they sought to invest their chief must quickly fade before the strong sunlight which would be brought upon it so soon as there should be European linguists capable of examining their books and records. No opportunity was lost of throwing dust in the eyes of the new-comers, whom, even in the most trifling details, it was the official policy to lead astray. Now, however, there is no cause for concealment; the *Roi Fainéant* has shaken off his sloth, and his *Maire du Palais*, together, and an intelligible Government, which need not fear scrutiny from abroad, is the result: the records of the country being but so many proofs of the Mikado's title to power, there is no reason for keeping up any show of mystery. The path of inquiry is open to all; and although there is yet much to be learnt, some knowledge has been attained, in which it may interest those who stay at home to share.

The recent revolution in Japan has wrought changes social as well as political; and it may be that when, in addition to the advance which has already been made, railways and

[pg 2]

telegraphs shall have connected the principal points of the Land of Sunrise, the old Japanese, such as he was and had been for centuries when we found him eleven short years ago, will have become extinct. It has appeared to me that no better means could be chosen of preserving a record of a curious and fast disappearing civilization than the translation of some of the most interesting national legends and histories, together with other specimens of literature bearing upon the same subject. Thus the Japanese may tell their own tale, their translator only adding here and there a few words of heading or tag to a chapter, where an explanation or amplification may seem necessary. I fear that the long and hard names will often make my tales tedious reading, but I believe that those who will bear with the difficulty will learn more of the character of the Japanese people than by skimming over descriptions of travel and adventure, however brilliant. The lord and his retainer, the warrior and the priest, the humble artisan and the despised Eta or pariah, each in his turn will become a leading character in my budget of stories; and it is out of the mouths of these personages that I hope to show forth a tolerably complete picture of Japanese society.

Having said so much by way of preface, I beg my readers to fancy themselves wafted away to the shores of the Bay of Yedo—a fair, smiling landscape: gentle slopes, crested by a dark fringe of pines and firs, lead down to the sea; the quaint eaves of many a temple and holy shrine peep out here and there from the groves; the bay itself is studded with picturesque fisher-craft, the torches of which shine by night like glow-worms among the outlying forts; far away to the west loom the goblin-haunted heights of Oyama, and beyond the twin hills of the Hakoné Pass—Fuji-Yama, the Peerless Mountain, solitary and grand, stands in the centre of the plain, from which it sprang vomiting flames twenty-one centuries ago.¹ For a hundred and sixty years the huge mountain has been at peace, but the frequent earthquakes still tell of hidden fires, and none can say when the red-hot stones and ashes may once more fall like rain over five provinces.

[pg 3]

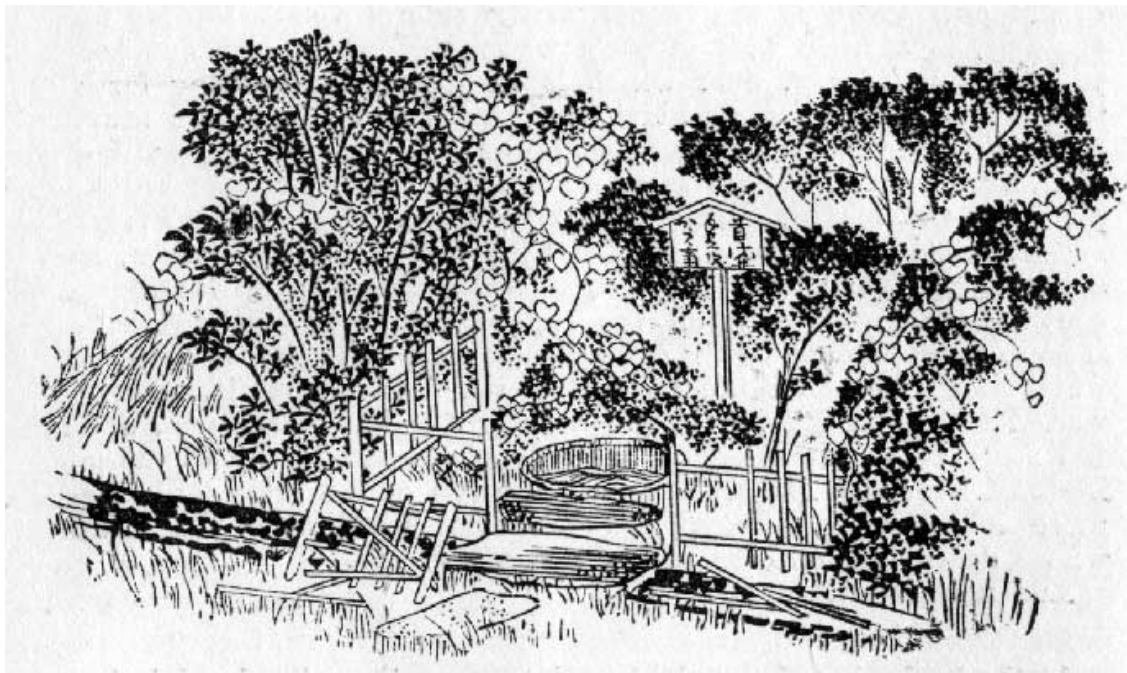
In the midst of a nest of venerable trees in Takanawa, a suburb of Yedo, is hidden Sengakuji, or the Spring-hill Temple, renowned throughout the length and breadth of the land for its cemetery, which contains the graves of the Forty-seven. Rônins,² famous in Japanese history, heroes of Japanese drama, the tale of whose deeds I am about to transcribe.

On the left-hand side of the main court of the temple is a chapel, in which, surmounted by a gilt figure of Kwanyin, the goddess of mercy, are enshrined the images of the forty-seven men, and of the master whom they loved so well. The statues are carved in wood, the faces coloured, and the dresses richly lacquered; as works of art they have great merit—the action of the heroes, each armed with his favourite weapon, being wonderfully life-like and spirited. Some are venerable men, with thin, grey hair (one is seventy-seven years old); others are mere boys of sixteen. Close by the chapel, at the side of a path leading up the hill, is a little well of pure water, fenced in and adorned with a tiny fernery, over which is an inscription, setting forth that "This is the well in which the head was washed; you must not wash your hands or your feet here." A little further on is a stall, at which a poor old man earns a pittance by selling books, pictures, and medals, commemorating the loyalty of the Forty-seven; and higher up yet, shaded by a grove of stately trees, is a neat inclosure, kept up, as a signboard announces, by voluntary contributions, round which are ranged forty-eight little tombstones, each decked with evergreens, each with its tribute of water and incense for the comfort of the departed spirit. There were forty-seven Rônins; there are forty-eight tombstones, and the story of the forty-eighth is truly characteristic of Japanese ideas of honour. Almost touching the rail of the graveyard is a more imposing monument under which lies buried the lord, whose death his followers piously avenged.

And now for the story.

[pg 4]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century there lived a daimio, called Asano Takumi no Kami, the Lord of the castle of Akô, in the province of Harima. Now it happened that an Imperial ambassador from the Court of the Mikado having been sent to the Shogun³ at Yedo, Takumi no Kami and another noble called Kamei Sama were appointed to receive and feast the envoy; and a high official, named Kira Kôtsuké no Suké, was named to teach them the proper ceremonies to be observed upon the occasion. The two nobles were accordingly forced to go daily to the castle to listen to the instructions of Kôtsuké no Suké. But this Kôtsuké no Suké was a man greedy of money; and as he deemed that the presents which the two daimios, according to time-honoured custom, had brought him in return for his instruction, were mean and unworthy, he conceived a great hatred against them, and took no pains in teaching them, but on the contrary rather sought to make laughing-stocks of them. Takumi no Kami, restrained by a stern sense of duty, bore his insults with patience; but Kamei Sama, who had less control over his temper, was violently incensed, and determined to kill Kôtsuké no Suké.



THE WELL IN WHICH THE HEAD WAS WASHED.

[pg 5]

One night when his duties at the castle were ended, Kamei Sama returned to his own palace, and having summoned his councillors⁴ to a secret conference, said to them: "Kôtsuké no Suké has insulted Takumi no Kami and myself during our service in attendance on the Imperial envoy. This is against all decency, and I was minded to kill him on the spot; but I bethought me that if I did such a deed within the precincts of the castle, not only would my own life be forfeit, but my family and vassals would be ruined: so I stayed my hand. Still the life of such a wretch is a sorrow to the people, and to-morrow when I go to Court I will slay him: my mind is made up, and I will listen to no remonstrance." And as he spoke his face became livid with rage.

Now one of Kamei Sama's councillors was a man of great judgment, and when he saw from his lord's manner that remonstrance would be useless, he said: "Your lordship's words are law; your servant will make all preparations accordingly; and to-morrow, when your lordship goes to Court, if this Kôtsuké no Suké should again be insolent, let him die the death." And his lord was pleased at this speech, and waited with impatience for the day to break, that he might return to Court and kill his enemy.

But the councillor went home, and was sorely troubled, and thought anxiously about what his prince had said. And as he reflected, it occurred to him that since Kôtsuké no

Suké had the reputation of being a miser he would certainly be open to a bribe, and that it was better to pay any sum, no matter how great, than that his lord and his house should be ruined. So he collected all the money he could, and, giving it to his servants to carry, rode off in the night to Kôtsuké no Suké's palace, and said to his retainers: "My master, who is now in attendance upon the Imperial envoy, owes much thanks to my Lord Kôtsuké no Suké, who has been at so great pains to teach him the proper ceremonies to be observed during the reception of the Imperial envoy. This is but a shabby present which he has sent by me, but he hopes that his lordship will condescend to accept it, and commends himself to his lordship's favour." And, with these words, he produced a thousand ounces of silver for Kôtsuké no Suké, and a hundred ounces to be distributed among his retainers.

When the latter saw the money their eyes sparkled with pleasure, and they were profuse in their thanks; and begging the councillor to wait a little, they went and told their master of the lordly present which had arrived with a polite message from Kamei Sama. Kôtsuké no Suké in eager delight sent for the councillor into an inner chamber, and, after thanking him, promised on the morrow to instruct his master carefully in all the different points of etiquette. So the councillor, seeing the miser's glee, rejoiced at the success of his plan; and having taken his leave returned home in high spirits. But Kamei Sama, little thinking how his vassal had propitiated his enemy, lay brooding over his vengeance, and on the following morning at daybreak went to Court in solemn procession.

[pg 6]

When Kôtsuké no Suké met him his manner had completely changed, and nothing could exceed his courtesy. "You have come early to Court this morning, my Lord Kamei," said he. "I cannot sufficiently admire your zeal. I shall have the honour to call your attention to several points of etiquette to-day. I must beg your lordship to excuse my previous conduct, which must have seemed very rude; but I am naturally of a cross-grained disposition, so I pray you to forgive me." And as he kept on humbling himself and making fair speeches, the heart of Kamei Sama was gradually softened, and he renounced his intention of killing him. Thus by the cleverness of his councillor was Kamei Sama, with all his house, saved from ruin.

Shortly after this, Takumi no Kami, who had sent no present, arrived at the castle, and Kôtsuké no Suké turned him into ridicule even more than before, provoking him with sneers and covert insults; but Takumi no Kami affected to ignore all this, and submitted himself patiently to Kôtsuké no Suké's orders.

This conduct, so far from producing a good effect, only made Kôtsuké no Suké despise him the more, until at last he said haughtily: "Here, my Lord of Takumi, the ribbon of my sock has come untied; be so good as to tie it up for me."

Takumi no Kami, although burning with rage at the affront, still thought that as he was on duty he was bound to obey, and tied up the ribbon of the sock. Then Kôtsuké no Suké, turning from him, petulantly exclaimed: "Why, how clumsy you are! You cannot so much as tie up the ribbon of a sock properly! Any one can see that you are a boor from the country, and know nothing of the manners of Yedo." And with a scornful laugh he moved towards an inner room.

But the patience of Takumi no Kami was exhausted; this last insult was more than he could bear.

"Stop a moment, my lord," cried he.

"Well, what is it?" replied the other. And, as he turned round, Takumi no Kami drew his dirk, and aimed a blow at his head; but Kôtsuké no Suké, being protected by the Court cap which he wore, the wound was but a scratch, so he ran away; and Takumi no Kami, pursuing him, tried a second time to cut him down, but, missing his aim, struck his dirk into a pillar. At this moment an officer, named Kajikawa Yosobei, seeing the affray,

rushed up, and holding back the infuriated noble, gave Kôtsuké no Suké time to make good his escape.

[pg 7]

Then there arose a great uproar and confusion, and Takumi no Kami was arrested and disarmed, and confined in one of the apartments of the palace under the care of the censors. A council was held, and the prisoner was given over to the safeguard of a daimio, called Tamura Ukiyô no Daibu, who kept him in close custody in his own house, to the great grief of his wife and of his retainers; and when the deliberations of the council were completed, it was decided that, as he had committed an outrage and attacked another man within the precincts of the palace, he must perform *hara-kiri*,—that is, commit suicide by disembowelling; his goods must be confiscated, and his family ruined. Such was the law. So Takumi no Kami performed *hara-kiri*, his castle of Akô was confiscated, and his retainers having become Rônins, some of them took service with other daimios, and others became merchants.

Now amongst these retainers was his principal councillor, a man called Oishi Kuranosuké, who, with forty-six other faithful dependants, formed a league to avenge their master's death by killing Kôtsuké no Suké. This Oishi Kuranosuké was absent at the castle of Akô at the time of the affray, which, had he been with his prince, would never have occurred; for, being a wise man, he would not have failed to propitiate Kôtsuké no Suké by sending him suitable presents; while the councillor who was in attendance on the prince at Yedo was a dullard, who neglected this precaution, and so caused the death of his master and the ruin of his house.

So Oishi Kuranosuké and his forty-six companions began to lay their plans of vengeance against Kôtsuké no Suké; but the latter was so well guarded by a body of men lent to him by a daimio called Uyésugi Sama, whose daughter he had married, that they saw that the only way of attaining their end would be to throw their enemy off his guard. With this object they separated and disguised themselves, some as carpenters or craftsmen, others as merchants; and their chief, Kuranosuké, went to Kiôto, and built a house in the quarter called Yamashina, where he took to frequenting houses of the worst repute, and gave himself up to drunkenness and debauchery, as if nothing were further from his mind than revenge. Kôtsuké no Suké, in the meanwhile, suspecting that Takumi no Kami's former retainers would be scheming against his life, secretly sent spies to Kiôto, and caused a faithful account to be kept of all that Kuranosuké did. The latter, however, determined thoroughly to delude the enemy into a false security, went on leading a dissolute life with harlots and winebibbers. One day, as he was returning home drunk from some low haunt, he fell down in the street and went to sleep, and all the passers-by laughed him to scorn. It happened that a Satsuma man saw this, and said: "Is not this Oishi Kuranosuké, who was a councillor of Asano Takumi no Kami, and who, not having the heart to avenge his lord, gives himself up to women and wine? See how he lies drunk in the public street! Faithless beast! Fool and craven! Unworthy the name of a Samurai!"⁵

[pg 8]



THE SATSUMA MAN INSULTS OISHI KURANOSUKÉ.

[pg 9]

And he trod on Kuranosuké's face as he slept, and spat upon him; but when Kôtsuké no Suké's spies reported all this at Yedo, he was greatly relieved at the news, and felt secure from danger.

One day Kuranosuké's wife, who was bitterly grieved to see her husband lead this abandoned life, went to him and said: "My lord, you told me at first that your debauchery was but a trick to make your enemy relax in watchfulness. But indeed, indeed, this has gone too far. I pray and beseech you to put some restraint upon yourself."

"Trouble me not," replied Kuranosuké, "for I will not listen to your whining. Since my way of life is displeasing to you, I will divorce you, and you may go about your business; and I will buy some pretty young girl from one of the public-houses, and marry her for my pleasure. I am sick of the sight of an old woman like you about the house, so get you gone—the sooner the better."

So saying, he flew into a violent rage, and his wife, terror-stricken, pleaded piteously for mercy.

"Oh, my lord! unsay those terrible words! I have been your faithful wife for twenty years, and have borne you three children; in sickness and in sorrow I have been with you; you cannot be so cruel as to turn me out of doors now. Have pity! have pity!"

"Cease this useless wailing. My mind is made up, and you must go; and as the children are in my way also, you are welcome to take them with you."

When she heard her husband speak thus, in her grief she sought her eldest son, Oishi Chikara, and begged him to plead for her, and pray that she might be pardoned. But nothing would turn Kuranosuké from his purpose, so his wife was sent away, with the two younger children, and went back to her native place. But Oishi Chikara remained with his father.

The spies communicated all this without fail to Kôtsuké no Suké, and he, when he heard how Kuranosuké, having turned his wife and children out of doors and bought a concubine, was grovelling in a life of drunkenness and lust, began to think that he had no longer anything to fear from the retainers of Takumi no Kami, who must be cowards,

without the courage to avenge their lord. So by degrees he began to keep a less strict watch, and sent back half of the guard which had been lent to him by his father-in-law, Uyésugi Sama. Little did he think how he was falling into the trap laid for him by Kuranosuké, who, in his zeal to slay his lord's enemy, thought nothing of divorcing his wife and sending away his children! Admirable and faithful man!

[pg 10]

In this way Kuranosuké continued to throw dust in the eyes of his foe, by persisting in his apparently shameless conduct; but his associates all went to Yedo, and, having in their several capacities as workmen and pedlars contrived to gain access to Kôtsuké no Suké's house, made themselves familiar with the plan of the building and the arrangement of the different rooms, and ascertained the character of the inmates, who were brave and loyal men, and who were cowards; upon all of which matters they sent regular reports to Kuranosuké. And when at last it became evident from the letters which arrived from Yedo that Kôtsuké no Suké was thoroughly off his guard, Kuranosuké rejoiced that the day of vengeance was at hand; and, having appointed a trysting-place at Yedo, he fled secretly from Kiôto, eluding the vigilance of his enemy's spies. Then the forty-seven men, having laid all their plans, bided their time patiently.

It was now midwinter, the twelfth month of the year, and the cold was bitter. One night, during a heavy fall of snow, when the whole world was hushed, and peaceful men were stretched in sleep upon the mats, the Rônins determined that no more favourable opportunity could occur for carrying out their purpose. So they took counsel together, and, having divided their band into two parties, assigned to each man his post. One band, led by Oishi Kuranosuké, was to attack the front gate, and the other, under his son Oishi Chikara, was to attack the postern of Kôtsuké no Suké's house; but as Chikara was only sixteen years of age, Yoshida Chiuzayémon was appointed to act as his guardian. Further it was arranged that a drum, beaten at the order of Kuranosuké, should be the signal for the simultaneous attack; and that if any one slew Kôtsuké no Suké and cut off his head he should blow a shrill whistle, as a signal to his comrades, who would hurry to the spot, and, having identified the head, carry it off to the temple called Sengakuji, and lay it as an offering before the tomb of their dead lord. Then they must report their deed to the Government, and await the sentence of death which would surely be passed upon them. To this the Rônins one and all pledged themselves. Midnight was fixed upon as the hour, and the forty-seven comrades, having made all ready for the attack, partook of a last farewell feast together, for on the morrow they must die. Then Oishi Kuranosuké addressed the band, and said—

"To-night we shall attack our enemy in his palace; his retainers will certainly resist us, and we shall be obliged to kill them. But to slay old men and women and children is a pitiful thing; therefore, I pray you each one to take great heed lest you kill a single helpless person." His comrades all applauded this speech, and so they remained, waiting for the hour of midnight to arrive.

[pg 11]

When the appointed hour came, the Rônins set forth. The wind howled furiously, and the driving snow beat in their faces; but little cared they for wind or snow as they hurried on their road, eager for revenge. At last they reached Kôtsuké no Suké's house, and divided themselves into two bands; and Chikara, with twenty-three men, went round to the back gate. Then four men, by means of a ladder of ropes which they hung on to the roof of the porch, effected an entry into the courtyard; and, as they saw signs that all the inmates of the house were asleep, they went into the porter's lodge where the guard slept, and, before the latter had time to recover from their astonishment, bound them. The terrified guard prayed hard for mercy, that their lives might be spared; and to this the Rônins agreed on condition that the keys of the gate should be given up; but the others tremblingly said that the keys were kept in the house of one of their officers, and that they had no means of obtaining them. Then the Rônins lost patience, and with a hammer dashed in pieces the big wooden bolt which secured the gate, and the doors flew open to the right and to the left. At the same time Chikara and his party broke in by the back gate.

Then Oishi Kuranosuké sent a messenger to the neighbouring houses, bearing the following message:—"We, the Rônins who were formerly in the service of Asano Takumi no Kami, are this night about to break into the palace of Kôtsuké no Suké, to avenge our lord. As we are neither night robbers nor ruffians, no hurt will be done to the neighbouring houses. We pray you to set your minds at rest." And as Kôtsuké no Suké was hated by his neighbours for his covetousness, they did not unite their forces to assist him. Another precaution was yet taken. Lest any of the people inside should run out to call the relations of the family to the rescue, and these coming in force should interfere with the plans of the Rônins, Kuranosuké stationed ten of his men armed with bows on the roof of the four sides of the courtyard, with orders to shoot any retainers who might attempt to leave the place. Having thus laid all his plans and posted his men, Kuranosuké with his own hand beat the drum and gave the signal for attack.

Ten of Kôtsuké no Suké's retainers, hearing the noise, woke up; and, drawing their swords, rushed into the front room to defend their master. At this moment the Rônins, who had burst open the door of the front hall, entered the same room. Then arose a furious fight between the two parties, in the midst of which Chikara, leading his men through the garden, broke into the back of the house; and Kôtsuké no Suké, in terror of his life, took refuge, with his wife and female servants, in a closet in the verandah; while the rest of his retainers, who slept in the barrack outside the house, made ready to go to the rescue. But the Rônins who had come in by the front door, and were fighting with the ten retainers, ended by overpowering and slaying the latter without losing one of their own number; after which, forcing their way bravely towards the back rooms, they were joined by Chikara and his men, and the two bands were united in one.

By this time the remainder of Kôtsuké no Suké's men had come in, and the fight became general; and Kuranosuké, sitting on a camp-stool, gave his orders and directed the Rônins. Soon the inmates of the house perceived that they were no match for their enemy, so they tried to send out intelligence of their plight to Uyésugi Sama, their lord's father-in-law, begging him to come to the rescue with all the force at his command. But the messengers were shot down by the archers whom Kuranosuké had posted on the roof. So no help coming, they fought on in despair. Then Kuranosuké cried out with a loud voice: "Kôtsuké no Suké alone is our enemy; let some one go inside and bring him forth. dead or alive!"

[pg 12]

Now in front of Kôtsuké no Suké's private room stood three brave retainers with drawn swords. The first was Kobayashi Héhachi, the second was Waku Handaiyu, and the third was Shimidzu Ikkaku, all good men and true, and expert swordsmen. So stoutly did these men lay about them that for a while they kept the whole of the Rônins at bay, and at one moment even forced them back. When Oishi Kuranosuké saw this, he ground his teeth with rage, and shouted to his men: "What! did not every man of you swear to lay down his life in avenging his lord, and now are you driven back by three men? Cowards, not fit to be spoken to! to die fighting in a master's cause should be the noblest ambition of a retainer!" Then turning to his own son Chikara, he said, "Here, boy! engage those men, and if they are too strong for you, die!"

Spurred by these words, Chikara seized a spear and gave battle to Waku Handaiyu, but could not hold his ground, and backing by degrees, was driven out into the garden, where he missed his footing and slipped into a pond, but as Handaiyu, thinking to kill him, looked down into the pond, Chikara cut his enemy in the leg and caused him to fall, and then, crawling out of the water dispatched him. In the meanwhile Kobayashi Héhachi and Shimidzu Ikkaku had been killed by the other Rônins, and of all Kôtsuké no Suké's retainers not one fighting man remained. Chikara, seeing this, went with his bloody sword in his hand into a back room to search for Kôtsuké no Suké, but he only found the son of the latter, a young lord named Kira Sahioyé, who, carrying a halberd, attacked him, but was soon wounded and fled. Thus the whole of Kôtsuké no Suké's men having been killed, there was an end of the fighting; but as yet there was no trace of Kôtsuké no Suké to be found.

Then Kuranosuké divided his men into several parties and searched the whole house, but all in vain; women and children weeping were alone to be seen. At this the forty-seven men began to lose heart in regret, that after all their toil they had allowed their enemy to escape them, and there was a moment when in their despair they agreed to commit suicide together upon the spot; but they determined to make one more effort. So Kuranosuké went into Kôtsuké no Suké's sleeping-room, and touching the quilt with his hands, exclaimed, "I have just felt the bed-clothes and they are yet warm, and so methinks that our enemy is not far off. He must certainly be hidden somewhere in the house." Greatly excited by this, the Rônins renewed their search. Now in the raised part of the room, near the place of honour, there was a picture hanging; taking down this picture, they saw that there was a large hole in the plastered wall, and on thrusting a spear in they could feel nothing beyond it. So one of the Rônins, called Yazama Jiutarô, got into the hole, and found that on the other side there was a little courtyard, in which there stood an outhouse for holding charcoal and firewood. Looking into the outhouse, he spied something white at the further end, at which he struck with his spear, when two armed men sprang out upon him and tried to cut him down, but he kept them back until one of his comrades came up and killed one of the two men and engaged the other, while Jiutarô entered the outhouse and felt about with his spear. Again seeing something white, he struck it with his lance, when a cry of pain betrayed that it was a man; so he rushed up, and the man in white clothes, who had been wounded in the thigh, drew a dirk and aimed a blow at him. But Jiutarô wrested the dirk from him, and clutching him by the collar, dragged him out of the outhouse. Then the other Rônin came up, and they examined the prisoner attentively, and saw that he was a noble-looking man, some sixty years of age, dressed in a white satin sleeping-robe, which was stained by the blood from the thigh-wound which, Jiutarô had inflicted. The two men felt convinced that this was no other than Kôtsuké no Suké, and they asked him his name, but he gave no answer, so they gave the signal whistle, and all their comrades collected together at the call; then Oishi Kuranosuké, bringing a lantern, scanned the old man's features, and it was indeed Kôtsuké no Suké; and if further proof were wanting, he still bore a scar on his forehead where their master, Asano Takumi no Kami, had wounded him during the affray in the castle. There being no possibility of mistake, therefore, Oishi Kuranosuké went down on his knees, and addressing the old man very respectfully, said—

[pg 13]

"My lord, we are the retainers of Asano Takumi no Kami. Last year your lordship and our master quarrelled in the palace, and our master was sentenced to *hara-kiri*, and his family was ruined. We have come to-night to avenge him, as is the duty of faithful and loyal men. I pray your lordship to acknowledge the justice of our purpose. And now, my lord, we beseech you to perform *hara-kiri*. I myself shall have the honour to act as your second, and when, with all humility, I shall have received your lordship's head, it is my intention to lay it as an offering upon the grave of Asano Takumi no Kami."

Thus, in consideration of the high rank of Kôtsuké no Suké, the Rônins treated him with the greatest courtesy, and over and over again entreated him to perform *hara-kiri*. But he crouched speechless and trembling. At last Kuranosuké, seeing that it was vain to urge him to die the death of a nobleman, forced him down, and cut off his head with the same dirk with which Asano Takumi no Kami had killed himself. Then the forty-seven comrades, elated at having accomplished their design, placed the head in a bucket, and prepared to depart; but before leaving the house they carefully extinguished all the lights and fires in the place, lest by any accident a fire should break out and the neighbours suffer.

[pg 14]

As they were on their way to Takanawa, the suburb in which the temple called Sengakuji stands, the day broke; and the people flocked out to see the forty-seven men, who, with their clothes and arms all blood-stained, presented a terrible appearance; and every one praised them, wondering at their valour and faithfulness. But they expected every moment that Kôtsuké no Suké's father-in-law would attack them and carry off the head, and made ready to die bravely sword in hand. However, they reached Takanawa in safety, for Matsudaira Aki no Kami, one of the eighteen chief daimios of Japan, of whose house

Asano Takumi no Kami had been a cadet, had been highly pleased when he heard of the last night's work, and he had made ready to assist the Rônins in case they were attacked. So Kôtsuké no Suké's father-in-law dared not pursue them.

At about seven in the morning they came opposite to the palace of Matsudaira Mutsu no Kami, the Prince of Sendai, and the Prince, hearing of it, sent for one of his councillors and said: "The retainers of Takumi no Kami have slain their lord's enemy, and are passing this way; I cannot sufficiently admire their devotion, so, as they must be tired and hungry after their night's work, do you go and invite them to come in here, and set some gruel and a cup of wine before them."

So the councillor went out and said to Oishi Kuranosuké: "Sir, I am a councillor of the Prince of Sendai, and my master bids me beg you, as you must be worn out after all you have undergone, to come in and partake of such poor refreshment as we can offer you. This is my message to you from my lord."

"I thank you, sir," replied Kuranosuké. "It is very good of his lordship to trouble himself to think of us. We shall accept his kindness gratefully."

So the forty-seven Rônins went into the palace, and were feasted with gruel and wine, and all the retainers of the Prince of Sendai came and praised them.

Then Kuranosuké turned to the councillor and said, "Sir, we are truly indebted to you for this kind hospitality; but as we have still to hurry to Sengakuji, we must needs humbly take our leave." And, after returning many thanks to their hosts, they left the palace of the Prince of Sendai and hastened to Sengakuji, where they were met by the abbot of the monastery, who went to the front gate to receive them, and led them to the tomb of Takumi no Kami.

And when they came to their lord's grave, they took the head of Kôtsuké no Suké, and having washed it clean in a well hard by, laid it as an offering before the tomb. When they had done this, they engaged the priests of the temple to come and read prayers while they burnt incense: first Oishi Kuranosuké burnt incense, and then his son Oishi Chikara, and after them the other forty-five men performed the same ceremony. Then Kuranosuké, having given all the money that he had by him to the abbot, said—

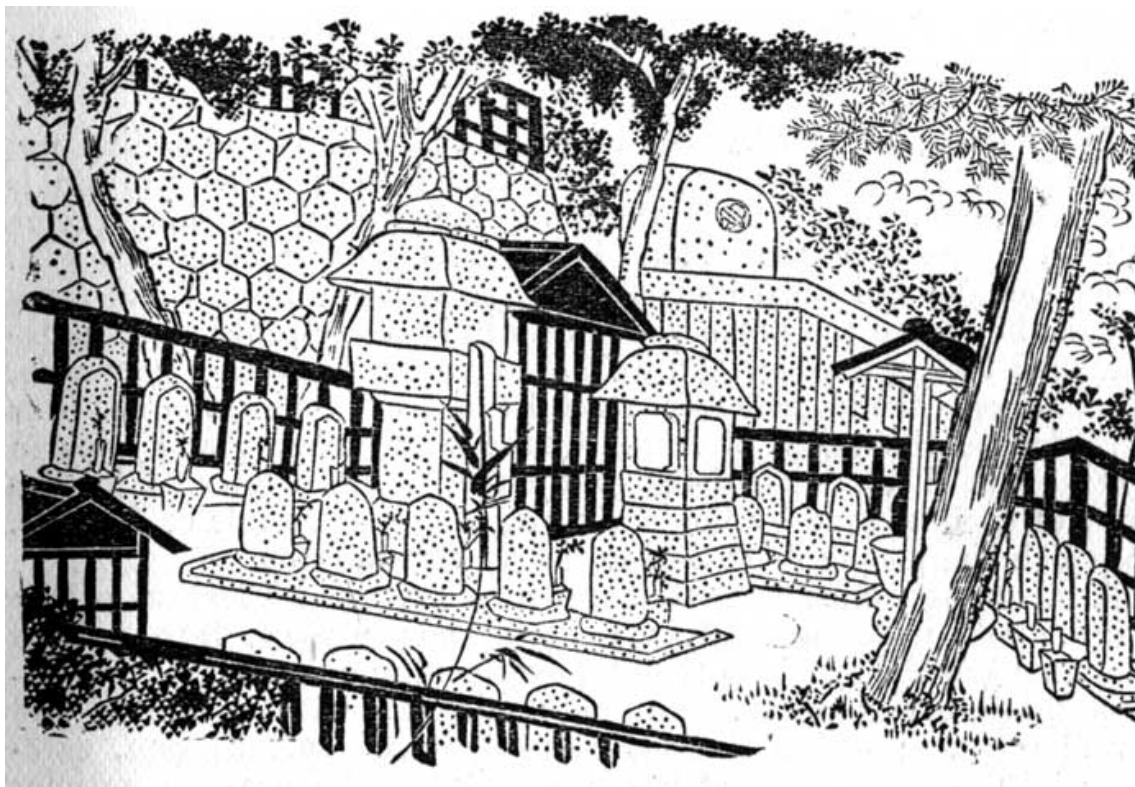
[pg 15]

"When we forty-seven men shall have performed *hara-kiri*, I beg you to bury us decently. I rely upon your kindness. This is but a trifle that I have to offer; such as it is, let it be spent in masses for our souls!"

And the abbot, marvelling at the faithful courage of the men, with tears in his eyes pledged himself to fulfil their wishes. So the forty-seven Rônins, with their minds at rest, waited patiently until they should receive the orders of the Government.

At last they were summoned to the Supreme Court, where the governors of Yedo and the public censors had assembled; and the sentence passed upon them was as follows: "Whereas, neither respecting the dignity of the city nor fearing the Government, having leagued yourselves together to slay your enemy, you violently broke into the house of Kira Kôtsuké no Suké by night and murdered him, the sentence of the Court is, that, for this audacious conduct, you perform *hara-kiri*." When the sentence had been read, the forty-seven Rônins were divided into four parties, and handed over to the safe keeping of four different daimios; and sheriffs were sent to the palaces of those daimios in whose presence the Rônins were made to perform *hara-kiri*. But, as from the very beginning they had all made up their minds that to this end they must come, they met their death nobly; and their corpses were carried to Sengakuji, and buried in front of the tomb of their master, Asano Takumi no Kami. And when the fame of this became noised abroad, the people flocked to pray at the graves of these faithful men.

[pg 16]



THE TOMBS OF THE RÔNINS.

Among those who came to pray was a Satsuma man, who, prostrating himself before the grave of Oishi Kuranosuké, said: "When I saw you lying drunk by the roadside at Yamashina, in Kiôto, I knew not that you were plotting to avenge your lord; and, thinking you to be a faithless man, I trampled on you and spat in your face as I passed. And now I have come to ask pardon and offer atonement for the insult of last year." With those words he prostrated himself again before the grave, and, drawing a dirk from his girdle, stabbed himself in the belly and died. And the chief priest of the temple, taking pity upon him, buried him by the side of the Rônins; and his tomb still remains to be seen with those of the forty-seven comrades.

This is the end of the story of the forty-seven Rônins.

A terrible picture of fierce heroism which it is impossible not to admire. In the Japanese mind this feeling of admiration is unmixed, and hence it is that the forty-seven Rônins receive almost divine honours. Pious hands still deck their graves with green boughs and burn incense upon them; the clothes and arms which they wore are preserved carefully in a fire-proof store-house attached to the temple, and exhibited yearly to admiring crowds, who behold them probably with little less veneration than is accorded to the relics of Aix-la-Chapelle or Trèves; and once in sixty years the monks of Sengakuji reap quite a harvest for the good of their temple by holding a commemorative fair or festival, to which the people flock during nearly two months.

A silver key once admitted me to a private inspection of the relics. We were ushered, my friend and myself, into a back apartment of the spacious temple, overlooking one of those marvellous miniature gardens, cunningly adorned with rockeries and dwarf trees, in which the Japanese delight. One by one, carefully labelled and indexed boxes containing the precious articles were brought out and opened by the chief priest. Such a curious medley of old rags and scraps of metal and wood! Home-made chain armour, composed of wads of leather secured together by pieces of iron, bear witness to the secrecy with which the Rônins made ready for the fight. To have bought armour would have attracted attention, so they made it with their own hands. Old moth-eaten surcoats, bits of helmets,

[pg 17]

three flutes, a writing-box that must have been any age at the time of the tragedy, and is now tumbling to pieces; tattered trousers of what once was rich silk brocade, now all unravelled and befringed; scraps of leather, part of an old gauntlet, crests and badges, bits of sword handles, spear-heads and dirks, the latter all red with rust, but with certain patches more deeply stained as if the fatal clots of blood were never to be blotted out: all these were reverently shown to us. Among the confusion and litter were a number of documents, Yellow with age and much worn at the folds. One was a plan of Kôtsuké no Suké's house, which one of the Rônins obtained by marrying the daughter of the builder who designed it. Three of the manuscripts appeared to me so curious that I obtained leave to have copies taken of them.

The first is the receipt given by the retainers of Kôtsuké no Suké's son in return for the head of their lord's father, which the priests restored to the family, and runs as follows:—

"MEMORANDUM:—

ITEM. ONE HEAD.

ITEM. ONE PAPER PARCEL.

The above articles are acknowledged to have been received.

Signed, {SAYADA MAGOBELI.(*Loc. sigill.*)

{ SAITÔ KUNAI.(*Loc. sigill.*)

"To the priests deputed from the Temple Sengakuji,

His Reverence SEKISHI,

His Reverence ICHIDON."

The second paper is a document explanatory of their conduct, a copy of which was found on the person of each of the forty-seven men:—

"Last year, in the third month, Asano Takumi no Kami, upon the occasion of the entertainment of the Imperial ambassador, was driven, by the force of circumstances, to attack and wound my Lord Kôtsuké no Suké in the castle, in order to avenge an insult offered to him. Having done this without considering the dignity of the place, and having thus disregarded all rules of propriety, he was condemned to *hara-kiri*, and his property and castle of Akô were forfeited to the State, and were delivered up by his retainers to the officers deputed by the Shogun to receive them. After this his followers were all dispersed. At the time of the quarrel the high officials present prevented Asano Takumi no Kami from carrying out his intention of killing his enemy, my Lord Kôtsuké no Suké. So Asano Takumi no Kami died without having avenged himself, and this was more than his retainers could endure. It is impossible to remain under the same heaven with the enemy of lord or father; for this reason we have dared to declare enmity against a personage of so exalted rank. This day we shall attack Kira Kôtsuké no Suké, in order to finish the deed of vengeance which was begun by our dead lord. If any honourable person should find our bodies after death, he is respectfully requested to open and read this document.

"15th year of Genroku. 12th month.

"Signed, OISHI KURANOSUKÉ, Retainer of Asano

Takumi no Kami, and forty-six others."⁶

The third manuscript is a paper which the Forty-seven Rônins laid upon the tomb of their master, together with the head of Kira Kôtsuké no Suké:—

"The 15th year of Genroku, the 12th month, and 15th day. We have come this day to do homage here, forty-seven men in all, from Oishi Kuranosuké down to the foot-soldier, Terasaka Kichiyémon, all cheerfully about to lay

[pg 18]

down our lives on your behalf. We reverently announce this to the honoured spirit of our dead master. On the 14th day of the third month of last year our honoured master was pleased to attack Kira Kôtsuké no Suké, for what reason we know not. Our honoured master put an end to his own life, but Kira Kôtsuké no Suké lived. Although we fear that after the decree issued by the Government this plot of ours will be displeasing to our honoured master, still we, who have eaten of your food, could not without blushing repeat the verse, 'Thou shalt not live under the same heaven nor tread the same earth with the enemy of thy father or lord,' nor could we have dared to leave hell and present ourselves before you in paradise, unless we had carried out the vengeance which you began. Every day that we waited seemed as three autumns to us. Verily, we have trodden the snow for one day, nay, for two days, and have tasted food but once. The old and decrepit, the sick and ailing, have come forth gladly to lay down their lives. Men might laugh at us, as at grasshoppers trusting in the strength of their arms, and thus shame our honoured lord; but we could not halt in our deed of vengeance. Having taken counsel together last night, we have escorted my Lord Kôtsuké no Suké hither to your tomb. This dirk,⁷ by which our honoured lord set great store last year, and entrusted to our care, we now bring back. If your noble spirit be now present before this tomb, we pray you, as a sign, to take the dirk, and, striking the head of your enemy with it a second time, to dispel your hatred for ever. This is the respectful statement of forty-seven men."

The text, "Thou shalt not live under the same heaven with the enemy of thy father," is based upon the Confucian books. Dr. Legge, in his "Life and Teachings of Confucius," p. 113, has an interesting paragraph summing up the doctrine of the sage upon the subject of revenge.

"In the second book of the 'Le Ke' there is the following passage:—'With the slayer of his father a man may not live under the same heaven; against the slayer of his brother a man must never have to go home to fetch a weapon; with the slayer of his friend a man may not live in the same State.' The *lex talionis* is here laid down in its fullest extent. The 'Chow Le' tells us of a provision made against the evil consequences of the principle by the appointment of a minister called 'The Reconciler.' The provision is very inferior to the cities of refuge which were set apart by Moses for the manslayer to flee to from the fury of the avenger. Such as it was, however, it existed, and it is remarkable that Confucius, when consulted on the subject, took no notice of it, but affirmed the duty of blood-revenge in the strongest and most unrestricted terms. His disciple, Tsze Hea, asked him, 'What course is to be pursued in the murder of a father or mother?' He replied, 'The son must sleep upon a matting of grass with his shield for his pillow; he must decline to take office; he must not live under the same heaven with the slayer. When he meets him in the market-place or the court, he must have his weapon ready to strike him.' 'And what is the course in the murder of a brother?' 'The surviving brother must not take office in the same State with the slayer; yet, if he go on his prince's service to the State where the slayer is, though he meet him, he must not fight with him.' 'And what is the course in the murder of an uncle or cousin?' 'In this case the nephew or cousin is not the principal. If the principal, on whom the revenge devolves, can take it, he has only to stand behind with his weapon in his hand, and support him.'"

[pg 19]

I will add one anecdote to show the sanctity which is attached to the graves of the Forty-seven. In the month of September 1868, a certain man came to pray before the grave of Oishi Chikara. Having finished his prayers, he deliberately performed *hara-kiri*,⁸ and, the belly wound not being mortal, dispatched himself by cutting his throat. Upon his person were found papers setting forth that, being a Rônin and without means of earning a living, he had petitioned to be allowed to enter the clan of the Prince of Chôshiu, which

he looked upon as the noblest clan in the realm; his petition having been refused, nothing remained for him but to die, for to be a Rônin was hateful to him, and he would serve no other master than the Prince of Chôshiu: what more fitting place could he find in which to put an end to his life than the graveyard of these Braves? This happened at about two hundred yards' distance from my house, and when I saw the spot an hour or two later, the ground was all bespattered with blood, and disturbed by the death-struggles of the man.

[pg 20]

THE LOVES OF GOMPACHI AND KOMURASAKI

Within two miles or so from Yedo, and yet well away from the toil and din of the great city, stands the village of Meguro. Once past the outskirts of the town, the road leading thither is bounded on either side by woodlands rich in an endless variety of foliage, broken at intervals by the long, low line of villages and hamlets. As we draw near to Meguro, the scenery, becoming more and more rustic, increases in beauty. Deep shady lanes, bordered by hedgerows as luxurious as any in England, lead down to a valley of rice fields bright with the emerald green of the young crops. To the right and to the left rise knolls of fantastic shape, crowned with a profusion of *Cryptomerias*, Scotch firs and other cone-bearing trees, and fringed with thickets of feathery bamboos, bending their stems gracefully to the light summer breeze. Wherever there is a spot shadier and pleasanter to look upon than the rest, there may be seen the red portal of a shrine which the simple piety of the country folk has raised to Inari Sama, the patron god of farming, or to some other tutelary deity of the place. At the eastern outlet of the valley a strip of blue sea bounds the horizon; westward are the distant mountains. In the foreground, in front of a farmhouse, snug-looking, with its roof of velvety-brown thatch, a troop of sturdy urchins, suntanned and stark naked, are frisking in the wildest gambols, all heedless of the scolding voice of the withered old grandam who sits spinning and minding the house, while her son and his wife are away toiling at some outdoor labour. Close at our feet runs a stream of pure water, in which a group of countrymen are washing the vegetables which they will presently shoulder and carry off to sell by auction in the suburbs of Yedo. Not the least beauty of the scene consists in the wondrous clearness of an atmosphere so transparent that the most distant outlines are scarcely dimmed, while the details of the nearer ground stand out in sharp, bold relief, now lit by the rays of a vertical sun, now darkened under the flying shadows thrown by the fleecy clouds which sail across the sky. Under such a heaven, what painter could limn the lights and shades which flit over the woods, the pride of Japan, whether in late autumn, when the russets and yellows of our own trees are mixed with the deep crimson glow of the maples, or in spring-time, when plum and cherry trees and wild camellias—giants, fifty feet high—are in full blossom?

All that we see is enchanting, but there is a strange stillness in the groves; rarely does the song of a bird break the silence; indeed, I know but one warbler whose note has any music in it, the *uguisu*, by some enthusiasts called the Japanese nightingale—at best, a king in the kingdom of the blind. The scarcity of animal life of all descriptions, man and mosquitoes alone excepted, is a standing wonder to the traveller; the sportsman must toil many a weary mile to get a shot at boar, or deer, or pheasant; and the plough of the farmer and the trap of the poacher, who works in and out of season, threaten to exterminate all wild creatures; unless, indeed, the Government should, as they threatened in the spring of 1869, put in force some adaptation of European game-laws. But they are lukewarm in the matter; a little hawking on a duck-pond satisfies the cravings of the modern Japanese sportsman, who knows that, game-laws or no game-laws, the wild fowl will never fail in winter; and the days are long past when my Lord the Shogun used to

[pg 21]

ride forth with a mighty company to the wild places about Mount Fuji, there camping out and hunting the boar, the deer, and the wolf, believing that in so doing he was fostering a manly and military spirit in the land.

There is one serious drawback to the enjoyment of the beauties of the Japanese country, and that is the intolerable affront which is continually offered to one's sense of smell; the whole of what should form the sewerage of the city is carried out on the backs of men and horses, to be thrown upon the fields; and, if you would avoid the overpowering nuisance, you must walk handkerchief in hand, ready to shut out the stench which assails you at every moment.

It would seem natural, while writing of the Japanese country, to say a few words about the peasantry, their relation to the lord of the soil, and their government. But these I must reserve for another place. At present our dealings are with the pretty village of Meguro.

At the bottom of a little lane, close to the entrance of the village, stands an old shrine of the Shintô (the form of hero-worship which existed in Japan before the introduction of Confucianism or of Buddhism), surrounded by lofty Cryptomerias. The trees around a Shintô shrine are specially under the protection of the god to whom the altar is dedicated; and, in connection with them, there is a kind of magic still respected by the superstitious, which recalls the waxen dolls, through the medium of which sorcerers of the middle ages in Europe, and indeed those of ancient Greece, as Theocritus tells us, pretended to kill the enemies of their clients. This is called *Ushi no toki mairi*, or "going to worship at the hour of the ox,"⁹ and is practised by jealous women who wish to be revenged upon their faithless lovers.

[pg 22]

When the world is at rest, at two in the morning, the hour of which the ox is the symbol, the woman rises; she dons a white robe and high sandals or clogs; her coif is a metal tripod, in which are thrust three lighted candles; around her neck she hangs a mirror, which falls upon her bosom; in her left hand she carries a small straw figure, the effigy of the lover who has abandoned her, and in her right she grasps a hammer and nails, with which she fastens the figure to one of the sacred trees that surround the shrine. There she prays for the death of the traitor, vowing that, if her petition be heard, she will herself pull out the nails which now offend the god by wounding the mystic tree. Night after night she comes to the shrine, and each night she strikes in two or more nails, believing that every nail will shorten her lover's life, for the god, to save his tree, will surely strike him dead.

Meguro is one of the many places round Yedo to which the good citizens flock for purposes convivial or religious, or both; hence it is that, cheek by jowl with the old shrines and temples, you will find many a pretty tea-house, standing at the rival doors of which Mesdemoiselles Sugar, Wave of the Sea, Flower, Seashore, and Chrysanthemum are pressing in their invitations to you to enter and rest. Not beautiful these damsels, if judged by our standard, but the charm of Japanese women lies in their manner and dainty little ways, and the tea-house girl, being a professional decoy-duck, is an adept in the art of flirting,—*en tout bien tout honneur*, be it remembered; for she is not to be confounded with the frail beauties of the Yoshiwara, nor even with her sisterhood near the ports open to foreigners, and to their corrupting influence. For, strange as it seems, our contact all over the East has an evil effect upon the natives.

In one of the tea-houses a thriving trade is carried on in the sale of wooden tablets, some six inches square, adorned with the picture of a pink cuttlefish on a bright blue ground. These are ex-votos, destined to be offered up at the Temple of Yakushi Niurai, the Buddhist Æsculapius, which stands opposite, and concerning the foundation of which the following legend is told.

In the days of old there was a priest called Jikaku, who at the age of forty years, it being the autumn of the tenth year of the period called Tenchô (A.D. 833), was suffering from

[pg 23]

disease of the eyes, which had attacked him three years before. In order to be healed from this disease he carved a figure of Yakushi Niurai, to which he used to offer up his prayers. Five years later he went to China, taking with him the figure as his guardian saint, and at a place called Kairetsu it protected him from robbers and wild beasts and from other calamities. There he passed his time in studying the sacred laws both hidden and revealed, and after nine years set sail to return to Japan. When he was on the high seas a storm arose, and a great fish attacked and tried to swamp the ship, so that the rudder and mast were broken, and the nearest shore being that of a land inhabited by devils, to retreat or to advance was equally dangerous. Then the holy man prayed to the patron saint whose image he carried, and as he prayed, behold the true Yakushi Niurai appeared in the centre of the ship, and said to him—

"Verily, thou hast travelled far that the sacred laws might be revealed for the salvation of many men; now, therefore, take my image, which thou carriest in thy bosom, and cast it into the sea, that the wind may abate, and that thou mayest be delivered from this land of devils."

The commands of the saints must be obeyed, so with tears in his eyes, the priest threw into the sea the sacred image which he loved. Then did the wind abate, and the waves were stilled, and the ship went on her course as though she were being drawn by unseen hands until she reached a safe haven. In the tenth month of the same year the priest again set sail, trusting to the power of his patron saint, and reached the harbour of Tsukushi without mishap. For three years he prayed that the image which he had cast away might be restored to him, until at last one night he was warned in a dream that on the sea-shore at Matsura Yakushi Niurai would appear to him. In consequence of this dream he went to the province of Hizen, and landed on the sea-shore at Hirato, where, in the midst of a blaze of light, the image which he had carved appeared to him twice, riding on the back of a cuttlefish. Thus was the image restored to the world by a miracle. In commemoration of his recovery from the disease of the eyes and of his preservation from the dangers of the sea, that these things might be known to all posterity, the priest established the worship of Tako Yakushi Niurai ("Yakushi Niurai of the Cuttlefish") and came to Meguro, where he built the Temple of Fudô Sama,¹⁰ another Buddhist divinity. At this time there was an epidemic of small-pox in the village, so that men fell down and died in the street, and the holy man prayed to Fudô Sama that the plague might be stayed. Then the god appeared to him, and said—

"The saint Yakushi Niurai of the Cuttlefish, whose image thou carriest, desires to have his place in this village, and he will heal this plague. Thou shalt, therefore, raise a temple to him here that not only this small-pox, but other diseases for future generations, may be cured by his power."

[pg 24]

Hearing this, the priest shed tears of gratitude, and having chosen a piece of fine wood, carved a large figure of his patron saint of the cuttlefish, and placed the smaller image inside of the larger, and laid it up in this temple, to which people still flock that they may be healed of their diseases.

Such is the story of the miracle, translated from a small ill-printed pamphlet sold by the priests of the temple, all the decorations of which, even to a bronze lantern in the middle of the yard, are in the form of a cuttlefish, the sacred emblem of the place.

What pleasanter lounge in which to while away a hot day could a man wish for than the shade of the trees borne by the hill on which stands the Temple of Fudô Sama? Two jets of pure water springing from the rock are voided by spouts carved in the shape of dragons into a stone basin enclosed by rails, within which it is written that "no woman may enter." If you are in luck, you may cool yourself by watching some devotee, naked save his loin-cloth, performing the ceremony called *Suigiyô*; that is to say, praying under the waterfall that his soul may be purified through his body. In winter it requires no small pluck to go through this penance, yet I have seen a penitent submit to it for more than a

quarter of an hour on a bitterly cold day in January. In summer, on the other hand, the religious exercise called *Hiyakudo*, or "the hundred times," which may also be seen here to advantage, is no small trial of patience. It consists in walking backwards and forwards a hundred times between two points within the sacred precincts, repeating a prayer each time. The count is kept either upon the fingers or by depositing a length of twisted straw each time that the goal is reached; at this temple the place allotted for the ceremony is between a grotesque bronze figure of Tengu Sama ("the Dog of Heaven"), the terror of children, a most hideous monster with a gigantic nose, which it is beneficial to rub with a finger afterwards to be applied to one's own nose, and a large brown box inscribed with the characters *Hiyaku Do* in high relief, which may generally be seen full of straw tallies. It is no sinecure to be a good Buddhist, for the gods are not lightly to be propitiated. Prayer and fasting, mortification of the flesh, abstinence from wine, from women, and from favourite dishes, are the only passports to rising in office, prosperity in trade, recovery from sickness, or a happy marriage with a beloved maiden. Nor will mere faith without works be efficient. A votive tablet of proportionate value to the favour prayed for, or a sum of money for the repairs of the shrine or temple, is necessary to win the favour of the gods. Poorer persons will cut off the queue of their hair and offer that up; and at Horinouchi, a temple in great renown some eight or nine miles from Yedo, there is a rope about two inches and a half in diameter and about six fathoms long, entirely made of human hair so given to the gods; it lies coiled up, dirty, moth-eaten, and uncared for, at one end of a long shed full of tablets and pictures, by the side of a rude native fire-engine. The taking of life being displeasing to Buddha, outside many of the temples old women and children earn a livelihood by selling sparrows, small eels, carp, and tortoises, which the worshipper sets free in honour of the deity, within whose territory cocks and hens and doves, tame and unharmed, perch on every jutting, frieze, buttress, and coigne of vantage.

[pg 25]

But of all the marvellous customs that I wot of in connection with Japanese religious exercises, none appears to me so strange as that of spitting at the images of the gods, more especially at the statues of the Ni-ô, the two huge red or red and green statues which, like Gog and Magog, emblems of strength, stand as guardians of the chief Buddhist temples. The figures are protected by a network of iron wire, through which the votaries, praying the while, spit pieces of paper, which they had chewed up into a pulp. If the pellet sticks to the statue, the omen is favourable; if it falls, the prayer is not accepted. The inside of the great bell at the Tycoon's burial-ground, and almost every holy statue throughout the country, are all covered with these outspittings from pious mouths.¹¹



THE TOMB OF THE SHIYOKU.

[pg 26]

Through all this discourse about temples and tea-houses, I am coming by degrees to the goal of our pilgrimage—two old stones, mouldering away in a rank, overgrown graveyard hard by, an old old burying-ground, forgotten by all save those who love to dig out the tales of the past. The key is kept by a ghoulish old dame, almost as time-worn and mildewed as the tomb over which she watches. Obedient to our call, and looking forward to a fee ten times greater than any native would give her, she hobbles out, and, opening the gate, points out the stone bearing the inscription, the "Tomb of the Shiyoku" (fabulous birds, which, living one within the other—a mysterious duality contained in one body—are the emblem of connubial love and fidelity). By this stone stands another, graven with a longer legend, which runs as follows:—

"In the old days of Genroku, she pined for the beauty of her lover, who was as fair to look upon as the flowers; and now beneath the moss of this old tombstone all has perished of her save her name. Amid the changes of a fitful world, this tomb is decaying under the dew and rain; gradually crumbling beneath its own dust, its outline alone remains. Stranger! bestow an alms to preserve this stone; and we, sparing neither pain nor labour, will second you with all our hearts. Erecting it again, let us preserve it from decay for future generations, and let us write the following verse upon it:—'These two birds, beautiful as the cherry-blossoms, perished before their time, like flowers broken down by the wind before they have borne seed.'"

Under the first stone is the dust of Gompachi, robber and murderer, mixed with that of his true love Komurasaki, who lies buried with him. Her sorrows and constancy have hallowed the place, and pious people still come to burn incense and lay flowers before the grave. How she loved him even in death may be seen from the following old-world story.

About two hundred and thirty years ago there lived in the service of a daimio of the province of Inaba a young man, called Shirai Gompachi, who, when he was but sixteen years of age, had already won a name for his personal beauty and valour, and for his skill in the use of arms. Now it happened that one day a dog belonging to him fought with another dog belonging to a fellow-clansman, and the two masters, being both passionate youths, disputing as to whose dog had had the best of the fight, quarrelled and came to blows, and Gompachi slew his adversary; and in consequence of this he was obliged to flee from his country, and make his escape to Yedo.

And so Gompachi set out on his travels.

[pg 27]

One night, weary and footsore, he entered what appeared to him to be a roadside inn, ordered some refreshment, and went to bed, little thinking of the danger that menaced him: for as luck would have it, this inn turned out to be the trysting-place of a gang of robbers, into whose clutches he had thus unwittingly fallen. To be sure, Gompachi's purse was but scantily furnished, but his sword and dirk were worth some three hundred ounces of silver, and upon these the robbers (of whom there were ten) had cast envious eyes, and had determined to kill the owner for their sake; but he, all unsuspecting, slept on in fancied security.

In the middle of the night he was startled from his deep slumbers by some one stealthily opening the sliding door which led into his room, and rousing himself with an effort, he beheld a beautiful young girl, fifteen years of age, who, making signs to him not to stir, came up to his bedside, and said to him in a whisper—

"Sir, the master of this house is the chief of a gang of robbers, who have been plotting to murder you this night for the sake of your clothes and your sword. As for me, I am the daughter of a rich merchant in Mikawa: last year the robbers came to our house, and carried off my father's treasure and myself. I pray you, sir, take me with you, and let us fly from this dreadful place."

She wept as she spoke, and Gompachi was at first too much startled to answer; but being a youth of high courage and a cunning fencer to boot, he soon recovered his presence of mind, and determined to kill the robbers, and to deliver the girl out of their hands. So he replied—

"Since you say so, I will kill these thieves, and rescue you this very night; only do you, when I begin the fight, run outside the house, that you may be out of harm's way, and remain in hiding until I join you."

Upon this understanding the maiden left him, and went her way. But he lay awake, holding his breath and watching; and when the thieves crept noiselessly into the room, where they supposed him to be fast asleep, he cut down the first man that entered, and stretched him dead at his feet. The other nine, seeing this, laid about them with their drawn swords, but Gompachi, fighting with desperation, mastered them at last, and slew them. After thus ridding himself of his enemies, he went outside the house and called to the girl, who came running to his side, and joyfully travelled on with him to Mikawa, where her father dwelt; and when they reached Mikawa, he took the maiden to the old man's house, and told him how, when he had fallen among thieves, his daughter had come to him in his hour of peril, and saved him out of her great pity; and how he, in return, rescuing her from her servitude, had brought her back to her home. When the old folks saw their daughter whom they had lost restored to them, they were beside themselves with joy, and shed tears for very happiness; and, in their gratitude, they pressed Gompachi to remain with them, and they prepared feasts for him, and entertained him hospitably: but their daughter, who had fallen in love with him for his beauty and knightly valour, spent her days in thinking of him, and of him alone. The young man, however, in spite of the kindness of the old merchant, who wished to adopt him as his son, and tried hard to persuade him to consent to this, was fretting to go to Yedo and take

[pg 29]

service as an officer in the household of some noble lord; so he resisted the entreaties of the father and the soft speeches of the daughter, and made ready to start on his journey; and the old merchant, seeing that he would not be turned from his purpose, gave him a parting gift of two hundred ounces of silver, and sorrowfully bade him farewell.



GOMPACHI AWAKENED BY THE MAIDEN IN THE ROBBERS' DEN.

But alas for the grief of the maiden, who sat sobbing her heart out and mourning over her lover's departure! He, all the while thinking more of ambition than of love, went to her and comforted her, and said: "Dry your eyes, sweetheart, and weep no more, for I shall soon come back to you. Do you, in the meanwhile, be faithful and true to me, and tend your parents with filial piety."

So she wiped away her tears and smiled again, when she heard him promise that he would soon return to her. And Gompachi went his way, and in due time came near to Yedo.

But his dangers were not yet over; for late one night, arriving at a place called Suzugamori, in the neighbourhood of Yedo, he fell in with six highwaymen, who attacked him, thinking to make short work of killing and robbing him. Nothing daunted, he drew his sword, and dispatched two out of the six; but, being weary and worn out with his long journey, he was sorely pressed, and the struggle was going hard with him, when a wardsman,¹² who happened to pass that way riding in a chair, seeing the affray, jumped down from his chair and drawing his dirk came to the rescue, and between them they put the robbers to flight.

Now it turned out that this kind tradesman, who had so happily come to the assistance of Gompachi, was no other than Chôbei of Bandzuin, the chief of the *Otokodaté*, or Friendly Society of the wardsmen of Yedo—a man famous in the annals of the city, whose life, exploits, and adventures are recited to this day, and form the subject of another tale.

When the highwaymen had disappeared, Gompachi, turning to his deliverer, said—

"I know not who you may be, sir, but I have to thank you for rescuing me from a great danger."

And as he proceeded to express his gratitude, Chôbei replied—

"I am but a poor wardsman, a humble man in my way, sir; and if the robbers ran away, it was more by good luck than owing to any merit of mine. But I am filled with admiration at the way you fought; you displayed a courage and a skill that were beyond your years, sir."

[pg 30]

"Indeed," said the young man, smiling with pleasure at hearing himself praised; "I am still young and inexperienced, and am quite ashamed of my bungling style of fencing."

"And now may I ask you, sir, whither you are bound?"

"That is almost more than I know myself, for I am a *rônin*, and have no fixed purpose in view."

"That is a bad job," said Chôbei, who felt pity for the lad. "However, if you will excuse my boldness in making such an offer, being but a wardsman, until you shall have taken service I would fain place my poor house at your disposal."

Gompachi accepted the offer of his new but trusty friend with thanks; so Chôbei led him to his house, where he lodged him and hospitably entertained him for some months. And now Gompachi, being idle and having nothing to care for, fell into bad ways, and began to lead a dissolute life, thinking of nothing but gratifying his whims and passions; he took to frequenting the Yoshiwara, the quarter of the town which is set aside for tea-houses and other haunts of wild young men, where his handsome face and figure attracted attention, and soon made him a great favourite with all the beauties of the neighbourhood.

About this time men began to speak loud in praise of the charms of Komurasaki, or "Little Purple," a young girl who had recently come to the Yoshiwara, and who in beauty and accomplishments outshone all her rivals. Gompachi, like the rest of the world, heard so much of her fame that he determined to go to the house where she dwelt, at the sign of "The Three Sea-coasts," and judge for himself whether she deserved all that men said of her. Accordingly he set out one day, and having arrived at "The Three Sea-coasts," asked to see Komurasaki; and being shown into the room where she was sitting, advanced towards her; but when their eyes met, they both started back with a cry of astonishment, for this Komurasaki, the famous beauty of the Yoshiwara, proved to be the very girl whom several months before Gompachi had rescued from the robbers' den, and restored to her parents in Mikawa. He had left her in prosperity and affluence, the darling child of a rich father, when they had exchanged vows of love and fidelity; and now they met in a common stew in Yedo. What a change! what a contrast! How had the riches turned to rust, the vows to lies!

"What is this?" cried Gompachi, when he had recovered from his surprise. "How is it that I find you here pursuing this vile calling, in the Yoshiwara? Pray explain this to me, for there is some mystery beneath all this which I do not understand."

But Komurasaki—who, having thus unexpectedly fallen in with her lover that she had yearned for, was divided between joy and shame—answered, weeping—

"Alas! my tale is a sad one, and would be long to tell. After you left us last year, calamity and reverses fell upon our house; and when my parents became poverty-stricken, I was at my wits' end to know how to support them: so I sold this wretched body of mine to the master of this house, and sent the money to my father and mother; but, in spite of this, troubles and misfortunes multiplied upon them, and now, at last, they have died of misery and grief. And, oh! lives there in this wide world so unhappy a wretch as I! But now that I have met you again—you who are so strong—help me who am weak. You saved me once—do not, I implore you, desert me now!!" and as she told her piteous tale the tears streamed from her eyes.

[pg 31]

"This is, indeed, a sad story," replied Gompachi, much affected by the recital. "There must have been a wonderful run of bad luck to bring such misfortune upon your house, which but a little while ago I recollect so prosperous. However, mourn no more, for I will not forsake you. It is true that I am too poor to redeem you from your servitude, but at any rate I will contrive so that you shall be tormented no more. Love me, therefore, and put your trust in me." When she heard him speak so kindly she was comforted, and wept no more, but poured out her whole heart to him, and forgot her past sorrows in the great joy of meeting him again.

When it became time for them to separate, he embraced her tenderly and returned to Chôbei's house; but he could not banish Komurasaki from his mind, and all day long he thought of her alone; and so it came about that he went daily to the Yoshiwara to see her, and if any accident detained him, she, missing the accustomed visit, would become anxious and write to him to inquire the cause of his absence. At last, pursuing this course of life, his stock of money ran short, and as, being a *rônin* and without any fixed employment, he had no means of renewing his supplies, he was ashamed of showing himself penniless at "The Three Sea-coasts." Then it was that a wicked spirit arose within him, and he went out and murdered a man, and having robbed him of his money carried it to the Yoshiwara.

From bad to worse is an easy step, and the tiger that has once tasted blood is dangerous. Blinded and infatuated by his excessive love, Gompachi kept on slaying and robbing, so that, while his outer man was fair to look upon, the heart within him was that of a hideous devil. At last his friend Chôbei could no longer endure the sight of him, and turned him out of his house; and as, sooner or later, virtue and vice meet with their reward, it came to pass that Gompachi's crimes became notorious, and the Government having set spies upon his track, he was caught red-handed and arrested; and his evil deeds having been fully proved against him, he was carried off to the execution ground at Suzugamori, the "Bell Grove," and beheaded as a common male-factor.

Now when Gompachi was dead, Chôbei's old affection for the young man returned, and, being a kind and pious man, he went and claimed his body and head, and buried him at Meguro, in the grounds of the Temple called Boronji.

[pg 32]

When Komurasaki heard the people at Yoshiwara gossiping about her lover's end, her grief knew no bounds, so she fled secretly from "The Three Sea-coasts," and came to Meguro and threw herself upon the newly-made grave. Long she prayed and bitterly she wept over the tomb of him whom, with all his faults, she had loved so well, and then, drawing a dagger from her girdle, she plunged it in her breast and died. The priests of the temple, when they saw what had happened, wondered greatly and were astonished at the loving faithfulness of this beautiful girl, and taking compassion on her, they laid her side by side with Gompachi in one grave, and over the grave they placed a stone which remains to this day, bearing the inscription "The Tomb of the Shiyoku." And still the people of Yedo visit the place, and still they praise the beauty of Gompachi and the filial piety and fidelity of Komurasaki.

Let us linger for a moment longer in the old graveyard. The word which I have translated a few lines above as "loving faithfulness" means literally "chastity." When Komurasaki sold herself to supply the wants of her ruined parents, she was not, according to her lights, forfeiting her claim to virtue. On the contrary, she could perform no greater act of filial piety, and, so far from incurring reproach among her people, her self-sacrifice would be worthy of all praise in their eyes. This idea has led to grave misunderstanding abroad, and indeed no phase of Japanese life has been so misrepresented as this. I have heard it stated, and seen it printed, that it is no disgrace for a respectable Japanese to sell his daughter, that men of position and family often choose their wives from such places as "The Three Sea-coasts," and that up to the time of her marriage the conduct of a young girl is a matter of no importance whatever. Nothing could be more unjust or more untrue. It is only the neediest people that sell their children to be waitresses, singers, or

prostitutes. It does occasionally happen that the daughter of a *Samurai*, or gentleman, is found in a house of ill-fame, but such a case could only occur at the death or utter ruin of the parents, and an official investigation of the matter has proved it to be so exceptional, that the presence of a young lady in such a place is an enormous attraction, her superior education and accomplishments shedding a lustre over the house. As for gentlemen marrying women of bad character, are not such things known in Europe? Do ladies of the *demi-monde* never make good marriages? *Mésalliances* are far rarer in Japan than with us. Certainly among the lowest class of the population such, marriages may occasionally occur, for it often happens that a woman can lay by a tempting dowry out of her wretched earnings-, but amongst the gentry of the country they are unknown.

[pg 33]

And yet a girl is not disgraced if for her parents' sake she sells herself to a life of misery so great, that, when a Japanese enters a house of ill-fame, he is forced to leave his sword and dirk at the door for two reasons—first, to prevent brawling; secondly, because it is known that some of the women inside so loathe their existence that they would put an end to it, could they get hold of a weapon.

It is a curious fact that in all the Daimio's castle-towns, with the exception of some which are also seaports, open prostitution is strictly forbidden, although, if report speaks truly, public morality rather suffers than gains by the prohibition.

The misapprehension which exists upon the subject of prostitution in Japan may be accounted for by the fact that foreign writers, basing their judgment upon the vice of the open ports, have not hesitated to pronounce the Japanese women unchaste. As fairly might a Japanese, writing about England, argue from the street-walkers of Portsmouth or Plymouth to the wives, sisters, and daughters of these very authors. In some respects the gulf fixed between virtue and vice in Japan is even greater than in England. The Eastern courtesan is confined to a certain quarter of the town, and distinguished by a peculiarly gaudy costume, and by a head-dress which consists of a forest of light tortoiseshell hair-pins, stuck round her head like a saint's glory—a glory of shame which a modest woman would sooner die than wear. Vice jostling virtue in the public places; virtue imitating the fashions set by vice, and buying trinkets or furniture at the sale of vice's effects—these are social phenomena which the East knows not.

[pg 34]

The custom prevalent among the lower orders of bathing in public bath-houses without distinction of the sexes, is another circumstance which has tended to spread abroad very false notions upon the subject of the chastity of the Japanese women. Every traveller is shocked by it, and every writer finds in it matter for a page of pungent description. Yet it is only those who are so poor (and they must be poor indeed) that they cannot afford a bath at home, who, at the end of their day's work, go to the public bath-house to refresh themselves before sitting down to their evening meal: having been used to the scene from their childhood, they see no indelicacy in it; it is a matter of course, and *honi soit qui mal y pense*: certainly there is far less indecency and immorality resulting from this public bathing, than from the promiscuous herding together of all sexes and ages which disgraces our own lodging-houses in the great cities, and the hideous hovels in which some of our labourers have to pass their lives; nor can it be said that there is more confusion of sexes amongst the lowest orders in Japan than in Europe. Speaking upon the subject once with a Japanese gentleman, I observed that we considered it an act of indecency for men and women to wash together. He shrugged his shoulders as he answered, "But then Westerns have such prurient minds." Some time ago, at the open port of Yokohama, the Government, out of deference to the prejudices of foreigners, forbade the men and women to bathe together, and no doubt this was the first step towards putting down the practice altogether: as for women tubbing in the open streets of Yedo, I have read of such things in books written by foreigners; but during a residence of three years and a half, in which time I crossed and recrossed every part of the great city at all hours of the day, I never once saw such a sight. I believe myself that it can only be seen at certain hot mineral springs in remote country districts.

The best answer to the general charge of immorality which has been brought against the Japanese women during their period of unmarried life, lies in the fact that every man who can afford to do so keeps the maidens of his family closely guarded in the strictest seclusion. The daughter of poverty, indeed, must work and go abroad, but not a man is allowed to approach the daughter of a gentleman; and she is taught that if by accident any insult should be offered to her, the knife which she carries at her girdle is meant for use, and not merely as a badge of her rank. Not long ago a tragedy took place in the house of one of the chief nobles in Yedo. One of My Lady's tire-women, herself a damsel of gentle blood, and gifted with rare beauty, had attracted the attention of a retainer in the palace, who fell desperately in love with her. For a long time the strict rules of decorum by which she was hedged in prevented him from declaring his passion; but at last he contrived to gain access to her presence, and so far forgot himself, that she, drawing her poniard, stabbed him in the eye, so that he was carried off fainting, and presently died. The girl's declaration, that the dead man had attempted to insult her, was held to be sufficient justification of her deed, and, instead of being blamed, she was praised and extolled for her valour and chastity. As the affair had taken place within the four walls of a powerful noble, there was no official investigation into the matter, with which the authorities of the palace were competent to deal. The truth of this story was vouched for by two or three persons whose word I have no reason to doubt, and who had themselves been mixed up in it; I can bear witness that it is in complete harmony with Japanese ideas; and certainly it seems more just that Lucretia should kill Tarquin than herself.

The better the Japanese people come to be known and understood, the more, I am certain, will it be felt that a great injustice has been done them in the sweeping attacks which have been made upon their women. Writers are agreed, I believe, that their matrons are, as a rule, without reproach. If their maidens are chaste, as I contend that from very force of circumstances they cannot help being, what becomes of all these charges of vice and immodesty? Do they not rather recoil upon the accusers, who would appear to have studied the Japanese woman only in the harlot of Yokohama?

Having said so much, I will now try to give some account of the famous Yoshiwara¹³ of Yedo, to which frequent allusion will have to be made in the course of these tales.

[pg 35]

At the end of the sixteenth century the courtesans of Yedo lived in three special places: these were the street called Kôji-machi, in which dwelt the women who came from Kiôto; the Kamakura Street, and a spot opposite the great bridge, in which last two places lived women brought from Suruga. Besides these there afterwards came women from Fushimi and from Nara, who lodged scattered here and there throughout the town. This appears to have scandalized a certain reformer, named Shôji Jinyémon, who, in the year 1612, addressed a memorial to the Government, petitioning that the women who lived in different parts of the town should be collected in one "Flower Quarter." His petition was granted in the year 1617, and he fixed upon a place called Fukiyacho, which, on account of the quantities of rushes which grew there, was named *Yoshi-Wara*, or the rush-moor, a name which now-a-days, by a play upon the word *yoshi*, is written with two Chinese characters, signifying the "good," or "lucky moor." The place was divided into four streets, called the Yedo Street, the Second Yedo Street, the Kiôto Street, and the Second Kiôto Street.

In the eighth month of the year 1655, when Yedo was beginning to increase in size and importance, the Yoshiwara, preserving its name, was transplanted bodily to the spot which it now occupies at the northern end of the town. And the streets in it were named after the places from which the greater number of their inhabitants originally came, as the "Sakai Street," the "Fushimi Street," &c.

The official Guide to the Yoshiwara for 1869 gives a return of 153 brothels, containing 3,289 courtesans of all classes, from the *Oiran*, or proud beauty, who, dressed up in gorgeous brocade of gold and silver, with painted face and gilded lips, and with her teeth fashionably blacked, has all the young bloods of Yedo at her feet, down to the humble

Shinzo, or white-toothed woman, who rots away her life in the common stews. These figures do not, however, represent the whole of the prostitution of Yedo; the Yoshiwara is the chief, but not the only, abiding-place of the public women. At Fukagawa there is another Flower District, built upon the same principle as the Yoshiwara; while at Shinagawa, Shinjiku, Itabashi, Senji, and Kadzukkappara, the hotels contain women who, nominally only waitresses, are in reality prostitutes. There are also women called *Jigoku-Omna*, or hell-women, who, without being borne on the books of any brothel, live in their own houses, and ply their trade in secret. On the whole, I believe the amount of prostitution in Yedo to be wonderfully small, considering the vast size of the city.

[pg 36]

There are 394 tea-houses in the Yoshiwara, which are largely used as places of assignation, and which on those occasions are paid, not by the visitors frequenting them, but by the keepers of the brothels. It is also the fashion to give dinners and drinking-parties at these houses, for which the services of *Taikomochi*, or jesters, among whom there are thirty-nine chief celebrities, and of singing and dancing girls, are retained. The Guide to the Yoshiwara gives a list of fifty-five famous singing-girls, besides a host of minor stars. These women are not to be confounded with the courtesans. Their conduct is very closely watched by their masters, and they always go out to parties in couples or in bands, so that they may be a check upon one another. Doubtless, however, in spite of all precautions, the shower of gold does from time to time find its way to Danaë's lap; and to be the favoured lover of a fashionable singer or dancer is rather a feather in the cap of a fast young Japanese gentleman. The fee paid to singing-girls for performing during a space of two hours is one shilling and fourpence each; for six hours the fee is quadrupled, and it is customary to give the girls a *hana*, or present, for themselves, besides their regular pay, which goes to the master of the troupe to which they belong.

Courtesans, singing women, and dancers are bought by contractors, either as children, when they are educated for their calling, or at a more advanced age, when their accomplishments and charms render them desirable investments. The engagement is never made life-long, for once past the flower of their youth the poor creatures would be mere burthens upon their masters; a courtesan is usually bought until she shall have reached the age of twenty-seven, after which she becomes her own property. Singers remain longer in harness, but even they rarely work after the age of thirty, for Japanese women, like Italians, age quickly, and have none of that intermediate stage between youth and old age, which seems to be confined to countries where there is a twilight.

Children destined to be trained as singers are usually bought when they are five or six years old, a likely child fetching from about thirty-five to fifty shillings; the purchaser undertakes the education of his charge, and brings the little thing up as his own child. The parents sign a paper absolving him from all responsibility in case of sickness or accident; but they know that their child will be well treated and cared for, the interests of the buyer being their material guarantee. Girls of fifteen or upwards who are sufficiently accomplished to join a company of singers fetch ten times the price paid for children; for in their case there is no risk and no expense of education.

[pg 37]

Little children who are bought for purposes of prostitution at the age of five or six years fetch about the same price as those that are bought to be singers. During their novitiate they are employed to wait upon the *Oiran*, or fashionable courtesans, in the capacity of little female pages (*Kamuro*). They are mostly the children of distressed persons, or orphans, whom their relatives cruelly sell rather than be at the expense and trouble of bringing them up. Of the girls who enter the profession later in life, some are orphans, who have no other means of earning a livelihood; others sell their bodies out of filial piety, that they may succour their sick or needy parents; others are married women, who enter the Yoshiwara to supply the wants of their husbands; and a very small proportion is recruited from girls who have been seduced and abandoned, perhaps sold, by faithless lovers.

The time to see the Yoshiwara to the best advantage is just after nightfall, when the lamps are lighted. Then it is that the women—who for the last two hours have been engaged in gilding their lips and painting their eyebrows black, and their throats and bosoms a snowy white, carefully leaving three brown Van-dyke-collar points where the back of the head joins the neck, in accordance with one of the strictest rules of Japanese cosmetic science—leave the back rooms, and take their places, side by side, in a kind of long narrow cage, the wooden bars of which open on to the public thoroughfare. Here they sit for hours, gorgeous in dresses of silk and gold and silver embroidery, speechless and motionless as wax figures, until they shall have attracted the attention of some of the passers-by, who begin to throng the place. At Yokohama indeed, and at the other open ports, the women of the Yoshiwara are loud in their invitations to visitors, frequently relieving the monotony of their own language by some blasphemous term of endearment picked up from British and American seamen; but in the Flower District at Yedo, and wherever Japanese customs are untainted, the utmost decorum prevails. Although the shape which vice takes is ugly enough, still it has this merit, that it is unobtrusive. Never need the pure be contaminated by contact with the impure; he who goes to the Yoshiwara, goes there knowing full well what he will find, but the virtuous man may live through his life without having this kind of vice forced upon his sight. Here again do the open ports contrast unfavourably with other places: Yokohama at night is as leprous a place as the London Haymarket.¹⁴

A public woman or singer on entering her profession assumes a *nom de guerre*, by which she is known until her engagement is at an end. Some of these names are so pretty and quaint that I will take a few specimens from the *Yoshiwara Saiken*, the guidebook upon which this notice is based. "Little Pine," "Little Butterfly," "Brightness of the Flowers," "The Jewel River," "Gold Mountain," "Pearl Harp," "The Stork that lives a Thousand Years," "Village of Flowers," "Sea Beach," "The Little Dragon," "Little Purple," "Silver," "Chrysanthemum," "Waterfall," "White Brightness," "Forest of Cherries,"—these and a host of other quaint conceits are the one prettiness of a very foul place.

[pg 38]

KAZUMA'S REVENGE

It is a law that he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword. In Japan, where there exists a large armed class over whom there is practically little or no control, party and clan broils, and single quarrels ending in bloodshed and death, are matters of daily occurrence; and it has been observed that Edinburgh in the olden time, when the clansmen, roistering through the streets at night, would pass from high words to deadly blows, is perhaps the best European parallel of modern Yedo or Kiôto.

It follows that of all his possessions the Samurai sets most store by his sword, his constant companion, his ally, defensive and offensive. The price of a sword by a famous maker reaches a high sum: a Japanese noble will sometimes be found girding on a sword, the blade of which unmounted is worth from six hundred to a thousand riyos, say from £200 to £300, and the mounting, rich in cunning metal work, will be of proportionate value. These swords are handed down as heirlooms from father to son, and become almost a part of the wearer's own self. Iyéyasu, the founder of the last dynasty of Shoguns, wrote in his Legacy,¹⁵ a code of rules drawn up for the guidance of his successors and their advisers in the government, "The girded sword is the living soul of the Samurai. In the case of a Samurai forgetting his sword, act as is appointed: it may not be overlooked."

The occupation of a swordsmith is an honourable profession, the members of which are men of gentle blood. In a country where trade is looked down upon as degrading, it is strange to find this single exception to the general rule. The traditions of the craft are many and curious. During the most critical moment of the forging of the sword, when the steel edge is being welded into the body of the iron blade, it is a custom which still obtains among old-fashioned armourers to put on the cap and robes worn by the Kugé, or nobles of the Mikado's court, and, closing the doors of the workshop, to labour in secrecy and freedom from interruption, the half gloom adding to the mystery of the operation. Sometimes the occasion is even invested with a certain sanctity, a tasselled cord of straw, such as is hung before the shrines of the Kami, or native gods of Japan, being suspended between two bamboo poles in the forge, which for the nonce is converted into a holy altar.

[pg 39]

At Osaka, I lived opposite to one Kusano Yoshiaki, a swordsmith, a most intelligent and amiable gentleman, who was famous throughout his neighbourhood for his good and charitable deeds. His idea was that, having been bred up to a calling which trades in life and death, he was bound, so far as in him lay, to atone for this by seeking to alleviate the suffering which is in the world; and he carried out his principle to the extent of impoverishing himself. No neighbour ever appealed to him in vain for help in tending the sick or burying the dead. No beggar or lazar was ever turned from his door without receiving some mark of his bounty, whether in money or in kind. Nor was his scrupulous honesty less remarkable than his charity. While other smiths are in the habit of earning large sums of money by counterfeiting the marks of the famous makers of old, he was able to boast that he had never turned out a weapon which bore any other mark than his own. From his father and his forefathers he inherited his trade, which, in his turn, he will hand over to his son—a hard-working, honest, and sturdy man, the clank of whose hammer and anvil may be heard from daybreak to sundown.



FORGING THE SWORD.

[pg 40]

The trenchant edge of the Japanese sword is notorious. It is said that the best blades will in the hands of an expert swordsman cut through the dead bodies of three men, laid one upon the other, at a blow. The swords of the Shogun used to be tried upon the corpses of executed criminals; the public headsman was entrusted with the duty, and for a "nose medicine," or bribe of two bus (about three shillings), would substitute the weapon of a private individual for that of his Lord. Dogs and beggars, lying helpless by the roadside, not unfrequently serve to test a ruffian's sword; but the executioner earns many a fee from those who wish to see how their blades will cut off a head.

The statesman who shall enact a law forbidding the carrying of this deadly weapon will indeed have deserved well of his country; but it will be a difficult task to undertake, and a dangerous one. I would not give much for that man's life. The hand of every swashbuckler in the empire would be against him. One day as we were talking over this and other kindred subjects, a friend of mine, a man of advanced and liberal views, wrote down his opinion, *more Japonico*, in a verse of poetry which ran as follows:—"I would that all the swords and dirks in the country might be collected in one place and molten down, and that, from the metal so produced, one huge sword might be forged, which, being the only blade left, should be the girded sword of Great Japan."

The following history is in more senses than one a "Tale of a Sword."

About two hundred and fifty years ago Ikéda Kunaishôyu was Lord of the Province of Inaba. Among his retainers were two gentlemen, named Watanabé Yukiyé and Kawai Matazayémon, who were bound together by strong ties of friendship, and were in the habit of frequently visiting at one another's houses. One day Yukiyé was sitting conversing with Matazayémon in the house of the latter, when, on a sudden, a sword that was lying in the raised part of the room caught his eye. As he saw it, he started and said

"Pray tell me, how came you by that sword?"

"Well, as you know, when my Lord Ikéda followed my Lord Tokugawa Iyéyasu to fight at Nagakudé, my father went in his train; and it was at the battle of Nagakudé that he picked up this sword."

"My father went too, and was killed in the fight, and this sword, which was an heirloom in our family for many generations, was lost at that time. As it is of great value in my eyes, I do wish that, if you set no special store by it, you would have the great kindness to return it to me."

"That is a very easy matter, and no more than what one friend should do by another. Pray take it."

Upon this Yukiyé gratefully took the sword, and having carried it home put it carefully away.

[pg 41]

At the beginning of the ensuing year Matazayémon fell sick and died, and Yukiyé, mourning bitterly for the loss of his good friend, and anxious to requite the favour which he had received in the matter of his father's sword, did many acts of kindness to the dead man's son—a young man twenty-two years of age, named Matagorô.

Now this Matagorô was a base-hearted cur, who had begrudged the sword that his father had given to Yukiyé, and complained publicly and often that Yukiyé had never made any present in return; and in this way Yukiyé got a bad name in my Lord's palace as a stingy and illiberal man.

But Yukiyé had a son, called Kazuma, a youth sixteen years of age, who served as one of the Prince's pages of honour. One evening, as he and one of his brother pages were talking together, the latter said—

"Matagorô is telling everybody that your father accepted a handsome sword from him and never made him any present in return, and people are beginning to gossip about it."

"Indeed," replied the other, "my father received that sword from Matagorô's father as a mark of friendship and good-will, and, considering that it would be an insult to send a present of money in return, thought to return the favour by acts of kindness towards Matagorô. I suppose it is money he wants."

When Kazuma's service was over, he returned home, and went to his father's room to tell him the report that was being spread in the palace, and begged him to send an ample present of money to Matagorô. Yukryé reflected for a while, and said—

"You are too young to understand the right line of conduct in such matters. Matagorô's father and myself were very close friends; so, seeing that he had ungrudgingly given me back the sword of my ancestors, I, thinking to requite his kindness at his death, rendered important services to Matagorô. It would be easy to finish the matter by sending a present of money; but I had rather take the sword and return it than be under an obligation to this mean churl, who knows not the laws which regulate the intercourse and dealings of men of gentle blood."

So Yukiyé, in his anger, took the sword to Matagorô's house, and said to him—

"I have come to your house this night for no other purpose than to restore to you the sword which your father gave me;" and with this he placed the sword before Matagorô.

"Indeed," replied the other, "I trust that you will not pain me by returning a present which my father made you."

"Amongst men of gentle birth," said Yukiyé, laughing scornfully, "it is the custom to requite presents, in the first place by kindness, and afterwards by a suitable gift offered with a free heart. But it is no use talking to such as you, who are ignorant of the first principles of good breeding; so I have the honour to give you back the sword."

As Yukiyé went on bitterly to reprove Matagorô, the latter waxed very wroth, and, being a ruffian, would have killed Yukiyé on the spot; but he, old man as he was, was a skilful swordsman, so Matagorô, craven-like, determined to wait until he could attack him unawares. Little suspecting any treachery, Yukiyé started to return home, and Matagorô, under the pretence of attending him to the door, came behind him with his sword drawn and cut him in the shoulder. The older man, turning round, drew and defended himself; but having received a severe wound in the first instance, he fainted away from loss of blood, and Matagorô slew him.

The mother of Matagorô, startled by the noise, came out; and when she saw what had been done, she was afraid, and said—"Passionate man! what have you done? You are a murderer; and now your life will be forfeit. What terrible deed is this!"

"I have killed him now, and there's nothing to be done. Come, mother, before the matter becomes known, let us fly together from this house."

"I will follow you; do you go and seek out my Lord Abé Shirogorô, a chief among the Hatamotos,¹⁶ who was my foster-child. You had better fly to him for protection, and remain in hiding."

So the old woman persuaded her son to make his escape, and sent him to the palace of Shirogorô.

Now it happened that at this time the Hatamotos had formed themselves into a league against the powerful Daimios; and Abé Shirogorô, with two other noblemen, named Kondô Noborinosuké and Midzuno Jiurozayémon, was at the head of the league. It

followed, as a matter of course, that his forces were frequently recruited by vicious men, who had no means of gaining their living, and whom he received and entreated kindly without asking any questions as to their antecedents; how much the more then, on being applied to for an asylum by the son of his own foster-mother, did he willingly extend his patronage to him, and guarantee him against all danger. So he called a meeting of the principal Hatamotos, and introduced Matagorô to them, saying—"This man is a retainer of Ikéda Kunaishôyu, who, having cause of hatred against a man named Watanabé Yukiyé, has slain him, and has fled to me for protection; this man's mother suckled me when I was an infant, and, right or wrong, I will befriend him. If, therefore, Ikéda Kunaishôyu should send to require me to deliver him up, I trust that you will one and all put forth your strength and help me to defend him."

"Ay! that will we, with pleasure!" replied Kondô Noborinosuké. "We have for some time had cause to complain of the scorn with which the Daimios have treated us. Let Ikéda Kunaishôyu send to claim this man, and we will show him the power of the Hatamotos."

All the other Hatamotos, with one accord, applauded this determination, and made ready their force for an armed resistance, should my Lord Kunaishôyu send to demand the surrender of Matagorô. But the latter remained as a welcome guest in the house of Abé Shirogorô.

[pg 44]



MATAGORÔ KILLS YUKIYÉ.

Now when Watanabé Kazuma saw that, as the night advanced, his father Yukiyé did not return home, he became anxious, and went to the house of Matagorô to seek for him, and finding to his horror that he was murdered, fell upon the corpse and, embraced it, weeping. On a sudden, it flashed across him that this must assuredly be the handiwork of Matagorô; so he rushed furiously into the house, determined to kill his father's murderer upon the spot. But Matagorô had already fled, and he found only the mother, who was making her preparations for following her son to the house of Abé Shirogorô: so he bound the old woman, and searched all over the house for her son; but, seeing that his search was fruitless, he carried off the mother, and handed her over to one of the elders of the clan, at the same time laying information against Matagorô as his father's murderer. When the affair was reported to the Prince, he was very angry, and ordered that the old woman should remain bound and be cast into prison until the whereabouts of her son should be discovered. Then Kazuma buried his father's corpse with great pomp, and the widow and the orphan mourned over their loss.

It soon became known amongst the people of Abé Shirogorô that the mother of Matagorô had been imprisoned for her son's crime, and they immediately set about planning her rescue; so they sent to the palace of my Lord Kunaishôyu a messenger, who, when he was introduced to the councillor of the Prince, said—

"We have heard that, in consequence of the murder of Yukiyé, my lord has been pleased to imprison the mother of Matagorô. Our master Shirogorô has arrested the criminal, and will deliver him up to you. But the mother has committed no crime, so we pray that she may be released from a cruel imprisonment: she was the foster-mother of our master, and he would fain intercede to save her life. Should you consent to this, we, on our side, will give up the murderer, and hand him over to you in front of our master's gate to-morrow."

The councillor repeated this message to the Prince, who, in his pleasure at being able to give Kazuma his revenge on the morrow, immediately agreed to the proposal, and the messenger returned triumphant at the success of the scheme. On the following day, the Prince ordered the mother of Matagorô to be placed in a litter and carried to the Hatamoto's dwelling, in charge of a retainer named Sasawo Danyémon, who, when he arrived at the door of Abé Shirogorô's house, said—

"I am charged to hand over to you the mother of Matagorô, and, in exchange, I am authorized to receive her son at your hands."

"We will immediately give him up to you; but, as the mother and son are now about to bid an eternal farewell to one another, we beg you to be so kind as to tarry a little."

[pg 46]

With this the retainers of Shirogorô led the old woman inside their master's house, and Sasawo Danyémon remained waiting outside, until at last he grew impatient, and ventured to hurry on the people within.

"We return you many thanks," replied they, "for your kindness in bringing us the mother; but, as the son cannot go with you at present, you had better return home as quickly as possible. We are afraid we have put you to much trouble." And so they mocked him.

When Danyémon saw that he had not only been cheated into giving up the old woman, but was being made a laughing-stock of into the bargain, he flew into a great rage, and thought to break into the house and seize Matagorô and his mother by force; but, peeping into the courtyard, he saw that it was filled with Hatamotos, carrying guns and naked swords. Not caring then to die fighting a hopeless battle, and at the same time feeling that, after having been so cheated, he would be put to shame before his lord, Sasawo Danyémon went to the burial-place of his ancestors, and disembowelled himself in front of their graves.



THE DEATH OF DANYÉMON.

When the Prince heard how his messenger had been treated, he was indignant, and summoning his councillors resolved, although he was suffering from sickness, to collect his retainers and attack Abé Shirogorô; and the other chief Daimios, when the matter became publicly known, took up the cause, and determined that the Hatamotos must be chastised for their insolence. On their side, the Hatamotos put forth all their efforts to resist the Daimios. So Yedo became disturbed, and the riotous state of the city caused great anxiety to the Government, who took counsel together how they might restore peace. As the Hatamotos were directly under the orders of the Shogun, it was no difficult matter to put them down: the hard question to solve was how to put a restraint upon the great Daimios. However, one of the Gorôjin,¹⁷ named Matsudaira Idzu no Kami, a man of great intelligence, hit upon a plan by which he might secure this end.

There was at this time in the service of the Shogun a physician, named Nakarai Tsusen, who was in the habit of frequenting the palace of my Lord Kunaishôyu, and who for some time past had been treating him for the disease from which he was suffering. Idzu no Kami sent secretly for this physician, and, summoning him to his private room, engaged him in conversation, in the midst of which he suddenly dropped his voice and said to him in a whisper—

"Listen, Tsusen. You have received great favours at the hands of the Shogun. The Government is now sorely straitened: are you willing to carry your loyalty so far as to lay down your life on its behalf?"

"Ay, my lord; for generations my forefathers have held their property by the grace of the Shogun. I am willing this night to lay down my life for my Prince, as a faithful vassal should."

[pg 47]

"Well, then, I will tell you. The great Daimios and the Hatamotos have fallen out about this affair of Matagorô, and lately it has seemed as if they meant to come to blows. The country will be agitated, and the farmers and townsfolk suffer great misery, if we cannot quell the tumult. The Hatamotos will be easily kept under, but it will be no light task to pacify the great Daimios. If you are willing to lay down your life in carrying out a stratagem of mine, peace will be restored to the country; but your loyalty will be your death."

"I am ready to sacrifice my life in this service."

"This is my plan. You have been attending my Lord Kunaishôyu in his sickness; to-morrow you must go to see him, and put poison in his physic. If we can kill him, the agitation will cease. This is the service which I ask of you."

Tsusen agreed to undertake the deed; and on the following day, when he went to see Kunaishôyu, he carried with him poisoned drugs. Half the draught he drank himself,¹⁸ and thus put the Prince off his guard, so that he swallowed the remainder fearlessly. Tsusen, seeing this, hurried away, and as he was carried home in his litter the death-agony seized him, and he died, vomiting blood.

My Lord Kunaishôyu died in the same way in great torture, and in the confusion attending upon his death and funeral ceremonies the struggle which was impending with the Hatamotos was delayed.

In the meanwhile the Gorôjiu Idzu no Kami summoned the three leaders of the Hatamotos and addressed them as follows—

"The secret plottings and treasonable, turbulent conduct of you three men, so unbecoming your position as Hatamotos, have enraged my lord the Shogun to such a degree, that he has been pleased to order that you be imprisoned in a temple, and that your patrimony be given over to your next heirs."

Accordingly the three Hatamotos, after having been severely admonished, were confined in a temple called Kanyeiji; and the remaining Hatamotos, scared by this example, dispersed in peace. As for the great Daimios, inasmuch as after the death of my Lord Kunaishôyu the Hatamotos were all dispersed, there was no enemy left for them to fight with; so the tumult was quelled, and peace was restored.

Thus it happened that Matagorô lost his patron; so, taking his mother with him, he went and placed himself under the protection of an old man named Sakurai Jiuzayémon. This old man was a famous teacher of lance exercise, and enjoyed both wealth and honour; so he took in Matagorô, and having engaged as a guard thirty Rônins, all resolute fellows and well skilled in the arts of war, they all fled together to a distant place called Sagara.

All this time Watanabé Kazuma had been brooding over his father's death, and thinking how he should be revenged upon the murderer; so when my Lord Kunaishôyu suddenly died, he went to the young Prince who succeeded him and obtained leave of absence to go and seek out his father's enemy. Now Kazuma's elder sister was married to a man named Araki Matayémon, who at that time was famous as the first swordsman in Japan. As Kazuma was but sixteen years of age, this Matayémon, taking into consideration his near relationship as son-in-law to the murdered man, determined to go forth with the lad, as his guardian, and help him to seek out Matagorô; and two of Matayémon's retainers, named Ishidomé Busuké and Ikezoyé Magohachi, made up their minds, at all hazards, to follow their master. The latter, when he heard their intention, thanked them, but refused the offer, saying that as he was now about to engage in a vendetta in which his life would be continually in jeopardy, and as it would be a lasting grief to him should either of them receive a wound in such a service, he must beg them to renounce their intention; but they answered—

"Master, this is a cruel speech of yours. All these years have we received nought but kindness and favours at your hands; and now that you are engaged in the pursuit of this murderer, we desire to follow you, and, if needs must, to lay down our lives in your service. Furthermore, we have heard that the friends of this Matagorô are no fewer than thirty-six men; so, however bravely you may fight, you will be in peril from the superior numbers of your enemy. However, if you are pleased to persist in your refusal to take us,

[pg 48]

we have made up our minds that there is no resource for us but to disembowel ourselves on the spot."

When Matayémon and Kazuma heard these words, they wondered at these faithful and brave men, and were moved to tears. Then Matayémon said—

"The kindness of you two brave fellows is without precedent. Well, then, I will accept your services gratefully."

Then the two men, having obtained their wish, cheerfully followed their master; and the four set out together upon their journey to seek out Matagorô, of whose whereabouts they were completely ignorant.

Matagorô in the meanwhile had made his way, with the old man Sakurai Jiuzayémon and his thirty Rônins, to Osaka. But, strong as they were in numbers, they travelled in great secrecy. The reason for this was that the old man's younger brother, Sakurai Jinsuké, a fencing-master by profession, had once had a fencing-match with Matayémon, Kazuma's brother-in-law, and had been shamefully beaten; so that the party were greatly afraid of Matayémon, and felt that, since he was taking up Kazuma's cause and acting as his guardian, they might be worsted in spite of their numbers: so they went on their way with great caution, and, having reached Osaka, put up at an inn in a quarter called Ikutama, and hid from Kazuma and Matayémon.

[pg 49]

The latter also in good time reached Osaka, and spared no pains to seek out Matagorô. One evening towards dusk, as Matayémon was walking in the quarter where the enemy were staying, he saw a man, dressed as a gentleman's servant, enter a cook-shop and order some buckwheat porridge for thirty-six men, and looking attentively at the man, he recognized him as the servant of Sakurai Jiuzayémon; so he hid himself in a dark place and watched, and heard the fellow say—

"My master, Sakurai Jiuzayémon, is about to start for Sagara to-morrow morning, to return thanks to the gods for his recovery from a sickness from which he has been suffering; so I am in a great hurry."

With these words the servant hastened away; and Matayémon, entering the shop, called for some porridge, and as he ate it, made some inquiries as to the man who had just given so large an order for buckwheat porridge. The master of the shop answered that he was the attendant of a party of thirty-six gentlemen who were staying at such and such an inn. Then Matayémon, having found out all that he wanted to know, went home and told Kazuma, who was delighted at the prospect of carrying his revenge into execution on the morrow. That same evening Matayémon sent one of his two faithful retainers as a spy to the inn, to find out at what hour Matagorô was to set out on the following morning; and he ascertained from the servants of the inn, that the party was to start at daybreak for Sagara, stopping at Isé to worship at the shrine of Tershô Daijin.¹⁹

Matayémon made his preparations accordingly, and, with Kazuma and his two retainers, started before dawn. Beyond Uyéno, in the province of Iga, the castle-town of the Daimio Tôdô Idzumi no Kami, there is a wide and lonely moor; and this was the place upon which they fixed for the attack upon the enemy. When they had arrived at the spot, Matayémon went into a tea-house by the roadside, and wrote a petition to the governor of the Daimio's castle-town for permission to carry out the vendetta within its precincts;²⁰ then he addressed Kazuma, and said—

"When we fall in with Matagorô and begin the fight, do you engage and slay your father's murderer; attack him and him only, and I will keep off his guard of Rônins;" then turning to his two retainers, "As for you, keep close to Kazuma; and should the Rônins attempt to rescue Matagorô, it will be your duty to prevent them, and succour Kazuma." And having further laid down each man's duties with great minuteness, they lay in wait

[pg 50]

for the arrival of the enemy. Whilst they were resting in the tea-house, the governor of the castle-town arrived, and, asking for Matayémou, said—

"I have the honour to be the governor of the castle-town of Tôdô Idzumi no Kami. My lord, having learnt your intention of slaying your enemy within the precincts of his citadel, gives his consent; and as a proof of his admiration of your fidelity and valour, he has further sent you a detachment of infantry, one hundred strong, to guard the place; so that should any of the thirty-six men attempt to escape, you may set your mind at ease, for flight will be impossible."

"A person harbouring such vengeance shall notify the same in writing to the Criminal Court; and although no check or hindrance may be offered to his carrying out his desire within the period allowed for that purpose, it is forbidden that the chastisement of an enemy be attended with riot.

"Fellows who neglect to give notice of their intended revenge are like wolves of pretext, and their punishment or pardon should depend upon the circumstances of the case."—*Legacy of Iyéyasu*, ut suprâ.]

When Matayémon and Kazuma had expressed their thanks for his lordship's gracious kindness, the governor took his leave and returned home. At last the enemy's train was seen in the distance. First came Sakurai Jiuzayémon and his younger brother Jinsuké; and next to them followed Kawai Matagorô and Takénouchi Gentan. These four men, who were the bravest and the foremost of the band of Rônins, were riding on pack-horses, and the remainder were marching on foot, keeping close together.

As they drew near, Kazuma, who was impatient to avenge his father, stepped boldly forward and shouted in a loud voice—

"Here stand I, Kazuma, the son of Yukiyé, whom you, Matagorô, treacherously slew, determined to avenge my father's death. Come forth, then, and do battle with me, and let us see which of us twain is the better man."

And before the Rônins had recovered from their astonishment, Matayémon said—

"I, Araké Matayémon, the son-in-law of Yukiyé, have come to second Kazuma in his deed of vengeance. Win or lose, you must give us battle."

When the thirty-six men heard the name of Matayémon, they were greatly afraid; but Sakurai Jiuzayémon urged them to be upon their guard, and leaped from his horse; and Matayémon, springing forward with his drawn sword, cleft him from the shoulder to the nipple of his breast, so that he fell dead. Sakurai Jinsuké, seeing his brother killed before his eyes, grew furious, and shot an arrow at Matayémon, who deftly cut the shaft in two with his dirk as it flew; and Jinsuké, amazed at this feat, threw away his bow and attacked Matayémon, who, with his sword in his right hand and his dirk in his left, fought with desperation. The other Rônins attempted to rescue Jinsuké, and, in the struggle, Kazuma, who had engaged Matagorô, became separated from Matayémon, whose two retainers, Busuké and Magohachi, bearing in mind their master's orders, killed five Rônins who had attacked Kazuma, but were themselves badly wounded. In the meantime, Matayémon, who had killed seven of the Rônins, and who the harder he was pressed the more bravely he fought, soon cut down three more, and the remainder dared not approach him. At this moment there came up one Kanô Tozayémon, a retainer of the lord of the castle-town, and an old friend of Matayémon, who, when he heard that Matayémon was this day about to avenge his father-in-law, had seized his spear and set out, for the sake of the good-will between them, to help him, and act as his second, and said—

"Sir Matayémon, hearing of the perilous adventure in which you have engaged, I have come out to offer myself as your second."

Matayémon, hearing this, was rejoiced, and fought with renewed vigour. Then one of the Rônins, named Takénouchi Gentan, a very brave man, leaving his companions to do battle with Matayémon, came to the rescue of Matagorô, who was being hotly pressed by Kazuma, and, in attempting to prevent this, Busuké fell covered with wounds. His companion Magohachi, seeing him fall, was in great anxiety; for should any harm happen to Kazuma, what excuse could he make to Matayémon? So, wounded as he was, he too engaged Takénouchi Gentan, and, being crippled by the gashes he had received, was in deadly peril. Then the man who had come up from the castle-town to act as Matayémon's second cried out—

"See there, Sir Matayémon, your follower who is fighting with Gentan is in great danger. Do you go to his rescue, and second Sir Kazuma: I will give an account of the others!"

"Great thanks to you, sir. I will go and second Kazuma."

So Matayémon went to help Kazuma, whilst his second and the infantry soldiers kept back the surviving Rônins, who, already wearied by their fight with Matayémon, were unfit for any further exertion. Kazuma meanwhile was still fighting with Matagorô, and the issue of the conflict was doubtful; and Takénouchi Gentan, in his attempt to rescue Matagorô, was being kept at bay by Magohachi, who, weakened by his wounds, and blinded by the blood which was streaming into his eyes from a cut in the forehead, had given himself up for lost when Matayémon came and cried—

"Be of good cheer, Magohachi; it is I, Matayémon, who have come to the rescue. You are badly hurt; get out of harm's way, and rest yourself."

Then Magohachi, who until then had been kept up by his anxiety for Kazuma's safety, gave in, and fell fainting from loss of blood; and Matayémon worsted and slew Gentan; and even then, although he had received two wounds, he was not exhausted, but drew near to Kazuma and said—

"Courage, Kazuma! The Rônins are all killed, and there now remains only Matagorô, your father's murderer. Fight and win!"

The youth, thus encouraged, redoubled his efforts; but Matagorô, losing heart, quailed and fell. So Kazuma's vengeance was fulfilled, and the desire of his heart was accomplished.

The two faithful retainers, who had died in their loyalty, were buried with great ceremony, and Kazuma carried the head of Matagorô and piously laid it upon his father's tomb.

So ends the tale of Kazuma's revenge.

[pg 52]

I fear that stories of which killing and bloodshed form the principal features can hardly enlist much sympathy in these peaceful days. Still, when such tales are based upon history, they are interesting to students of social phenomena. The story of Kazuma's revenge is mixed up with events which at the present time are peculiarly significant: I mean the feud between the great Daimios and the Hatamotos. Those who have followed the modern history of Japan will see that the recent struggle, which has ended in the ruin of the Tycoon's power and the abolition of his office, was the outburst of a hidden fire which had been smouldering for centuries. But the repressive might had been gradually weakened, and contact with Western powers had rendered still more odious a feudality which men felt to be out of date. The revolution which has ended in the triumph of the Daimios over the Tycoon, is also the triumph of the vassal over his feudal lord, and is the harbinger of political life to the people at large. In the time of Iyéyasu the burden might be hateful, but it had to be borne; and so it would have been to this day, had not circumstances from without broken the spell. The Japanese Daimio, in advocating the

isolation of his country, was hugging the very yoke which he hated. Strange to say, however, there are still men who, while they embrace the new political creed, yet praise the past, and look back with regret upon the day when Japan stood alone, without part or share in the great family of nations.

NOTE.—*Hatamoto*. This word means "*under the flag*." The Hatamotos were men who, as their name implied, rallied round the standard of the Shogun, or Tycoon, in war-time. They were eighty thousand in number. When Iyéyasu left the Province of Mikawa and became Shogun, the retainers whom he ennobled, and who received from him grants of land yielding revenue to the amount of ten thousand kokus of rice a year, and from that down to one hundred kokus, were called *Hatamoto*. In return for these grants of land, the Hatamotos had in war-time to furnish a contingent of soldiers in proportion to their revenue. For every thousand kokus of rice five men were required. Those Hatamotos whose revenue fell short of a thousand kokus substituted a quota of money. In time of peace most of the minor offices of the Tycoon's government were filled by Hatamotos, the more important places being held by the Fudai, or vassal Daimios of the Shogun. Seven years ago, in imitation of the customs of foreign nations, a standing army was founded; and then the Hatamotos had to contribute their quota of men or of money, whether the country were at peace or at war. When the Shogun was reduced in 1868 to the rank of a simple Daimio, his revenue of eight million kokus reverted to the Government, with the exception of seven hundred thousand kokus. The title of Hatamoto exists no more, and those who until a few months ago held the rank are for the most part ruined or dispersed. From having been perhaps the proudest and most overbearing class in Japan, they are driven to the utmost straits of poverty. Some have gone into trade, with the heirlooms of their families as their stock; others are wandering through the country as Rônins; while a small minority have been allowed to follow the fallen fortunes of their master's family, the present chief of which is known as the Prince of Tokugawa. Thus are the eighty thousand dispersed.

[pg 53]

The koku of rice, in which all revenue is calculated, is of varying value. At the cheapest it is worth rather more than a pound sterling, and sometimes almost three times as much. The salaries of officials being paid in rice, it follows that there is a large and influential class throughout the country who are interested in keeping up the price of the staple article of food. Hence the opposition with which a free trade in rice has met, even in famine times. Hence also the frequent so-called "Rice Riots."

The amounts at which the lands formerly held by the chief Daimios, but now patriotically given up by them to the Mikado, were assessed, sound fabulous. The Prince of Kaga alone had an income of more than one million two hundred thousand kokus. Yet these great proprietors were, latterly at least, embarrassed men. They had many thousand mouths to feed, and were mulcted of their dues right and left; while their mania for buying foreign ships and munitions of war, often at exorbitant prices, had plunged them heavily in debt.

[pg 54]

A STORY OF THE OTOKODATÉ OF YEDO;

BEING THE SUPPLEMENT OF

THE STORY OF GOMPACHI AND KOMURASAKI

The word Otokodaté occurs several times in these Tales; and as I cannot convey its full meaning by a simple translation, I must preserve it in the text, explaining it by the following note, taken from the Japanese of a native scholar.

The Otokodaté were friendly associations of brave men bound together by an obligation to stand by one another in weal or in woe, regardless of their own lives, and without inquiring into one another's antecedents. A bad man, however, having joined the Otokodaté must forsake his evil ways; for their principle was to treat the oppressor as an enemy, and to help the feeble as a father does his child. If they had money, they gave it to those that had none, and their charitable deeds won for them the respect of all men. The head of the society was called its "Father"; if any of the others, who were his apprentices, were homeless, they lived with the Father and served him, paying him at the same time a small fee, in consideration of which, if they fell sick or into misfortune, he took charge of them and assisted them.

The Father of the Otokodaté pursued the calling of farming out coolies to the Daimios and great personages for their journeys to and from Yedo, and in return for this received from them rations in rice. He had more influence with the lower classes even than the officials; and if the coolies had struck work or refused to accompany a Daimio on his journey, a word from the Father would produce as many men as might be required. When Prince Tokugawa Iyémochi, the last but one of the Shoguns, left Yedo for Kiôto, one Shimmon Tatsugorô, chief of the Otokodaté, undertook the management of his journey, and some three or four years ago was raised to the dignity of Hatamoto for many faithful services. After the battle of Fushimi, and the abolition of the Shogunate, he accompanied the last of the Shoguns in his retirement.

In old days there were also Otokodaté among the Hatamotos; this was after the civil wars of the time of Iyéyasu, when, though the country was at peace, the minds of men were still in a state of high excitement, and could not be reconciled to the dulness of a state of rest; it followed that broils and faction fights were continually taking place among the young men of the Samurai class, and that those who distinguished themselves by their personal strength and valour were looked up to as captains. Leagues after the manner of those existing among the German students were formed in different quarters of the city, under various names, and used to fight for the honour of victory. When the country became more thoroughly tranquil, the custom of forming these leagues amongst gentlemen fell into disuse.

The past tense is used in speaking even of the Otokodaté of the lower classes; for although they nominally exist, they have no longer the power and importance which they enjoyed at the time to which these stories belong. They then, like the 'prentices of Old London, played a considerable part in the society of the great cities, and that man was lucky, were he gentle Samurai or simple wardman, who could claim the Father of the Otokodaté for his friend.

The word, taken by itself, means a manly or plucky fellow.

Chôbei of Bandzuin was the chief of the Otokodaté of Yedo. He was originally called Itarô, and was the son of a certain Rônin who lived in the country. One day, when he was only ten years of age, he went out with a playfellow to bathe in the river; and as the two were playing they quarrelled over their game, and Itarô, seizing the other boy, threw him into the river and drowned him.

Then he went home, and said to his father—

[pg 55]

"I went to play by the river to-day, with a friend; and as he was rude to me, I threw him into the water and killed him."

When his father heard him speak thus, quite calmly, as if nothing had happened, he was thunderstruck, and said—

"This is indeed a fearful thing. Child as you are, you will have to pay the penalty of your deed; so to-night you must fly to Yedo in secret, and take service with some noble Samurai, and perhaps in time you may become a soldier yourself."

With these words he gave him twenty ounces of silver and a fine sword, made by the famous swordsmith Rai Kunitoshi, and sent him out of the province with all dispatch. The following morning the parents of the murdered child came to claim that Itarô should be given up to their vengeance; but it was too late, and all they could do was to bury their child and mourn for his loss.

Itarô made his way to Yedo in hot haste, and there found employment as a shop-boy; but soon tiring of that sort of life, and burning to become a soldier, he found means at last to enter the service of a certain Hatamoto called Sakurai Shôzayémon, and changed his name to Tsunéhei. Now this Sakurai Shôzayémon had a son, called Shônosuké, a young man in his seventeenth year, who grew so fond of Tsunéhei that he took him with him wherever he went, and treated him in all ways as an equal.

When Shônosuké went to the fencing-school Tsunéhei would accompany him, and thus, as he was by nature strong and active, soon became a good swordsman.

[pg 56]

One day, when Shôzayémon had gone out, his son Shônosuké said to Tsunéhei—

"You know how fond my father is of playing at football: it must be great sport. As he has gone out to-day, suppose you and I have a game?"

"That will be rare sport," answered Tsunéhei. "Let us make haste and play, before my lord comes home."

So the two boys went out into the garden, and began trying to kick the football; but, lacking skill, do what they would, they could not lift it from the ground. At last Shônosuké, with a vigorous kick, raised the football; but, having missed his aim, it went tumbling over the wall into the next garden, which belonged to one Hikosaka Zempachi, a teacher of lance exercise, who was known to be a surly, ill-tempered fellow.

"Oh, dear! what shall we do?" said Shônosuké. "We have lost my father's football in his absence; and if we go and ask for it back from that churlish neighbour of ours, we shall only be scolded and sworn at for our pains."

"Oh, never mind," answered Tsunéhei; "I will go and apologize for our carelessness, and get the football back."

"Well, but then you will be chidden, and I don't want that."

"Never mind me. Little care I for his cross words." So Tsunéhei went to the next-door house to reclaim the ball.

Now it so happened that Zempachi, the surly neighbour, had been walking in his garden whilst the two youths were playing; and as he was admiring the beauty of his favourite chrysanthemums, the football came flying over the wall and struck him full in the face. Zempachi, not used to anything but flattery and coaxing, flew into a violent rage at this; and while he was thinking how he would revenge himself upon any one who might be sent to ask for the lost ball, Tsunéhei came in, and said to one of Zempachi's servants—

"I am sorry to say that in my lord's absence I took his football, and, in trying to play with it, clumsily kicked it over your wall. I beg you to excuse my carelessness, and to be so good as to give me back the ball."

The servant went in and repeated this to Zempachi, who worked himself up into a great rage, and ordered Tsunéhei to be brought before him, and said—

"Here, fellow, is your name Tsunéhei?"

"Yes, sir, at your service. I am almost afraid to ask pardon for my carelessness; but please forgive me, and let me have the ball."

"I thought your master, Shôzayémon, was to blame for this; but it seems that it was you who kicked the football."

"Yes, sir. I am sure I am very sorry for what I have done. Please, may I ask for the ball?" said Tsunéhei, bowing humbly.

For a while Zempachi made no answer, but at length he said—

[pg 57]

"Do you know, villain, that your dirty football struck me in the face? I ought, by rights, to kill you on the spot for this; but I will spare your life this time, so take your football and be off." And with that he went up to Tsunéhei and beat him, and kicked him in the head, and spat in his face.

Then Tsunéhei, who up to that time had demeaned himself very humbly, in his eagerness to get back the football, jumped up in a fury, and said—

"I made ample apologies to you for my carelessness, and now you have insulted and struck me. Ill-mannered ruffian! take back the ball,—I'll none of it;" and he drew his dirk, and cutting the football in two, threw it at Zempachi, and returned home.

But Zempachi, growing more and more angry, called one of his servants, and said to him —

"That fellow, Tsunéhei, has been most insolent: go next door and find out Shôzayémon, and tell him that I have ordered you to bring back Tsunéhei, that I may kill him."

So the servant went to deliver the message.

In the meantime Tsunéhei went back to his master's house; and when Shônosuké saw him, he said—

"Well, of course you have been ill treated; but did you get back the football?"

"When I went in, I made many apologies; but I was beaten, and kicked in the head, and treated with the greatest indignity. I would have killed that wretch, Zempachi, at once, but that I knew that, if I did so while I was yet a member of your household, I should bring trouble upon your family. For your sake I bore this ill-treatment patiently; but now I pray you let me take leave of you and become a Rônin, that I may be revenged upon this man."

"Think well what you are doing," answered Shônosuké. "After all, we have only lost a football; and my father will not care, nor upbraid us."

But Tsiméhei would not listen to him, and was bent upon wiping out the affront that he had received. As they were talking, the messenger arrived from Zempachi, demanding the surrender of Tsunéhei, on the ground that he had insulted him: to this Shônosuké replied that his father was away from home, and that in his absence he could do nothing.

At last Shôzayémon came home; and when he heard what had happened he was much grieved, and at a loss what to do, when a second messenger arrived from Zempachi, demanding that Tsunéhei should be given up without delay. Then Shôzayémon, seeing that the matter was serious, called the youth to him, and said—

"This Zempachi is heartless and cruel, and if you go to his house will assuredly kill you; take, therefore, these fifty riyos, and fly to Osaka or Kiôto, where you may safely set up in business."

[pg 58]

"Sir," answered Tsunéhei, with tears of gratitude for his lord's kindness, "from my heart I thank you for your great goodness; but I have been insulted and trampled upon, and, if I lay down my life in the attempt, I will repay Zempachi for what he has this day done."

"Well, then, since you needs must be revenged, go and fight, and may success attend you! Still, as much depends upon the blade you carry, and I fear yours is likely to be but a sorry weapon, I will give you a sword;" and with this he offered Tsunéhei his own.

"Nay, my lord," replied Tsunéhei; "I have a famous sword, by Rai Kunitoshi, which my father gave me. I have never shown it to your lordship, but I have it safely stowed away in my room."

When Shôzayémon saw and examined the sword, he admired it greatly, and said, "This is indeed a beautiful blade, and one on which you may rely. Take it, then, and bear yourself nobly in the fight; only remember that Zempachi is a cunning spearsman, and be sure to be very cautious."

So Tsunéhei, after thanking his lord for his manifold kindnesses, took an affectionate leave, and went to Zempachi's house, and said to the servant—

"It seems that your master wants to speak to me. Be so good as to take me to see him."

So the servant led him into the garden, where Zempachi, spear in hand, was waiting to kill him. When Zempachi saw him, he cried out—

"Ha! so you have come back; and now for your insolence, this day I mean to kill you with my own hand."

"Insolent yourself!" replied Tsunéhei. "Beast, and no Samurai! Come, let us see which of us is the better man."

Furiously incensed, Zempachi thrust with his spear at Tsunéhei; but he, trusting to his good sword, attacked Zempachi, who, cunning warrior as he was, could gain no advantage. At last Zempachi, losing his temper, began fighting less carefully, so that Tsunéhei found an opportunity of cutting the shaft of his spear. Zempachi then drew his sword, and two of his retainers came up to assist him; but Tsunéhei killed one of them, and wounded Zempachi in the forehead. The second retainer fled affrighted at the youth's valour, and Zempachi was blinded by the blood which flowed from the wound on his forehead. Then Tsunéhei said—

"To kill one who is as a blind man were unworthy a soldier. Wipe the blood from your eyes, Sir Zempachi, and let us fight it out fairly."

So Zempachi, wiping away his blood, bound a kerchief round his head, and fought again desperately. But at last the pain of his wound and the loss of blood overcame him, and Tsunéhei cut him down with a wound in the shoulder and easily dispatched him.

Then Tsunéhei went and reported the whole matter to the Governor of Yedo, and was put in prison until an inquiry could be made. But the Chief Priest of Bandzuin, who had heard of the affair, went and told the governor all the bad deeds of Zempachi, and having

[pg 59]

procured Tsunéhei's pardon, took him home and employed him as porter in the temple. So Tsunéhei changed his name to Chôbei, and earned much respect in the neighbourhood, both for his talents and for his many good works. If any man were in distress, he would help him, heedless of his own advantage or danger, until men came to look up to him as to a father, and many youths joined him and became his apprentices. So he built a house at Hanakawado, in Asakusa, and lived there with his apprentices, whom he farmed out as spearsmen and footmen to the Daimios and Hatamotos, taking for himself the tithe of their earnings. But if any of them were sick or in trouble, Chôbei would nurse and support them, and provide physicians and medicine. And the fame of his goodness went abroad until his apprentices were more than two thousand men, and were employed in every part of the city. But as for Chôbei, the more he prospered, the more he gave in charity, and all men praised his good and generous heart.

This was the time when the Hatamotos had formed themselves into bands of Otokodaté,²¹ of which Midzuno Jiurozayémon, Kondô Noborinosuké, and Abé Shirogorô were the chiefs. And the leagues of the nobles despised the leagues of the wardsmen, and treated them with scorn, and tried to put to shame Chôbei and his brave men; but the nobles' weapons recoiled upon themselves, and, whenever they tried to bring contempt upon Chôbei, they themselves were brought to ridicule. So there was great hatred on both sides.

One day, that Chôbei went to divert himself in a tea-house in the Yoshiwara, he saw a felt carpet spread in an upper room, which had been adorned as for some special occasion; and he asked the master of the house what guest of distinction was expected. The landlord replied that my Lord Jiurozayémon, the chief of the Otokodaté of the Hatamotos, was due there that afternoon. On hearing this, Chôbei replied that as he much wished to meet my Lord Jiurozayémon, he would lie down and await his coming. The landlord was put out at this, and knew not what to say; but yet he dare not thwart Chôbei, the powerful chief of the Otokodaté. So Chôbei took off his clothes and laid himself down upon the carpet. After a while my Lord Jiurozayémon arrived, and going upstairs found a man of large stature lying naked upon the carpet which had been spread for him.

"What low ruffian is this?" shouted he angrily to the landlord.

"My lord, it is Chôbei, the chief of the Otokodaté," answered the man, trembling.

[pg 60]

Jiurozayémon at once suspected that Chôbei was doing this to insult him; so he sat down by the side of the sleeping man, and lighting his pipe began to smoke. When he had finished his pipe, he emptied the burning ashes into Chôbei's navel; but Chôbei, patiently bearing the pain, still feigned sleep. Ten times did Jiurozayémon fill his pipe,²² and ten times he shook out the burning ashes on to Chôbei's navel; but he neither stirred nor spoke. Then Jiurozayémon, astonished at his fortitude, shook him, and roused him, saying—

"Chôbei! Chôbei! wake up, man."

"What is the matter?" said Chôbei, rubbing his eyes as though he were awaking from a deep sleep; then seeing Jiurozayémon, he pretended to be startled, and said, "Oh, my lord, I know not who you are; but I have been very rude to your lordship. I was overcome with wine, and fell asleep: I pray your lordship to forgive me."

"Is your name Chôbei?"

"Yes, my lord, at your service. A poor wardsmen, and ignorant of good manners, I have been very rude; but I pray your lordship to excuse my ill-breeding."

"Nay, nay; we have all heard the fame of Chôbei, of Bandzuin, and I hold myself lucky to have met you this day. Let us be friends."

"It is a great honour for a humble wardsman to meet a nobleman face to face."

As they were speaking, the waitresses brought in fish and wine, and Jiurozayémon pressed Chôbei to feast with him; and thinking to annoy Chôbei, offered him a large wine-cup,²³ which, however, he drank without shrinking, and then returned to his entertainer, who was by no means so well able to bear the fumes of the wine. Then Jiurozayémon hit upon another device for annoying Chôbei, and, hoping to frighten him, said—

"Here, Chôbei, let me offer you some fish;" and with those words he drew his sword, and, picking up a cake of baked fish upon the point of it, thrust it towards the wardsman's mouth. Any ordinary man would have been afraid to accept the morsel so roughly offered; but Chôbei simply opened his mouth, and taking the cake off the sword's point ate it without wincing. Whilst Jiurozayémon was wondering in his heart what manner of man this was, that nothing could daunt, Chôbei said to him—

"This meeting with your lordship has been an auspicious occasion to me, and I would fain ask leave to offer some humble gift to your lordship in memory of it."²⁴ Is there anything which your lordship would specially fancy?"

"I am very fond of cold macaroni."

[pg 61]

"Then I shall have the honour of ordering some for your lordship;" and with this Chôbei went downstairs, and calling one of his apprentices, named Tôken Gombei,²⁵ who was waiting for him, gave him a hundred riyos (about £28), and bade him collect all the cold macaroni to be found in the neighbouring cook-shops and pile it up in front of the tea-house. So Gombei went home, and, collecting Chôbei's apprentices, sent them out in all directions to buy the macaroni. Jiurozayémon all this while was thinking of the pleasure he would have in laughing at Chôbei for offering him a mean and paltry present; but when, by degrees, the macaroni began to be piled mountain-high around the tea-house, he saw that he could not make a fool of Chôbei, and went home discomfited.

It has already been told how Shirai Gompachi was befriended and helped by Chôbei.²⁶ His name will occur again in this story.

At this time there lived in the province of Yamato a certain Daimio, called Honda Dainaiki, who one day, when surrounded by several of his retainers, produced a sword, and bade them look at it and say from what smith's workshop the blade had come.

"I think this must be a Masamuné blade," said one Fuwa Banzayémon.

"No," said Nagoya Sanza, after examining the weapon attentively, "this certainly is a Muramasa."²⁷

[pg 62]

A third Samurai, named Takagi Umanojô, pronounced it to be the work of Shidzu Kanenji; and as they could not agree, but each maintained his opinion, their lord sent for a famous connoisseur to decide the point; and the sword proved, as Sanza had said, to be a genuine Muramasa. Sanza was delighted at the verdict; but the other two went home rather crestfallen. Umanojô, although he had been worsted in the argument, bore no malice nor ill-will in his heart; but Banzayémon, who was a vainglorious personage, puffed up with the idea of his own importance, conceived a spite against Sanza, and watched for an opportunity to put him to shame. At last, one day Banzayémon, eager to be revenged upon Sanza, went to the Prince, and said, "Your lordship ought to see Sanza fence; his swordsmanship is beyond all praise. I know that I am no match for him; still, if it will please your lordship, I will try a bout with him;" and the Prince, who was a mere stripling, and thought it would be rare sport, immediately sent for Sanza and desired he would fence with Banzayémon. So the two went out into the garden, and stood up facing each other, armed with wooden swords. Now Banzayémon was proud of his skill, and

thought he had no equal in fencing; so he expected to gain an easy victory over Sanza, and promised himself the luxury of giving his adversary a beating that should fully make up for the mortification which he had felt in the matter of the dispute about the sword. It happened, however, that he had undervalued the skill of Sanza, who, when he saw that his adversary was attacking him savagely and in good earnest, by a rapid blow struck Banzayémon so sharply on the wrist that he dropped the sword, and, before he could pick it up again, delivered a second cut on the shoulder, which sent him rolling over in the dust. All the officers present, seeing this, praised Sanza's skill, and Banzayémon, utterly stricken with shame, ran away home and hid himself.

After this affair Sanza rose high in the favour of his lord; and Banzayémon, who was more than ever jealous of him, feigned sickness, and stayed at home devising schemes for Sanza's ruin.

Now it happened that the Prince, wishing to have the Muramasa blade mounted, sent for Sanza and entrusted it to his care, ordering him to employ the most cunning workmen in the manufacture of the scabbard-hilt and ornaments; and Sanza, having received the blade, took it home, and put it carefully away. When Banzayémon heard of this, he was overjoyed; for he saw that his opportunity for revenge had come. He determined, if possible, to kill Sanza, but at any rate to steal the sword which had been committed to his care by the Prince, knowing full well that if Sanza lost the sword he and his family would be ruined. Being a single man, without wife or child, he sold his furniture, and, turning all his available property into money, made ready to fly the country. When his preparations were concluded, he went in the middle of the night to Sanza's house and tried to get in by stealth; but the doors and shutters were all carefully bolted from the inside, and there was no hole by which he could effect an entrance. All was still, however, and the people of the house were evidently fast asleep; so he climbed up to the second storey, and, having contrived to unfasten a window, made his way in. With soft, cat-like footsteps he crept downstairs, and, looking into one of the rooms, saw Sanza and his wife sleeping on the mats, with their little son Kosanza, a boy of thirteen, curled up in his quilt between them. The light in the night-lamp was at its last flicker, but, peering through the gloom, he could just see the Prince's famous Muramasa sword lying on a sword-rack in the raised part of the room: so he crawled stealthily along until he could reach it, and stuck it in his girdle. Then, drawing near to Sanza, he bestrode his sleeping body, and, brandishing the sword made a thrust at his throat; but in his excitement his hand shook, so that he missed his aim, and only scratched Sanza, who, waking with a start and trying to jump up, felt himself held down by a man standing over him. Stretching out his hands, he would have wrestled with his enemy; when Banzayémon, leaping back, kicked over the night-lamp, and throwing open the shutters, dashed into the garden. Snatching up his sword, Sanza rushed out after him; and his wife, having lit a lantern and armed herself with a halberd,²⁸ went out, with her son Kosanza, who carried a drawn dirk, to help her husband. Then Banzayémon, who was hiding in the shadow of a large pine-tree, seeing the lantern and dreading detection, seized a stone and hurled it at the light, and, chancing to strike it, put it out, and then scrambling over the fence unseen, fled into the darkness. When Sanza had searched all over the garden in vain, he returned to his room and examined his wound, which proving very slight, he began to look about to see whether the thief had carried off anything; but when his eye fell upon the place where the Muramasa sword had lain, he saw that it was gone. He hunted everywhere, but it was not to be found. The precious blade with which his Prince had entrusted him had been stolen, and the blame would fall heavily upon him. Filled with grief and shame at the loss, Sanza and his wife and child remained in great anxiety until the morning broke, when he reported the matter to one of the Prince's councillors, and waited in seclusion until he should receive his lord's commands.

It soon became known that Banzayémon, who had fled the province, was the thief; and the councillors made their report accordingly to the Prince, who, although he expressed his detestation of the mean action of Banzayémon, could not absolve Sanza from blame, in that he had not taken better precautions to insure the safety of the sword that had been

[pg 63]

[pg 64]

committed to his trust. It was decided, therefore, that Sanza should be dismissed from his service, and that his goods should be confiscated; with the proviso that should he be able to find Banzayémon, and recover the lost Muramasa blade, he should be restored to his former position. Sanza, who from the first had made up his mind that his punishment would be severe, accepted the decree without a murmur; and, having committed his wife and son to the care of his relations, prepared to leave the country as a Rônin and search for Banzayémon.

Before starting, however, he thought that he would go to his brother-officer, Takagi Umanojô, and consult with him as to what course he should pursue to gain his end. But this Umanojô, who was by nature a churlish fellow, answered him unkindly, and said—

"It is true that Banzayémon is a mean thief; but still it was through your carelessness that the sword was lost. It is of no avail your coming to me for help: you must get it back as best you may."

"Ah!" replied Sanza, "I see that you too bear me a grudge because I defeated you in the matter of the judgment of the sword. You are no better than Banzayémon yourself."

And his heart was bitter against his fellow men, and he left the house determined to kill Umanojô first and afterwards to track out Banzayémon; so, pretending to start on his journey, he hid in an inn, and waited for an opportunity to attack Umanojô.

One day Umanojô, who was very fond of fishing, had taken his son Umanosuké, a lad of sixteen, down to the sea-shore with him; and as the two were enjoying themselves, all of a sudden they perceived a Samurai running towards them, and when he drew near they saw that it was Sanza. Umanojô, thinking that Sanza had come back in order to talk over some important matter, left his angling and went to meet him. Then Sanza cried out—

"Now, Sir Umanojô, draw and defend yourself. What! were you in league with Banzayémon to vent your spite upon me? Draw, sir, draw! You have spirited away your accomplice; but, at any rate, you are here yourself, and shall answer for your deed. It is no use playing the innocent; your astonished face shall not save you. Defend yourself, coward and traitor!" and with these words Sanza flourished his naked sword.

"Nay, Sir Sanza," replied the other, anxious by a soft answer to turn away his wrath; "I am innocent of this deed. Waste not your valour on so poor a cause."

"Lying knave!" said Sanza; "think not that you can impose upon me. I know your treacherous heart;" and, rushing upon Umanojô, he cut him on the forehead so that he fell in agony upon the sand.

Umanosuké in the meanwhile, who had been fishing at some distance from his father, rushed up when he saw him in this perilous situation and threw a stone at Sanza, hoping to distract his attention; but, before he could reach the spot, Sanza had delivered the death-blow, and Umanojô lay a corpse upon the beach.

[pg 65]

"Stop, Sir Sanza—murderer of my father!" cried Umanosuké, drawing his sword, "stop and do battle with me, that I may avenge his death."

"That you should wish to slay your father's enemy," replied Sanza, "is but right and proper; and although I had just cause of quarrel with your father, and killed him, as a Samurai should, yet would I gladly forfeit my life to you here; but my life is precious to me for one purpose—that I may punish Banzayémon and get back the stolen sword. When I shall have restored that sword to my lord, then will I give you your revenge, and you may kill me. A soldier's word is truth; but, as a pledge that I will fulfil my promise, I will give to you, as hostages, my wife and boy. Stay your avenging hand, I pray you, until my desire shall have been attained."