Kottō

by Lafcadio Hearn

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK KOTTO: BEING JAPANESE CURIOS, WITH SUNDRY COBWEBS ***

KOTTŌ

BEING JAPANESE CURIOS, WITH SUNDRY COBWEBS

COLLECTED BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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TO

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

IN

GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

OF

KIND WORDS

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Old Stories

The following nine tales have been selected from the "Shin-Chomon-Shū" "Hyaku

Monogatari," "Uji-Jūi-Monogatari-Shō," and other old Japanese books, to illustrate some strange beliefs. They are only Curios.

The Legend of Yurei-Daki

Near the village of Kurosaka, in the province of Hōki, there is a waterfall called Yurei-Daki, or The Cascade of Ghosts. Why it is so called I do not know. Near the foot of the fall there is a small Shintō shrine of the god of the locality, whom the people name Taki-Daimyōjin; and in front of the shrine is a little wooden money-box—saisen-bako—to receive the offerings of believers. And there is a story about that money-box.

*

One icy winter's evening, thirty-five years ago, the women and girls employed at a certain asa-toriba, or hemp-factory, in Kurosaka, gathered around the big brazier in the spinning-room after their day's work had been done. Then they amused themselves by telling ghost-stories. By the time that a dozen stories had been told, most of the gathering felt uncomfortable; and a girl cried out, just to heighten the pleasure of fear, "Only think of going this night, all by one's self, to the Yurei-Daki!" The suggestion provoked a general scream, followed by nervous bursts of laughter.... "I'll give all the hemp I spun to-day," mockingly said one of the party, "to the person who goes!" "So will I," exclaimed another. "And I," said a third. "All of us," affirmed a fourth.... Then from among the spinners stood up one Yasumoto O-Katsu, the wife of a carpenter;—she had her only son, a boy of two years old, snugly wrapped up and asleep upon her back. "Listen," said O-Katsu; "if you will all really agree to make over to me all the hemp spun to-day, I will go to the Yurei-Daki." Her proposal was received with cries of astonishment and of defiance. But after having been several times repeated, it was seriously taken. Each of the spinners in turn agreed to give up her share of the day's work to O-Katsu, providing that O-Katsu should go to the Yurei-Daki. "But how are we to know if she really

goes there?" a sharp voice asked. "Why, let her bring back the money-box of the god," answered an old woman whom the spinners called Obaa-San, the Grandmother; "that will be proof enough." "I'll bring it," cried O-Katsu. And out she darted into the street, with her sleeping boy upon her back.

*

The night, was frosty, but clear. Down the empty street O-Katsu hurried; and she saw that all the house fronts were tightly closed, because of the piercing cold. Out of the village, and along the high road she ran—pichà-pichà—with the great silence of frozen rice-fields on either hand, and only the stars to light her. Half an hour she followed the open road; then she turned down a narrower way, winding under cliffs. Darker and rougher the path became as she proceeded; but she knew it well, and she soon heard the dull roar of the water. A few minutes more, and the way widened into a glen,—and the dull roar suddenly became a loud clamor,—and before her she saw, looming against a mass of blackness, the long glimmering of the fall. Dimly she perceived the shrine,—the money-box. She rushed forward,—put out her hand....

"Oi! O-Katsu-San!"[1] suddenly called a warning voice above the crash of the water.

O-Katsu stood motionless,—stupefied by terror.

"Oi! O-Katsu-San!" again pealed the voice,—this time with more of menace in its tone.

But O-Katsu was really a bold woman. At once recovering from her stupefaction, she snatched up the money-box and ran. She neither heard nor saw anything more to alarm her until she reached the highroad, where she stopped a moment to take breath. Then she ran on steadily,—pichà-pichà,—till she got to Kurosaka, and thumped at the door of the asa-toriba.

*

How the women and the girls cried out as she entered, panting, with the money-box of the god in her hand! Breathlessly they heard her story; sympathetically they

screeched when she told them of the Voice that had called her name, twice, out of the haunted water.... What a woman! Brave O-Katsu!—well had she earned the hemp!... "But your boy must be cold, O-Katsu!" cried the Obaa-San, "let us have him here by the fire!"

"He ought to be hungry," exclaimed the mother; "I must give him his milk presently."... "Poor O-Katsu!" said the Obaa-San, helping to remove the wraps in which the boy had been carried,—"why, you are all wet behind!" Then, with a husky scream, the helper vociferated, "Arà! it is blood!"

And out of the wrappings unfastened there fell to the floor a blood-soaked bundle of baby clothes that left exposed two very small brown feet, and two very small brown hands—nothing more. The child's head had been torn off!...

[1] The exclamation Oi! is used to call the attention of a person: it is the Japanese equivalent for such English exclamations as "Halloa!" "Ho, there!" etc.

In a Cup of Tea

Have you ever attempted to mount some old tower stairway, spiring up through darkness, and in the heart of that darkness found yourself at the cobwebbed edge of nothing? Or have you followed some coast path, cut along the face of a cliff, only to discover yourself, at a turn, on the jagged verge of a break? The emotional worth of such experience—from a literary point of view—is proved by the force of the sensations aroused, and by the vividness with which they are remembered.

Now there have been curiously preserved, in old Japanese story-books, certain fragments of fiction that produce an almost similar emotional experience.... Perhaps the writer was lazy; perhaps he had a quarrel with the publisher; perhaps he was suddenly called away from his little table, and never came back; perhaps death stopped the writing-brush in the very middle of a sentence. But no mortal man can ever tell us exactly why these things were left unfinished.... I select a typical

example.

*

On the fourth day of the first month of the third Tenwa,—that is to say, about two hundred and twenty years ago,—the lord Nakagawa Sado, while on his way to make a New Year's visit, halted with his train at a tea-house in Hakusan, in the Hongō district of Yedo. While the party were resting there, one of the lord's attendants,—a wakatō[1] named Sekinai,—feeling very thirsty, filled for himself a large water-cup with tea. He was raising the cup to his lips when he suddenly perceived, in the transparent yellow infusion, the image or reflection of a face that was not his own. Startled, he looked around, but could see no one near him. The face in the tea appeared, from the coiffure, to be the face of a young samurai: it was strangely distinct, and very handsome,—delicate as the face of a girl. And it seemed the reflection of a living face; for the eyes and the lips were moving. Bewildered by this mysterious apparition, Sekinai threw away the tea, and carefully examined the cup. It proved to be a very cheap water-cup, with no artistic devices of any sort. He found and filled another cup; and again the face appeared in the tea. He then ordered fresh tea, and refilled the cup; and once more the strange face appeared,—this time with a mocking smile. But Sekinai did not allow himself to be frightened. "Whoever you are," he muttered, "you shall delude me no further!"—then he swallowed the tea, face and all, and went his way, wondering whether he had swallowed a ghost.

*

Late in the evening of the same day, while on watch in the palace of the lord Nakagawa, Sekinai was surprised by the soundless coming of a stranger into the apartment. This stranger, a richly dressed young samurai, seated himself directly in front of Sekinai, and, saluting the wakatō with a slight bow, observed:—

"I am Shikibu Heinai—met you to-day for the first time.... You do not seem to recognize me."

He spoke in a very low, but penetrating voice. And Sekinai was astonished to find before him the same sinister, handsome face of which he had seen, and swallowed, the apparition in a cup of tea. It was smiling now, as the phantom had smiled; but the steady gaze of the eyes, above the smiling lips, was at once a challenge and an insult.

"No, I do not recognize you," returned Sekinai, angry but cool;—"and perhaps you will now be good enough to inform me how you obtained admission to this house?"

[In feudal times the residence of a lord was strictly guarded at all hours; and no one could enter unannounced, except through some unpardonable negligence on the part of the armed watch.]

"Ah, you do not recognize me!" exclaimed the visitor, in a tone of irony, drawing a little nearer as he spoke. "No, you do not recognize me! Yet you took upon yourself this morning to do me a deadly injury!..."

Sekinai instantly seized the tantō[2] at his girdle, and made a fierce thrust at the throat of the man. But the blade seemed to touch no substance. Simultaneously and soundlessly the intruder leaped sideward to the chamber-wall, and through it! ... The wall showed no trace of his exit. He had traversed it only as the light of a candle passes through lantern-paper.

*

When Sekinai made report of the incident, his recital astonished and puzzled the retainers. No stranger had been seen either to enter or to leave the palace at the hour of the occurrence; and no one in the service of the lord Nakagawa had ever heard of the name "Shikibu Heinai."

*

On the following night Sekinai was off duty, and remained at home with his parents. At a rather late hour he was informed that some strangers had called at the house, and desired to speak with him for a moment. Taking his sword, he went to the

entrance, and there found three armed men,—apparently retainers,—waiting in front of the doorstep. The three bowed respectfully to Sekinai; and one of them said:—

"Our names are Matsuoka Bungō, Tsuchibashi Bungō, and Okamura Heiroku. We are retainers of the noble Shikibu Heinai. When our master last night deigned to pay you a visit, you struck him with a sword. He was much will hurt, and has been obliged to go to the hot springs, where his wound is now being treated. But on the sixteenth day of the coming month he will return; and he will then fitly repay you for the injury done him...."

Without waiting to hear more, Sekinai leaped out, sword in hand, and slashed right and left, at the strangers. But the three men sprang to the wall of the adjoining building, and flitted up the wall like shadows, and....

Here the old narrative breaks off; the rest of the story existed only in some brain that has been dust for a century.

I am able to imagine several possible endings; but none of them would satisfy an Occidental imagination. I prefer to let the reader attempt to decide for himself the probable consequence of swallowing a Soul.

[1] The armed attendant of a samurai was thus called. The relation of the wakatō to the samurai was that of squire to knight.

[2] The shorter of the two swords carried by samurai. The longer sword was called katana.

Common Sense

Once there lived upon the mountain called Atagoyama, near Kyoto, a certain learned priest who devoted all his time to meditation and the study of the sacred books. The little temple in which he dwelt was far from any village; and he could not, in such a solitude, have obtained without help the common necessaries of life. But several devout country people regularly contributed to his maintenance, bringing him each

month supplies of vegetables and of rice.

Among these good folk there was a certain hunter, who sometimes visited the mountain in search of game. One day, when this hunter had brought a bag of rice to the temple, the priest said to him:—

"Friend, I must tell you that wonderful things have happened here since the last time I saw you. I do not certainly know why such things should have happened in my unworthy presence. But you are aware that I have been meditating, and reciting the sûtras daily, for many years; and it is possible that what has been vouchsafed me is due to the merit obtained through these religious exercises. I am not sure of this. But I am sure that Fugen Bosatsu[1] comes nightly to this temple, riding upon his elephant.... Stay here with me this night, friend; then you will be able to see and to worship the Buddha."

"To witness so holy a vision," the hunter replied, "were a privilege indeed! Most gladly I shall stay, and worship with you."

So the hunter remained at the temple. But while the priest was engaged in his religious exercises, the hunter began to think about the promised miracle, and to doubt whether such a thing could be. And the more he thought, the more he doubted. There was a little boy in the temple,—an acolyte,—and the hunter found an opportunity to question the boy.

"The priest told me," said the hunter, "that Fugen Bosatsu comes to this temple every night. Have you also seen Fugen Bosatsu?"

"Six times, already," the acolyte replied, "I have seen and reverently worshipped Fugen Bosatsu." This declaration only served to increase the hunter's suspicions, though he did not in the least doubt the truthfulness of the boy. He reflected, however, that he would probably be able to see whatever the boy had seen; and he waited with eagerness for the hour of the promised vision.

*

Shortly before midnight the priest announced that it was time to prepare for the coming of Fugen Bosatsu. The doors of the little temple were thrown open; and the priest knelt down at the threshold, with his face to the east. The acolyte knelt at his left hand, and the hunter respectfully placed himself behind the priest.

It was the night of the twentieth of the ninth month,—a dreary, dark, and very windy night; and the three waited a long time for the coming of Fugen Bosatsu. But at last a point of white light appeared, like a star, in the direction of the east; and this light approached quickly,—growing larger and larger as it came, and illuminating all the slope of the mountain. Presently the light took shape—the shape of a being divine, riding upon a snow-white elephant with six tusks. And, in another moment, the elephant with its shining rider arrived before the temple, and there stood towering, like a mountain of moonlight,—wonderful and weird.

Then the priest and the boy, prostrating themselves, began with exceeding fervour to repeat the holy invocation to Fugen Bosatsu. But suddenly the hunter rose up behind them, bow in hand; and, bending his bow to the full, he sent a long arrow whizzing straight at the luminous Buddha, into whose breast it sank up to the very feathers. Immediately, with a sound like a thunder-clap, the white light vanished, and the vision disappeared. Before the temple there was nothing but windy darkness.

"O miserable man!" cried out the priest, with tears of shame and despair, "O most wretched and wicked man! what have you done?—what have you done?"

But the hunter received the reproaches of the priest without any sign of compunction or of anger. Then he said, very gently:—

"Reverend sir, please try to calm yourself, and listen to me. You thought that you were able to see Fugen Bosatsu because of some merit obtained through your constant meditations and your recitation of the sûtras. But if that had been the case, the Buddha would have appeared to you only—not to me, nor even to the boy. I am an ignorant hunter, and my occupation is to kill;—and the taking of life is hateful to

the Buddhas. How then should I be able to see Fugen Bosatsu? I have been taught that the Buddhas are everywhere about us, and that we remain unable to see them because of our ignorance and our imperfections. You—being a learned priest of pure life—might indeed acquire such enlightenment as would enable you to see the Buddhas; but how should a man who kills animals for his livelihood find the power to see the divine? Both I and this little boy could see all that you saw. And let me now assure you, reverend sir, that what you saw was not Fugen Bosatsu, but a goblinry intended to deceive you—perhaps even to destroy you. I beg that you will try to control your feelings until daybreak. Then I will prove to you the truth of what I have said."

At sunrise the hunter and the priest examined the spot where the vision had been standing, and they discovered a thin trail of blood. And after having followed this trail to a hollow some hundred paces away, they came upon the body of a great badger, transfixed by the hunter's arrow.

*

The priest, although a learned and pious person, had easily been deceived by a badger. But the hunter, an ignorant and irreligious man, was gifted with strong common sense: and by mother-wit alone he was able at once to detect and to destroy a dangerous illusion.

[1] Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

Ikiryō[1]

Formerly, in the quarter of Reiganjima, in Yedo, there was a great porcelain shop called the Setomonodana, kept by a rich man named Kihei. Kihei had in his employ, for many years, a head clerk named Rokubei. Under Rokubei's care the business prospered;—and at last it grew so large that Rokubei found himself unable to manage it without help. He therefore asked and obtained permission to hire an

experienced assistant; and he then engaged one of his own nephews,—a young man about twenty-two years old, who had learned the porcelain trade in Osaka.

The nephew proved a very capable assistant,—shrewder in business than his experienced uncle. His enterprise extended the trade of the house, and Kihei was greatly pleased. But about seven months after his engagement, the young man became very ill, and seemed likely to die. The best physicians in Yedo were summoned to attend him; but none of them could understand the nature of his sickness. They prescribed no medicine, and expressed the opinion that such a sickness could only have been caused by some secret grief.

Rokubei imagined that it might be a case of lovesickness. He therefore said to his nephew:—

"I have been thinking that, as you are still very young, you might have formed some secret attachment which is making you unhappy,—perhaps even making you ill. If this be the truth, you certainly ought to tell me all about your troubles. Here I stand to you in the place of a father, as you are far away from your parents; and if you have any anxiety or sorrow, I am ready to do for you whatever a father should do. If money can help you, do not be ashamed to tell me, even though the amount be large. I think that I could assist you; and I am sure that Kihei would be glad to do anything to make you happy and well."

The sick youth appeared to be embarrassed by these kindly assurances; and for some little time he remained silent. At last he answered:—

"Never in this world can I forget those generous words. But I have no secret attachment—no longing for any woman. This sickness of mine is not a sickness that doctors can cure; and money could not help me in the least. The truth is, that I have been so persecuted in this house that I scarcely care to live. Everywhere—by day and by night, whether in the shop or in my room, whether alone or in company—I have been unceasingly followed and tormented by the Shadow of a woman. And it is

long, long since I have been able to get even one night's rest. For so soon as I close my eyes, the Shadow of the woman takes me by the throat and strives to strangle me. So I cannot sleep...."

"And why did you not tell me this before?" asked Rokubei.

"Because I thought," the nephew answered, "that it would be of no use to tell you. The Shadow is not the ghost of a dead person. It is made by the hatred of a living person—a person whom you very well know."

"What person?" questioned Rokubei, in great astonishment.[2]

"The mistress of this house," whispered the youth,—"the wife of Kihei Sama.. .. She wishes to kill me."

*

Rokubei was bewildered by this confession. He doubted nothing of what his nephew had said; but he could not imagine a reason for the haunting. An ikiryō might be caused by disappointed love, or by violent hate,—without the knowledge of the person from whom it had emanated. To suppose any love in this case was impossible;—the wife of Kihei was considerably more than fifty years of age. But, on the other hand, what could the young clerk have done to provoke hatred,—a hatred capable of producing an ikiryō? He had been irreproachably well conducted, unfailingly courteous, and earnestly devoted to his duties. The mystery troubled Rokubei; but, after careful reflection, he decided to tell everything to Kihei, and to request an investigation.

Kihei was astounded; but in the time of forty years he had never had the least reason to doubt the word of Rokubei. He therefore summoned his wife at once, and carefully questioned her, telling her, at the same time, what the sick clerk had said. At first she turned pale, and wept; but, after some hesitation, she answered frankly:—

"I suppose that what the new clerk has said about the ikiryō is true,—though I really

tried never to betray, by word or look, the dislike which I could not help feeling for him. You know that he is very skilful in commerce,—very shrewd in everything that he does. And you have given him much authority in this house—power over the apprentices and the servants. But our only son, who should inherit this business, is very simple-hearted and easily deceived; and I have long been thinking that your clever new clerk might so delude our boy as to get possession of all this property. Indeed, I am certain that your clerk could at any time, without the least difficulty, and without the least risk to himself, ruin our business and ruin our son. And with this certainty in my mind, I cannot help fearing and hating the man. I have often and often wished that he were dead; I have even wished that it were in my own power to kill him. ... Yes, I know that it is wrong to hate any one in such a way; but I could not check the feeling. Night and day I have been wishing evil to that clerk. So I cannot doubt that he has really seen the thing of which he spoke to Rokubei."

"How absurd of you," exclaimed Kihei, "to torment yourself thus! Up to the present time that clerk has done no single thing for which he could be blamed; and you have caused him to suffer cruelly.... Now if I should send him away, with his uncle, to another town, to establish a branch business, could you not endeavour to think more kindly of him?"

"If I do not see his face or hear his voice," the wife answered,—"if you will only send him away from this house,—then I think that I shall be able to conquer my hatred of him."

"Try to do so," said Kihei;—"for, if you continue to hate him as you have been hating him, he will certainly die, and you will then be guilty of having caused the death of a man who has done us nothing but good. He has been, in every way, a most excellent servant."

Then Kihei quickly made arrangements for the establishment of a branch house in another city; and he sent Rokubei there with the clerk, to take charge. And thereafter

the ikiryō ceased to torment the young man, who soon recovered his health.

[1] Literally, "living spirit,"—that is to say, the ghost of a person still alive. An ikiryō may detach itself from the body under the influence of anger, and proceed to haunt and torment the individual by whom the anger was caused.

[2] An ikiryō is seen only by the person haunted.—For another illustration of this curious belief, see the paper entitled "The Stone Buddha" in my Out of the East, p. 171.

Shiryō[1]

On the death of Nomoto Yajiyémon, a daikwan[2] in the province of Echizen, his clerks entered into a conspiracy to defraud the family of their late master. Under pretext of paying some of the daikwan's debts, they took possession of all the money, valuables, and furniture in his house; and they furthermore prepared a false report to make it appear that he had unlawfully contracted obligations exceeding the worth of his estate. This false report they sent to the Saishō,[3] and the Saishō thereupon issued a decree banishing the widow and the children of Nomoto from the province of Echizen. For in those times the family of a daikwan were held in part responsible, even after his death, for any malfeasance proved against him.

But at the moment when the order of banishment was officially announced to the widow of Nomoto, a strange thing happened to a maid-servant in the house. She was seized with convulsions and shudderings, like a person possessed; and when the convulsions passed, she rose up, and cried out to the officers of the Saishō, and to the clerks of her late master:—

"Now listen to me! It is not a girl who is speaking to you; it is I,—Yajiyémon, Nomoto Yajiyémon,—returned to you from the dead. In grief and great anger do I return—grief and anger caused me by those in whom I vainly put my trust!... O you infamous and ungrateful clerks! how could you so forget the favours bestowed upon

you, as thus to ruin my property, and to disgrace my name?... Here, now, in my presence, let the accounts of my office and of my house be made; and let a servant be sent for the books of the Metsuké,[4] so that the estimates may be compared!"

As the maid uttered these words, all present were filled with astonishment; for her voice and her manner were the voice and the manner of Nomoto Yajiyémon. The guilty clerks turned pale. But the representatives of the Saishō at once commanded that the desire expressed by the girl should be fully granted. All the account-books of the office were promptly placed before her,—and the books of the Metsuké were brought in; and she began the reckoning. Without making a single error, she went through all the accounts, writing down the totals and correcting every false entry. And her writing, as she wrote, was seen to be the very writing of Nomoto Yajiyémon.

Now this reëxamination of the accounts not only proved that there had been no indebtedness, but also showed that there had been a surplus in the office treasury at the time of the daikwan's death. Thus the villany of the clerks became manifest.

And when all the accounts had been made up, the girl said, speaking in the very voice of Nomoto Yajiyémon:—

"Now everything is finished; and I can do nothing further in the matter. So I shall go back to the place from which I came."

Then she lay down, and instantly fell asleep; and she slept like a dead person during two days and two nights. [For great weariness and deep sleep fall upon the possessed, when the possessing spirit passes from them.] When she again awoke, her voice and her manner were the voice and the manner of a young girl; and neither at that time, nor at any time after, could she remember what had happened while she was possessed by the ghost or Nomoto Yajiyémon.

A report of this event was promptly sent to the Saishō; and the Saishō, in consequence, not only revoked the order of banishment, but made large gifts to the

family of the daikwan. Later on, various posthumous honours were conferred upon Nomoto Yajiyémon; and for many subsequent years his house was favoured by the Government, so that it prospered greatly. But the clerks received the punishment which they deserved.

[1] The term shiryō, "dead ghost,"—that is to say, the ghost of a dead person,—is used in contradistinction to the term ikiryō, signifying the apparition of a living person. Yūrei is a more generic name for ghosts of any sort.

[2] A daikwan was a district governor under the direct control of the Shōgunate. His functions were both civil and judicial.

[3] The Saishō was a high official of the Shōgunate, with duties corresponding to those of a prime minister.

[4] The Metsuké was a government official, charged with the duty of keeping watch over the conduct of local governors or district judges, and of inspecting their accounts.

The Story of O-Kamé

O-Kamé, daughter of the rich Gonyémon of Nagoshi, in the province of Tosa, was very fond of her husband, Hachiyémon. She was twenty-two, and Hachiyémon twenty-five. She was so fond of him that people imagined her to be jealous. But he never gave her the least cause for jealousy; and it is certain that no single unkind word was ever spoken between them.

Unfortunately the health of O-Kamé was feeble. Within less than two years after her marriage she was attacked by a disease, then prevalent in Tosa, and the best doctors were not able to cure her. Persons seized by this malady could not eat or drink; they remained constantly drowsy and languid, and troubled by strange fancies. And, in spite of constant care, O-Kamé grew weaker and weaker, day by day, until it became evident, even to herself, that she was going to die. Then she called her husband, and

said to him:—

"I cannot tell you how good you have been to me during this miserable sickness of mine. Surely no one could have been more kind. But that only makes it all the harder for me to leave you now.... Think! I am not yet even twenty-five,—and I have the best husband in all this world,—and yet I must die!... Oh, no, no! it is useless to talk to me about hope; the best Chinese doctors could do nothing for me. I did think to live a few months longer; but when I saw my face this morning in the mirror, I knew that I must die to-day,—yes, this very day. And there is something that I want to beg you to do for me—if you wish me to die quite happy."

"Only tell me what it is," Hachiyémon answered; "and if it be in my power to do, I shall be more than glad to do it."

"No, no—you will not be glad to do it," she returned: "you are still so young! It is difficult—very, very difficult—even to ask you to do such a thing; yet the wish for it is like a fire burning in my breast. I must speak it before I die.... My dear, you know that sooner or later, after I am dead, they will want you to take another wife. Will you promise me—can you promise me—not to marry again?..."

"Only that!" Hachiyémon exclaimed. "Why, if that be all that you wanted to ask for, your wish is very easily granted. With all my heart I promise you that no one shall ever take your place."

"Aa! uréshiya!" cried O-Kamé, half-rising from her couch;—"oh, how happy you have made me!"

And she fell back dead.

*

Now the health of Hachiyémon appeared to fail after the death of O-Kamé. At first the change in his aspect was attributed to natural grief, and the villagers only said, "How fond of her he must have been!" But, as the months went by, he grew paler and weaker, until at last he became so thin and wan that he looked more like a ghost

than a man. Then people began to suspect that sorrow alone could not explain this sudden decline of a man so young. The doctors said that Hachiyémon was not suffering from any known form of disease: they could not account for his condition; but they suggested that it might have been caused by some very unusual trouble of mind. Hachiyémon's parents questioned him in vain;—he had no cause for sorrow, he said, other than what they already knew. They counselled him to remarry; but he protested that nothing could ever induce him to break his promise to the dead.

*

Thereafter Hachiyémon continued to grow visibly weaker, day by day; and his family despaired of his life. But one day his mother, who felt sure that he had been concealing something from her, adjured him so earnestly to tell her the real cause of his decline, and wept so bitterly before him, that he was not able to resist her entreaties.

"Mother," he said, "it is very difficult to speak about this matter, either to you or to any one; and, perhaps, when I have told you everything, you will not be able to believe me. But the truth is that O-Kamé can find no rest in the other world, and that the Buddhist services repeated for her have been said in vain. Perhaps she will never be able to rest unless I go with her on the long black journey. For every night she returns, and lies down by my side. Every night, since the day of her funeral, she has come back. And sometimes I doubt if she be really dead; for she looks and acts just as when she lived,—except that she talks to me only in whispers. And she always bids me tell no one that she comes. It may be that she wants me to die; and I should not care to live for my own sake only. But it is true, as you have said, that my body really belongs to my parents, and that I owe to them the first duty. So now, mother, I tell you the whole truth.. .. Yes: every night she comes, just as I am about to sleep; and she remains until dawn. As soon as she hears the temple-bell, she goes away."

*

When the mother of Hachiyémon had heard these things, she was greatly alarmed; and, hastening at once to the parish-temple, she told the priest all that her son had confessed, and begged for ghostly help. The priest, who was a man of great age and experience, listened without surprise to the recital, and then said to her:—

"It is not the first time that I have known such a thing to happen; and I think that I shall be able to save your son. But he is really in great danger. I have seen the shadow of death upon his face; and, if O-Kamé return but once again, he will never behold another sunrise. Whatever can be done for him must be done quickly. Say nothing of the matter to your son; but assemble the members of both families as soon as possible, and tell them to come to the temple without delay. For your son's sake it will be necessary to open the grave of O-Kamé."

*

So the relatives assembled at the temple; and when the priest had obtained their consent to the opening of the sepulchre, he led the way to the cemetery. Then, under his direction, the tombstone of O-Kamé was shifted, the grave opened, and the coffin raised. And when the coffin-lid had been removed, all present were startled; for O-Kamé sat before them with a smile upon her face, seeming as comely as before the time of her sickness; and there was not any sign of death upon her. But when the priest told his assistants to lift the dead woman out of the coffin, the astonishment changed to fear; for the corpse was blood-warm to the touch, and still flexible as in life, notwithstanding the squatting posture in which it had remained so long.[1]

It was borne to the mortuary chapel; and there the priest, with a writing-brush, traced upon the brow and breast and limbs of the body the Sanscrit characters (Bonji) of certain holy talismanic words. And he performed a Ségaki-service for the spirit of O-Kamé, before suffering her corpse to be restored to the ground.

She never again visited her husband; and Hachiyémon gradually recovered his

health and strength. But whether he always kept his promise, the Japanese story-teller does not say.

[1] The Japanese dead are placed in a sitting posture in the coffin,—which is almost square in form.

Story of a Fly

About two hundred years ago, there lived in Kyoto a merchant named Kazariya Kyūbei. His shop was in the street called Teramachidōri, a little south of the Shimabara thoroughfare. He had a maid-servant named Tama,—a native of the province of Wakasa.

Tama was kindly treated by Kyūbei and his wife, and appeared to be sincerely attached to them. But she never cared to dress nicely, like other girls; and whenever she had a holiday she would go out in her working-dress, notwithstanding that she had been given several pretty robes. After she had been in the service of Kyūbei for about five years, he one day asked her why she never took any pains to look neat.

Tama blushed at the reproach implied by this question, and answered respectfully:—

"When my parents died, I was a very little girl; and, as they had no other child, it became my duty to have the Buddhist services performed on their behalf. At that time I could not obtain the means to do so; but I resolved to have their ihai [mortuary tablets] placed in the temple called Jōrakuji, and to have the rites performed, so soon as I could earn the money required. And in order to fulfil this resolve I have tried to be saving of my money and my clothes;—perhaps I have been too saving, as you have found me negligent of my person. But I have already been able to put by about one hundred mommé of silver for the purpose which I have mentioned; and hereafter I will try to appear before you looking neat. So I beg that you will kindly excuse my past negligence and rudeness."

Kyūbei was touched by this simple confession; and he spoke to the girl

kindly,—assuring her that she might consider herself at liberty thenceforth to dress as she pleased, and commending her filial piety.

*

Soon after this conversation, the maid Tama was able to have the tablets of her parents placed in the temple Jōrakuji, and to have the appropriate services performed. Of the money which she had saved she thus expended seventy mommé; and the remaining thirty mommé she asked her mistress to keep for her.

But early in the following winter Tama was suddenly taken ill; and after a brief sickness she died, on the eleventh day of the first month of the fifteenth year of Genroku [1702]. Kyūbei and his wife were much grieved by her death.

*

Now, about ten days later, a very large fly came into the house, and began to fly round and round the head of Kyūbei. This surprised Kyūbei, because no flies of any kind appear, as a rule, during the Period of Greatest Cold, and the larger kinds of flies are seldom seen except in the warm season. The fly annoyed Kyūbei so persistently that he took the trouble to catch it, and put it out of the house,—being careful the while to injure it in no way; for he was a devout Buddhist. It soon came back again, and was again caught and thrown out; but it entered a third time. Kyūbei's wife thought this a strange thing. "I wonder," she said, "if it is Tama." [For the dead—particularly those who pass to the state of Gaki—sometimes return in the form of insects.] Kyūbei laughed, and made answer, "Perhaps we can find out by marking it." He caught the fly, and slightly nicked the tips of its wings with a pair of scissors,—after which he carried it to a considerable distance from the house and let it go.

Next day it returned. Kyūbei still doubted whether its return had any ghostly significance. He caught it again, painted its wings and body with beni (rouge), carried it away from the house to a much greater distance than before, and set it free.

But, two days later, it came back, all red; and Kyūbei ceased to doubt.

"I think it is Tama," he said. "She wants something;—but what does she want?"

The wife responded:—

"I have still thirty mommé of her savings. Perhaps she wants us to pay that money to the temple, for a Buddhist service on behalf of her spirit. Tama was always very anxious about her next birth."

As she spoke, the fly fell from the paper window on which it had been resting. Kyūbei picked it up, and found that it was dead.

*

Thereupon the husband and wife resolved to go to the temple at once, and to pay the girl's money to the priests. They put the body of the fly into a little box, and took it along with them.

Jiku Shōnin, the chief priest of the temple, on hearing the story of the fly, decided that Kyūbei and his wife had acted rightly in the matter. Then Jiku Shōnin performed a Ségaki service on behalf of the spirit of Tama; and over the body of the fly were recited the eight rolls of the sûtra Myōten. And the box containing the body of the fly was buried in the grounds of the temple; and above the place a sotoba was set up, appropriately inscribed.

Story of a Pheasant

In the Toyama district of the province of Bishū, there formerly lived a young farmer and his wife. Their farm was situated in a lonely place, among the hills.

One night the wife dreamed that her father-in-law, who had died some years before, came to her and said, "To-morrow I shall be in great danger: try to save me if you can!" In the morning she told this to her husband; and they talked about the dream. Both imagined that the dead man wanted something; but neither could imagine what the words of the vision signified.

After breakfast, the husband went to the fields; but the wife remained at her loom. Presently she was startled by a great shouting outside. She went to the door, and saw the Jitō[1] of the district, with a hunting party, approaching the farm. While she stood watching them, a pheasant ran by her into the house; and she suddenly remembered her dream. "Perhaps it is my father-in-law," she thought to herself;—"I must try to save it!" Then, hurrying in after the bird,—a fine male pheasant,—she caught it without any difficulty, put it into the empty rice-pot, and covered the pot with the lid.

A moment later some of the Jitō's followers entered, and asked her whether she had seen a pheasant. She answered boldly that she had not; but one of the hunters declared that he had seen the bird run into the house. So the party searched for it, peeping into every nook and corner; but nobody thought of looking into the rice-pot. After looking everywhere else to no purpose, the men decided that the bird must have escaped through some hole; and they went away.

*

When the farmer came home his wife told him about the pheasant, which she had left in the rice-pot, so that he might see it. "When I caught it," she said, "it did not struggle in the least; and it remained very quiet in the pot. I really think that it is father-in-law." The farmer went to the pot, lifted the lid, and took out the bird. It remained still in his hands, as if tame, and looked at him as if accustomed to his presence. One of its eyes was blind. "Father was blind of one eye," the farmer said,—"the right eye; and the right eye of this bird is blind. Really, I think it is father. See! it looks at us just as father used to do!... Poor father must have thought to himself, 'Now that I am a bird, better to give my body to my children for food than to let the hunters have it.'... And that explains your dream of last night," he added,—turning to his wife with an evil smile as he wrung the pheasant's neck.

At the sight of that brutal act, the woman screamed, and cried out:—

"Oh, you wicked man! Oh, you devil! Only a man with the heart of a devil could do what you have done!... And I would rather die than continue to be the wife of such a man!"

And she sprang to the door, without waiting even to put on her sandals. He caught her sleeve as she leaped; but she broke away from him, and ran out, sobbing as she ran. And she ceased not to run, barefooted, till she reached the town, when she hastened directly to the residence of the Jitō. Then, with many tears, she told the Jitō everything: her dream of the night before the hunting, and how she had hidden the pheasant in order to save it, and how her husband had mocked her, and had killed it.

The Jitō spoke to her kindly, and gave orders that she should be well cared for; but he commanded his officers to seize her husband.

Next day the farmer was brought up for judgment; and, after he had been made to confess the truth concerning the killing of the pheasant, sentence was pronounced. The Jitō said to him:—

"Only a person of evil heart could have acted as you have acted; and the presence of so perverse a being is a misfortune to the community in which he happens to reside. The people under Our jurisdiction are people who respect the sentiment of filial piety; and among them you cannot be suffered to live."

So the farmer was banished from the district, and forbidden ever to return to it on pain of death. But to the woman the Jitō made a donation of land; and at a later time he caused her to be provided with a good husband.

[1] The lord of the district, who acted both as governor and magistrate.

The Story of Chūgorō

Along time ago there lived, in the Koishi-kawa quarter of Yedo, a hatamoto named Suzuki, whose yashiki was situated on the bank of the Yedogawa, not far from the bridge called Naka-no-hashi. And among the retainers of this Suzuki there was an

ashigaru[1] named Chūgorō. Chūgorō was a handsome lad, very amiable and clever, and much liked by his comrades.

For several years Chūgorō remained in the service of Suzuki, conducting himself so well that no fault was found with him. But at last the other ashigaru discovered that Chūgorō was in the habit of leaving the yashiki every night, by way of the garden, and staying out until a little before dawn. At first they said nothing to him about this strange behaviour; for his absences did not interfere with any regular duty, and were supposed to be caused by some love-affair. But after a time he began to look pale and weak; and his comrades, suspecting some serious folly, decided to interfere. Therefore, one evening, just as he was about to steal away from the house, an elderly retainer called him aside, and said:—

"Chūgorō, my lad, we know that you go out every night and stay away until early morning; and we have observed that you are looking unwell. We fear that you are keeping bad company, and injuring your health. And unless you can give a good reason for your conduct, we shall think that it is our duty to report this matter to the Chief Officer. In any case, since we are your comrades and friends, it is but right that we should know why you go out at night, contrary to the custom of this house."

Chūgorō appeared to be very much embarrassed and alarmed by these words. But after a short silence he passed into the garden, followed by his comrade. When the two found themselves well out of hearing of the rest, Chūgorō stopped, and said:—

"I will now tell you everything; but I must entreat you to keep my secret. If you repeat what I tell you, some great misfortune may befall me.

"It was in the early part of last spring—about five months ago—that I first began to go out at night, on account of a love-affair. One evening, when I was returning to the yashiki after a visit to my parents, I saw a woman standing by the riverside, not far from the main gateway. She was dressed like a person of high rank; and I thought it strange that a woman so finely dressed should be standing there alone at such an

hour. But I did not think that I had any right to question her; and I was about to pass her by, without speaking, when she stepped forward and pulled me by the sleeve. Then I saw that she was very young and handsome. 'Will you not walk with me as far as the bridge?' she said; 'I have something to tell you.' Her voice was very soft and pleasant; and she smiled as she spoke; and her smile was hard to resist. So I walked with her toward the bridge; and on the way she told me that she had often seen me going in and out of the yashiki, and had taken a fancy to me. 'I wish to have you for my husband,' she said;—'if you can like me, we shall be able to make each other very happy.' I did not know how to answer her; but I thought her very charming. As we neared the bridge, she pulled my sleeve again, and led me down the bank to the very edge of the river. 'Come in with me,' she whispered, and pulled me toward the water. It is deep there, as you know; and I became all at once afraid of her, and tried to turn back. She smiled, and caught me by the wrist, and said, 'Oh, you must never be afraid with me!' And, somehow, at the touch of her hand, I became more helpless than a child. I felt like a person in a dream who tries to run, and cannot move hand or foot. Into the deep water she stepped, and drew me with her; and I neither saw nor heard nor felt anything more until I found myself walking beside her through what seemed to be a great palace, full of light. I was neither wet nor cold: everything around me was dry and warm and beautiful. I could not understand where I was, nor how I had come there. The woman led me by the hand: we passed through room after room,—through ever so many rooms, all empty, but very fine,—until we entered into a guest-room of a thousand mats. Before a great alcove, at the farther end, lights were burning, and cushions laid as for a feast; but I saw no guests. She led me to the place of honour, by the alcove, and seated herself in front of me, and said: 'This is my home: do you think that you could be happy with me here?' As she asked the question she smiled; and I thought that her smile was more beautiful than anything else in the world; and out of my heart I answered, 'Yes....' In the same moment I remembered the story of Urashima; and I imagined

that she might be the daughter of a god; but I feared to ask her any questions.... Presently maid-servants came in, bearing rice-wine and many dishes, which they set before us. Then she who sat before me said: 'To-night shall be our bridal night, because you like me; and this is our wedding-feast.' We pledged ourselves to each other for the time of seven existences; and after the banquet we were conducted to a bridal chamber, which had been prepared for us.

"It was yet early in the morning when she awoke me, and said: 'My dear one, you are now indeed my husband. But for reasons which I cannot tell you, and which you must not ask, it is necessary that our marriage remain secret. To keep you here until daybreak would cost both of us our lives. Therefore do not, I beg of you, feel displeased because I must now send you back to the house of your lord. You can come to me to-night again, and every night hereafter, at the same hour that we first met. Wait always for me by the bridge; and you will not have to wait long. But remember, above all things, that our marriage must be a secret, and that, if you talk about it, we shall probably be separated forever.'

"I promised to obey her in all things,—remembering the fate of Urashima,—and she conducted me through many rooms, all empty and beautiful, to the entrance. There she again took me by the wrist, and everything suddenly became dark, and I knew nothing more until I found myself standing alone on the river bank, close to the Naka-no-hashi. When I got back to the yashiki, the temple bells had not yet begun to ring.

"In the evening I went again to the bridge, at the hour she had named, and I found her waiting for me. She took me with her, as before, into the deep water, and into the wonderful place where we had passed our bridal night. And every night, since then, I have met and parted from her in the same way. To-night she will certainly be waiting for me, and I would rather die than disappoint her: therefore I must go.... But let me again entreat you, my friend, never to speak to any one about what I have told

you."

*

The elder ashigaru was surprised and alarmed by this story. He felt that Chūgorō had told him the truth; and the truth suggested unpleasant possibilities. Probably the whole experience was an illusion, and an illusion produced by some evil power for a malevolent end. Nevertheless, if really bewitched, the lad was rather to be pitied than blamed; and any forcible interference would be likely to result in mischief. So the ashigaru answered kindly:—

"I shall never speak of what you have told me—never, at least, while you remain alive and well. Go and meet the woman; but—beware of her! I fear that you are being deceived by some wicked spirit."

Chūgorō only smiled at the old man's warning, and hastened away. Several hours later he reentered the yashiki, with a strangely dejected look. "Did you meet her?" whispered his comrade. "No," replied Chūgorō; "she was not there. For the first time, she was not there. I think that she will never meet me again. I did wrong to tell you;—I was very foolish to break my promise...." The other vainly tried to console him. Chūgorō lay down, and spoke no word more. He was trembling from head to foot, as if he had caught a chill.

*

When the temple bells announced the hour of dawn, Chūgorō tried to get up, and fell back senseless. He was evidently sick,—deathly sick. A Chinese physician was summoned.

"Why, the man has no blood!" exclaimed the doctor, after a careful examination;—"there is nothing but water in his veins! It will be very difficult to save him.... What maleficence is this?"

*

Everything was done that could be done to save Chūgorō's life—but in vain. He died as the sun went down. Then his comrade related the whole story.

"Ah! I might have suspected as much!" exclaimed the doctor.... "No power could have saved him. He was not the first whom she destroyed."

"Who is she?—or what is she?" the ashigaru asked,—"a Fox-Woman?"

"No; she has been haunting this river from ancient time. She loves the blood of the young...."

"A Serpent-Woman?—A Dragon-Woman?"

"No, no! If you were to see her under that bridge by daylight, she would appear to you a very loathsome creature."

"But what kind of a creature?"

"Simply a Frog,—a great and ugly Frog!"

[1] The ashigaru were the lowest class of retainers in military service.

A Woman's Diary

Recently there was put into my hands a somewhat remarkable manuscript,—seventeen long narrow sheets of soft paper, pierced with a silken string, and covered with fine Japanese characters. It was a kind of diary, containing the history of a woman's married life, recorded by herself. The writer was dead; and the diary had been found in a small work-box (haribako) which had belonged to her.

The friend who lent me the manuscript gave me leave to translate as much of it as I might think worth publishing. I have gladly availed myself of this unique opportunity to present in English the thoughts and feelings, joys and sorrows, of a simple woman of the people—just as she herself recorded them in the frankest possible way, never dreaming that any foreign eye would read her humble and touching memoir.

But out of respect to her gentle ghost, I have tried to use the manuscript in such a way only as could not cause her the least pain if she were yet in the body, and able to read me. Some parts I have omitted, because I thought them sacred. Also I have left out a few details relating to customs or to local beliefs that the Western reader could scarcely understand, even with the aid of notes. And the names, of course, have been changed. Otherwise I have followed the text as closely as I could,—making no changes of phrase except when the Japanese original could not be adequately interpreted by a literal rendering.

*

In addition to the facts stated or suggested in the diary itself, I could learn but very little of the writer's personal history. She was a woman of the poorest class; and from her own narrative it appears that she remained unmarried until she was nearly thirty. A younger sister had been married several years previously; and the diary does not explain this departure from custom. A small photograph found with the manuscript shows that its author never could have been called good-looking; but the face has a certain pleasing expression of shy gentleness. Her husband was a kozukai,[1] employed in one of the great public offices, chiefly for night duty, at a salary of ten yen per month. In order to help him to meet the expenses of housekeeping, she made cigarettes for a tobacco dealer.

*

The manuscript shows that she must have been at school for some years: she could write the kana very nicely, but she had not learned many Chinese characters,—so that her work resembles the work of a schoolgirl. But it is written without mistakes, and skilfully. The dialect is of Tōkyō,—the common speech of the city people,—full of idiomatic expressions, but entirely free from coarseness.

*

Some one might naturally ask why this poor woman, so much occupied with the

constant struggle for mere existence, should have taken the pains to write down what she probably never intended to be read. I would remind such a questioner of the old Japanese teaching that literary composition is the best medicine for sorrow; and I would remind him also of the fact that, even among the poorest classes, poems are still composed upon all occasions of joy or pain. The latter part of the diary was written in lonely hours of illness; and I suppose that she then wrote chiefly in order to keep her thoughts composed at a time when solitude had become dangerous for her. A little before her death, her mind gave way; and these final pages probably represent the last brave struggle of the spirit against the hopeless weakness of the flesh.

*

I found that the manuscript was inscribed, on the outside sheet, with the title, Mukashi-hanashi: "A Story of Old Times." According to circumstances, the word mukashi may signify either "long ago," in reference to past centuries, or "old times," in reference to one's own past life. The latter is the obvious meaning in the present case.

Mukashi-Banashi

On the evening of the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month of the twenty-eighth year of Meiji [1895]? man of the opposite house came and asked:—

"As for the eldest daughter of this family, is it agreeable that she be disposed of in marriage?"

Then the answer was given:—

"Even though the matter were agreeable [to our wishes], no preparation for such an event has yet been made."[2]

The man of the opposite house said:—

"But as no preparation is needed in this case, will you not honourably give her to the

person for whom I speak? He is said to be a very steady man; and he is thirty-eight years of age. As I thought your eldest girl to be about twenty-six, I proposed her to him...."

"No,—she is twenty-nine years old," was answered.

"Ah!... That being the case, I must again speak to the other party; and I shall honourably consult with you after I have seen him."

So saying, the man went away.

Next evening the man came again,—this time with the wife of Okada-Shi[3] [a friend of the family],—and said:—

"The other party is satisfied;—so, if you are willing, the match can be made."

Father replied:—

"As the two are, both of them, shichi-séki-kin ["seven-red-metal"],[4] they should have the same nature;—so I think that no harm can come of it."

The match-maker asked:—

"Then how would it be to arrange for the miai[5] ["see-meeting"] to-morrow?"

Father said:—

"I suppose that everything really depends upon the En [karma-relation formed in previous states of existence].... Well, then, I beg that you will honourably meet us to-morrow evening at the house of Okada."

Thus the betrothal promise was given on both sides.

*

The person of the opposite house wanted me to go with him next evening to Okada's; but I said that I wished to go with my mother only, as from the time of taking such a first step one could not either retreat or advance. When I went with mother to the house, we were welcomed in with the words, "Kochira ē!" Then [my future husband and I] greeted each other for the first time. But somehow I felt so

much ashamed that I could not look at him.

Then Okada-Shi said to Namiki-Shi [the proposed husband]: "Now that you have nobody to consult with at home, would it not be well for you to snatch your luck where you find it, as the proverb says,—'Zen wa isogé'?"

The answer was made:—

"As for me, I am well satisfied; but I do not know what the feeling may be on the other side."

"If it be honourably deigned to take me as it is honourably known that I am ..."[6] I said.

The match-maker said:—

"The matter being so, what would be a good day for the wedding?"

[Namaki-Shi answered:—]

"Though I can be at home to-morrow, perhaps the first day of the tenth month would be a better day."

But Okada-Shi at once said:—

"As there is cause for anxiety about the house being unoccupied while Namiki-Shi is absent [on night-duty], to-morrow would perhaps be the better day—would it not?"

Though at first that seemed to me much too soon, I presently remembered that the next day was a Taian-nichi[7] [perfectly fortunate day]: so I gave my consent; and we went home.

When I told father, he was not pleased. He said that it was too soon, and that a delay of at least three or four days ought to have been allowed. Also he said that the direction [hōgaku][8] was not lucky, and that other conditions were not favourable.

I said:—

"But I have already promised; and I cannot now ask to have the day changed. Indeed it would be a great pity if a thief were to enter the house in [his] absence. As for the

matter of the direction being unlucky, even though I should have to die on that account, I would not complain; for I should die in my own husband's house.. .. And to-morrow," I added, "I shall be too busy to call on Goto [her brother-in-law]: so I must go there now." I went to Goto's; but, when I saw him, I felt afraid to say exactly what I had come to say. I suggested it only by telling him:—

"To-morrow I have to go to a strange house."

Goto immediately asked:—

"As an honourable daughter-in-law [bride]?"

After hesitating, I answered at last:—

"Yes."

"What kind of a person?" Goto asked.

I answered:—

"If I had felt myself able to look at him long enough to form any opinion, I would not have put mother to the trouble of going with me."

"Ané-San [Elder Sister]!" he exclaimed,—"then what was the use of going to see him at all?... But," he added, in a more pleasant tone, "let me wish you luck."

"Anyhow," I said, "to-morrow it will be."

And I returned home.

*

Now the appointed day having come—the twenty-eighth day of the ninth month—I had so much to do that I did not know how I should ever be able to get ready. And as it had been raining for several days, the roadway was very bad, which made matters worse for me—though, luckily, no rain fell on that day. I had to buy some little things; and I could not well ask mother to do anything for me,—much as I wished for her help,—because her feet had become very weak by reason of her great age. So I got up very early and went out alone, and did the best I could: nevertheless,

it was two o'clock in the afternoon before I got everything ready.

Then I had to go to the hair-dresser's to have my hair dressed, and to go to the bath-house—all of which took time. And when I came back to dress, I found that no message had yet been received from Namiki-Shi; and I began to feel a little anxious. Just after we had finished supper, the message came. I had scarcely time to say good-by to all: then I went out,—leaving my home behind forever,—and walked with mother to the house of Okada-Shi.

There I had to part even from mother; and the wife of Okada-Shi taking charge of me, I accompanied her to the house of Namaki-Shi in Funamachi.

The wedding ceremony of the sansan-kudo-no-sakazuki[9] having been performed without any difficulty, and the time of the o-hiraki ["honourable-blossoming"][10] having come more quickly than I had expected, the guests all returned home.

So we two were left, for the first time, each alone with the other—sitting face to face: my heart beat wildly;[11] and I felt abashed in such a way as could not be expressed by means of ink and paper.

Indeed, what I felt can be imagined only by one who remembers leaving her parents' home for the first time, to become a bride,—a daughter-in-law in a strange house.

*

Afterward, at the hour of meals, I felt very much distressed [embarrassed]....

*

Two or three days later, the father of my husband's former wife [who was dead] visited me, and said:—

"Namiki-Shi is really a good man,—a moral, steady man; but as he is also very particular about small matters and inclined to find fault, you had better always be careful to try to please him."

Now as I had been carefully watching my husband's ways from the beginning, I

knew that he was really a very strict man, and I resolved so to conduct myself in all matters as never to cross his will.

*

The fifth day of the tenth month was the day for our satogaëri,[12] and for the first time we went out together, calling at Goto's on the way. After we left Goto's, the weather suddenly became bad, and it began to rain. Then we borrowed a paper umbrella, which we used as an aigasa[13]; and though I was very uneasy lest any of my former neighbours should see us walking thus together, we luckily reached my parents' house, and made our visit of duty, without any trouble at all. While we were in the house, the rain fortunately stopped.

*

On the ninth day of the same month I went with him to the theatre for the first time. We visited the Engiza at Akasaka, and saw a performance by the Yamaguchi company.

*

On the eighth day of the eleventh month, we made a visit to Asakusa-temple,[14] and also went to the [Shinto temple of the] O-Tori-Sama.

—During this last month of the year I made new spring robes for my husband and myself: then I learned for the first time how pleasant such work was, and I felt very happy.

*

On the twenty-fifth day we visited the temple of Ten-jin-Sama,[15] and walked about the grounds there.

*

On the eleventh day of the first month of the twenty-ninth year [1896], called at Okada's.

*

On the twelfth day we paid a visit to Goto's, and had a pleasant time there.

On the ninth day of the second month we went to the Mizaki theatre to see the play Imosé-Yama. On our way to the theatre we met Goto-Shi unexpectedly; and he went with us. But unluckily it began to rain as we were returning home, and we found the roads very muddy.

On the twenty-second day of the same month [we had our] photograph taken at Amano's.

*

On the twenty-fifth day of the third month we went to the Haruki theatre, and saw the play Uguisuzuka.—During the month it was agreed that all of us [kindred, friends, and parents] should make up a party, and enjoy our hanami[16] together; but this could not be managed.

*

On the tenth day of the fourth month, at nine o'clock in the morning, we two went out for a walk. We first visited the Shōkonsha [Shintō shrine] at Kudan: thence we walked to Uyéno [park]; and from there we went to Asakusa, and visited the Kwannon temple; and we also prayed at the Monzéki [Higashi Hongwanji]. Thence we had intended to go round to Asakusa-Okuyama; but we thought that it would be better to have dinner first—so we went to an eating-house. While we were dining, we heard such a noise of shouting and screaming that we thought there was a great quarrel outside. But the trouble was really caused by a fire in one of the misémono ["shows"]. The fire spread quickly, even while we were looking at it; and nearly all the show-buildings in that street were burnt up.... We left the eating-house soon after, and walked about the Asakusa grounds, looking at things.

[Here follows, in the original Ms., the text of a little poem, composed by the writer herself:—]

Imado no watashi nité, Aimita koto mo naki hito ni, Fushigi ni Miméguri-Inari, Kaku mo fūfu ni naru nomika. Hajimé no omoi ni hikikaëté, Itsushika-kokoro mo Sumidagawa. Tsugai hanarénu miyakodori, Hito mo urayaméba wagami mo mata, Sakimidarétaru doté no hana yori mo, Hana ni mo mashita sono hito to Shirahigé-Yashiro ni naru madé mo. Soïtogétashi to inorinenji!

[Freely translated.][17]

Having been taken across the Imado-Ferry, I strangely met at [the temple of] Miméguri-Inari with a person whom I had never seen before. Because of this meeting our relation is now even more than the relation of husband and wife. And my first anxious doubt, "For how long—?" having passed away, my mind has become [clear] as the Sumida River. Indeed we are now like a pair of Miyako-birds [always together]; and I even think that I deserve to be envied. [To see the flowers we went out; but] more than the pleasure of viewing a whole shore in blossom is the pleasure that I now desire,—always to dwell with this person, dearer to me than any flower, until we enter the Shirahigé-Yashiro. That we may so remain together, I supplicate the Gods!

... Then we crossed the Azuma bridge on our homeward way; and we went by steamer to the kaichō [festival] of the temple of the Soga-Kyōdai,[18] and prayed that love and concord should continue always between ourselves and our brothers and sisters. It was after seven o'clock that evening when we got home.

—On the twenty-fifth day of the same month we went to the Rokumono-no-Yosé.[19]

On the second day of the fifth month we visited [the gardens at] Ōkubo to see the azaleas in blossom. On the sixth day of the same month we went to see a display of fireworks at the Shōkonsha.

—So far we had never had any words between us nor any disagreement;[20] and I had ceased to feel bashful when we went out visiting or sight-seeing. Now each of

us seemed to think only of how to please the other; and I felt sure that nothing would ever separate us.... May our relation always be thus happy!

The eighteenth day of the sixth month, being the festival of the Suga-jinja,[21] we were invited to my father's house. But as the hair-dresser did not come to dress my hair at the proper time, I was much annoyed. However, I went with O-Tori-San [a younger sister] to father's. Presently O-Kō-San [a married sister] also came;—and we had a pleasant time. In the evening Goto-Shi [husband of O-Kō] joined us; and, last of all, came my husband, for whom I had been waiting with anxious impatience. And there was one thing that made me very glad. Often when he and I were to go out together, I had proposed that we should put on the new spring robes which I had made; but he had as often refused,—preferring to wear his old kimono. Now, however, he wore the new one,—having felt obliged to put it on because of father's invitation.... All of us being thus happily assembled, the party became more and more enjoyable; and when we had at last to say good-by, we only regretted the shortness of the summer night.

These are the poems which we composed that evening:—

Futa-fūfu Sorōté iwō, Ujigami no Matsuri mo kyō wa Nigiwai ni kéri. —By Namiki (the husband).

Two wedded couples having gone together to worship at the temple, the parish-festival to-day has been merrier than ever before.

Ujigami no Matsuri médétashi Futa-fūfu.—Also by the husband.

Fortunate indeed for two married couples has been the parish-temple festival!

Ikutosé mo Nigiyaka narishi, Ujigami no, Matsuri ni sorō, Kyō no uréshisa.—By the wife.

Though for ever so many years it has always been a joyous occasion, the festival of our parish-temple to-day is more pleasant than ever before, because of our being thus happily assembled together.

Matsuri toté, Ikka atsumaru, Tanoshimi wa! Géni Ujigami no Mégumi narikéri. —By the wife.

To-day being a day of festival, and all of us meeting together,—what a delight! Surely by the favour of the tutelar God [Ujigami] this has come to pass.

Futa-fūfu Sorōté kyō no Shitashimi mo, Kami no mégumi zo Médéta kari-kéri.—By the wife.

Two wedded pairs being to-day united in such friendship as this,—certainly it has happened only through the favour of the Gods!

Ujigami no Mégumi mo fukaki Fūfu-zuré.—By the wife.

Deep indeed is the favour of the tutelar God to the two married couples.

Matsuri toté, Tsui ni shitatéshi Iyō-gasuri, Kyō tanoshimi ni Kiru to omoëba. —By the wife.

This day being a day of festival, we decided to put on, for the joyful meeting, the robes of Iyogasuri,[22] that had been made alike.

Omoïkya! Hakarazu sōro Futa-fūfu; Nani ni tatōën Kyō no kichi-jitsu. —By Goto (the brother-in-law).

How could we have thought it! Here unexpectedly the two married couples meet together. What can compare with the good fortune of this day?

Matsuri toté Hajimété sorō Futa-fūfu, Nochi no kaëri zo Ima wa kanashiki. —By O-Kō, the married sister.

This day being a day of festival, here for the first time two wedded pairs have met. Already I find myself sorrowing at the thought that we must separate again.

Furu-sato no Matsuri ni sorō Futa-fūfu: Katarō ma saë Natsu mo mijika yo! —By O-Kō.

At the old parental home, two married couples have met together in holiday celebration. Alas! that the time of our happy converse should be only one short

summer night!

On the fifth day of the seventh month, went to the Kanazawa-tei,[23] where Harimadayū was then reciting; and we heard him recite the jōruri called Sanjūsangendō.

On the first day of the eighth month we went to the [Buddhist] temple of Asakusa [Kwannon] to pray,—that day being the first anniversary [isshūki] of the death of my husband's former wife. Afterward we went to an eel-house, near the Azuma bridge, for dinner; and while we were there—just about the hour of noon—an earthquake took place. Being close to the river, the house rocked very much; and I was greatly frightened.

—Remembering that when we went to Asakusa before, in the time of cherry blossoms, we had seen a big fire, this earthquake made me feel anxious;—I wondered whether lightning would come next.[24]

About two o'clock we left the eating-house, and went to the Asakusa park. From there we went by street-car to Kanda; and we stopped awhile at a cool place in Kanda, to rest ourselves. On our way home we called at father's, and it was after nine o'clock when we got back.

*

The fifteenth day of the same month was the festival of the Hachiman-jinja[25]; and Goto, my sister, and the younger sister of Goto came to the house. I had hoped that we could all go to the temple together; but that morning my husband had taken a little too much wine,—so we had to go without him. After worshipping at the temple, we went to Goto's house; and I stopped there awhile before returning home.

*

In the ninth month, on the occasion of the Higan[26] festival, I went alone to the [Buddhist] temple to pray.

On the twenty-first day of the tenth month, O-Taka-San [probably a relative] came from Shidzuoka. I wanted to take her to the theatre the next day; but she was obliged to leave Tōkyō early in the morning. However, my husband and I went to the Ryūsei theatre on the following evening; and we saw the play called Matsumaë Bidan Teichū-Kagami.[27]

On the twenty-second day of the sixth month I began to sew a kimono which father had asked me to make for him; but I felt ill, and could not do much. However, I was able to finish the work on the first day of the new year [1897].

... Now we were very happy because of the child that was to be born. And I thought how proud and glad my parents would be at having a grandchild for the first time.

On the tenth day of the fifth month I went out with mother to worship Shiogama-Sama,[28] and also to visit Sengakuji. There we saw the tombs of the Shijin-shichi Shi [Forty-seven Rōnin], and many relics of their history. We returned by railroad, taking the train from Shinagawa to Shinjiku. At Shiochō-Sanchōmé I parted from mother, and I got home by six o'clock.

On the eighth day of the sixth month, at four o'clock in the afternoon, a boy was born. Both mother and child appeared to be as well as could be wished; and the child much resembled my husband; and its eyes were large and black.... But I must say that it was a very small child; for, though it ought to have been born in the eighth month, it was born indeed in the sixth.... At seven o'clock in the evening of the same day, when the time came to give the child some medicine, we saw, by the light of the lamp, that he was looking all about, with his big eyes wide open. During that night the child slept in my mother's bosom. As we had been told that he must be kept very warm, because he was only a seven-months' child, it was decided that he should be kept in the bosom by day as well as by night.

Next day—the ninth day of the sixth month—at half-past six o'clock in the afternoon, he suddenly died....

*

—"Brief is the time of pleasure, and quickly turns to pain; and whatsoever is born must necessarily die"[29];—that, indeed, is a true saying about this world.

*

Only for one day to be called a mother!—to have a child born only to see it die!... Surely, I thought, if a child must die within two days after birth, it were better that it should never be born.

From the twelfth to the sixth month I had been so ill!—then at last I had obtained some ease, and joy at the birth of a son; and I had received so many congratulations about my good fortune;—and, nevertheless, he was dead!... Indeed, I suffered great grief.

On the tenth day of the sixth month the funeral took place, at the temple called Senpukuji, in Ōkubo, and a small tomb was erected.

The poems composed at that time[30] were the following:—

Omoïkya! Mi ni saë kaënu Nadéshiko ni, Wakaréshi sodé no Tsuyu no tamoto wo!

If I could, only have known! Ah, this parting with the flower,[31] for which I would so gladly have given my own life, has left my sleeves wet with the dew!

Samidaré ya! Shimérigachi naru Sodé no tamoto wo.

Oh! the month of rain![32] All things become damp;—the ends of my sleeves are wet.

Some little time afterward, people told me that if I planted the sotoba[33] upside down, another misfortune of this kind would not come to pass. I had a great many sorrowful doubts about doing such a thing; but at last, on the ninth day of the eighth month, I had the sotoba reversed....

*

On the eighth day of the ninth month we went to the Akasaka theatre.

*

On the eighteenth day of the tenth month I went by myself to the Haruki theatre in Hongō, to see the play of Ōkubo Hikozaëmon.[34] There, having carelessly lost my sandal-ticket [gésoku-fuda], I had to remain until after everybody else had left. Then I was at last able to get my sandals, and to go home; but the night was so black that I felt very lonesome on the way.

On the day of the Sekku,[35]in the first month [1898], I was talking with Hori's aunt and the wife of our friend Uchimi, when I suddenly felt a violent pain in my breast, and, being frightened, I tried to reach a talisman (o-mamori) of Suitengū,[36] which was lying upon the wardrobe. But in the same moment I fell senseless. Under kind treatment I soon came to myself again; but I was ill for a long time after.

The tenth day of the fourth month being the holiday Sanjiu-nen-Sai,[37] we arranged to meet at father's. I was to go there first with Jiunosuké [perhaps a relative], and there wait for my husband, who had to go to the office that morning for a little while. He met us at father's house about half-past eight: then the three of us went out together to look at the streets. We passed through Kōjimachi to Nakatamachi, and went by way of the Sakurada-Mon to the Hibiya-Metsuké, and thence from Ginzadōri by way of the Mégané-Bashi to Uyéno. After looking at things there, we again went to the Mégané-Bashi; but then I felt so tired that I proposed to return, and my husband agreed, as he also was very tired. But Jiunosuké said: "As I do not want to miss this chance to see the Daimyō-procession,[38] I must go on to Ginza." So there we said good-by to him, and we went to a little eating-house [tempura-ya], where we were served with fried fish; and, as luck would have it, we got a good chance to see the Daimyō-procession from that very house. We did not get back home that evening until half-past six o'clock.

*

From the middle of the fourth month I had much sorrow on account of a matter

relating to my sister Tori [the matter is not mentioned].

On the nineteenth day of the eighth month of the thirty-first year of Meiji [1898] my second child was born, almost painlessly,—a girl; and we named her Hatsu. We invited to the shichiya[39] all those who had helped us at the time of the child's birth.

—Mother afterwards remained with me for a couple of days; but she was then obliged to leave me, because my sister Kō was suffering from severe pains in the chest. Fortunately my husband had his regular vacation about the same time; and he helped me all he could,—even in regard to washing and other matters; but I was often greatly troubled because I had no woman with me....

When my husband's vacation was over, mother came often, but only while my husband was away. The twenty-one days [the period of danger] thus passed; but mother and child continued well.

—Up to the time of one hundred days after my daughter's birth, I was constantly anxious about her, because she often seemed to have a difficulty in breathing. But that passed off at last, and she appeared to be getting strong.

Still, we were unhappy about one matter,—a deformity: Hatsu had been born with a double thumb on one hand. For a long time we could not make up our minds to take her to a hospital, in order to have an operation performed. But at last a woman living near our house told us of a very skilful surgeon in [the quarter of] Shinjiku; and we decided to go to him. My husband held the child on his lap during the operation. I could not bear to see the operation; and I waited in the next room, my heart full of pain and fear, wondering how the matter would end. But [when all was over] the little one did not appear to suffer any pain; and she took the breast as usual a few minutes after. So the matter ended more fortunately than I had thought possible.

At home she continued to take her milk as before, and seemed as if nothing had been done to her little body. But as she was so very young we were afraid that the

operation might in some way cause her to be sick. By way of precaution, I went with her to the hospital every day for about three weeks; but she showed no sign of sickness.

*

On the third day of the third month of the thirty-second year [1899], on the occasion of the hatsu-sekku,[40] we received presents of Dairi and of hina, both from father's house and from Goto's,—also the customary gifts of congratulation: a tansu [chest of drawers], a kyōdai [mirror-stand], and a haribako [work-box: lit. "needle-box"][41] We ourselves on the same occasion bought for her a chadai [teacup stand], a zen [lacquered tray], and some other little things. Both Goto and Jiunosuké came to see us on that day; and we had a very happy gathering.

*

On the third day of the fourth month we visited the temple Ana-Hachiman [Shintō shrine in the district of Waséda] to pray for the child's health....

On the twenty-ninth day of the fourth month Hatsu appeared to be unwell: so I wanted to have her examined by a doctor.

A doctor promised to come the same morning, but he did not come, and I waited for him in vain all that day. Next day again I waited, but he did not come. Toward evening Hatsu became worse, and seemed to be suffering great pain in her breast, and I resolved to take her to a doctor early next morning. All through that night I was very uneasy about her, but at daybreak she seemed to be better. So I went out alone, taking her on my back, and walked to the office of a doctor in Akasaka. But when I asked to have the child examined, I was told that I must wait, as it was not yet the regular time for seeing patients.

While I was waiting, the child began to cry worse than ever before; she would not take the breast, and I could do nothing to soothe her, either by walking or resting, so that I was greatly troubled. At last the doctor came, and began to examine her; and

in the same moment I noticed that her crying grew feebler, and that her lips were becoming paler and paler. Then, as I could not remain silent, seeing her thus, I had to ask, "How is her condition?" "She cannot live until evening," he answered. "But could you not give her medicine?" I asked. "If she could drink it," he replied.

I wanted to go back home at once, and send word to my husband and to my father's house; but the shock had been too much for me—all my strength suddenly left me. Fortunately a kind old woman came to my aid, and carried my umbrella and other things, and helped me to get into a jinrikisha, so that I was able to return home by jinrikisha. Then I sent a man to tell my husband and my father. Mita's wife came to help me; and with her assistance everything possible was done to help the child.... Still my husband did not come back. But all our pain and trouble was in vain.

So, on the second day of the fifth month of the thirty-second year, my child set out on her journey to the Jūmanokudō[42]—never to return to this world.

*

And we, her father and mother, were yet living—though we had caused her death by neglecting to have her treated by a skilled doctor! This thought made us both sorrow greatly; and we often reproached ourselves in vain. But the day after her death the doctor said to us: "Even if that disease had been treated from the beginning by the best possible means, your child could not have lived more than about a week. If she had been ten or eleven years old, she might possibly have been saved by an operation; but in this case no operation could have been attempted—the child was too young." Then he explained to us that the child had died from a jinzōen.[43]...

Thus all the hopes that we had, and all the pains that we took in caring for her, and all the pleasure of watching her grow during those nine months,—all were in vain!

But we two were at last able to find some ease from our sorrow by reflecting that our relation to this child, from the time of some former life, must have been very slight and weak.[44]

*

In the loneliness of that weary time, I tried to express my heart by writing some verses after the manner of the story of Miyagino and Shinobu in the gidayū-bon[45]:—

Koré, kono uchi é enzukishi wa, Omoi kaëséba itsutosé maë; Kondo mōkéshi wa onago no ko, Kawaii mono toté sodatsuru ka to;—

Waga mi no nari wa uchi-wasuré, Sodatéshi koto mo, nasaké nai. Kōshita koto to wa tsuyushirazu, Kono Hatsu wa buji ni sodatsuru ka. Shubi yō seijin shita naraba, Yagaté muko wo tori Tanoshimashō dōshité to. Monomi yusan wo tashinandé, Wagako daiji to, Otto no koto mo, Hatsu no koto mo, Koïshi natsukashi omō no wo; —Tanoshimi-kurashita kai mo no. Oyako ni narishi wa uréshii ga, Sakidatsu koto wo miru haha no Kokoro mo suishité tamoi no to! —Té wo tori-kawasu fūfu ga nagéki, Nagéki wo tachi-giku mo, Morai nakishité omotéguchi Shōji mo nururu bakari nari.

Here in this house it was that I married him;—well I remember the day—five years ago. Here was born the girl-baby,—the loved one whom we hoped to rear. Caring then no longer for my person [,—heedless of how I dressed when I went out],—thinking only of how to bring her up,—I lived. How pitiless [this doom of mine]! Never had I even dreamed that such a thing could befall me: my only thoughts were as to how my Hatsu could best be reared. When she grows up, I thought, soon we shall find her a good husband, to make her life happy. So, never going out for pleasure-seeking, I studied only how to care for my little one,—how to love and to cherish my husband and my Hatsu. Vain now, alas! this hoped-for joy of living only for her sake.. .. Once having known the delight of the relation of mother and child, deign to think of the heart of the mother who sees her child die before her! [46]

*

[All of the foregoing is addressed to the spirit of the dead child.—Translator.]

*

Now, while husband and wife, each clasping the hands of the other, make lament together, if any one pausing at the entrance should listen to their sorrow, surely the paper window would be moistened by tears from without.

*

About the time of Hatsu's death, the law concerning funerals was changed for the better; and permission was given for the burning of corpses in Ōkubo. So I asked Namiki to have the body sent to the temple of which his family had always been parishioners,—providing that there should be no [legal] difficulty about the matter. Accordingly the funeral took place at Monjōji,—a temple belonging to the Asakusa branch of the Hongwanji Shin-shū; and the ashes were there interred.

—My sister Kō was sick in bed with a rather bad cold at the time of Hatsu's death; but she visited us very soon after the news had reached her. And she called again a few days later to tell us that she had become almost well, and that we had no more cause to feel anxious about her.

—As for myself, I felt a dread of going out anywhere; and I did not leave the house for a whole month. But as custom does not allow one to remain always indoors, I had to go out at last; and I made the required visit to father's and to my sister's.

—Having become quite ill, I hoped that mother would be able to help me. But Kō was again sick, and Yoshi [a younger sister here mentioned for the first time] and mother had both to attend her constantly: so I could get no aid from father's house. There was no one to help me except some of my female neighbours, who attended me out of pure kindness, when they could spare the time. At last I got Hori-Shi to engage a good old woman to assist me; and under her kind care I began to get well. About the beginning of the eighth month I felt much stronger....

On the fourth day of the ninth month my sister Kō died of consumption.

—It had been agreed beforehand that if an unexpected matter[47] came to pass, my younger sister Yoshi should be received in the place of Kō. As Goto-Shi found it inconvenient to live altogether alone, the marriage took place on the eleventh day of the same month; and the usual congratulations were offered.

On the last day of the same month Okada-Shi suddenly died.

We found ourselves greatly troubled [pecuniarily embarrassed] by the expenses that all these events caused us.

*

—When I first heard that Yoshi had been received so soon after the death of Kō, I was greatly displeased. But I kept my feelings hidden, and I spoke to the man as before.

*

In the eleventh month Goto went alone to Sapporo. On the second day of the second month, thirty-third year of Meiji [1900], Goto-Shi returned to Tōkyō; and on the fourteenth day of the same month he went away again to the Hokkaidō [Yezo], taking Yoshi with him.

On the twentieth day of the second month, at six o'clock in the morning, my third child—a boy—was born. Both mother and child were well.

*

—We had expected a girl, but it was a boy that was born; so, when my husband came back from his work, he was greatly surprised and pleased to find that he had a boy.

—But the child was not well able to take the breast: so we had to nourish him by means of a feeding-bottle.

*

On the seventh day after the boy's birth, we partly shaved his head. And in the

evening we had the shichiya [seventh-day festival]—but, this time, all by ourselves.

—My husband had caught a bad cold some time before; and he could not go to work next morning, as he was coughing badly. So he remained in the house.

Early in the morning the child had taken his milk as usual. But, about ten o'clock in the forenoon, he seemed to be suffering great pain in his breast; and he began to moan so strangely that we sent a man for a doctor. Unfortunately the doctor that we asked to come was out of town; and we were told that he would not come back before night. Therefore, we thought that it would be better to send at once for another doctor; and we sent for one. He said that he would come in the evening. But, about two o'clock in the afternoon, the child's sickness suddenly became worse; and a little before three o'clock—the twenty-seventh day of the second month—aënaku![48]—my child was dead, having lived for only eight days....

*

—I thought to myself that, even if this new misfortune did not cause my husband to feel an aversion for me, thus having to part with all my children, one after another, must be the punishment of some wrong done in the time of a former life. And, so thinking, I knew that my sleeves would never again become dry,—that the rain [of tears] would never cease,—that never again in this world would the sky grow clear for me.

And more and more I wondered whether my husband's feelings would not change for the worse, by reason of his having to meet such trouble, over and over again, on my account. I felt anxious about his heart, because of what already was in my own.

Nevertheless, he only repeated the words, Temméï itashikata koré naku: "From the decrees of Heaven there is no escape."

*

—I thought that I should be better able to visit the tomb of my child if he were buried in some temple near us. So the funeral took place at the temple called

Sempu-kuji in Ōkubo; and the ashes were buried there....

Tanoshimi mo Samété hakanashi Haru no yumé![49]

[Translation.]

—All the delight having perished, hopeless I remain: it was only a dream of Spring![50]

[No date.]

... I wonder whether it was because of the sorrow that I suffered—my face and limbs became slightly swollen during the fortnight[51] after my boy's death.—It was nothing very serious, after all, and it soon went away.... Now the period of twenty-one days [the period of danger] is past....

*

Here the poor mother's diary ends. The closing statement regarding the time of twenty-one days from the birth of her child leaves it probable that these last lines were written on the thirteenth or fourteenth day of the third month. She died on the twenty-eighth of the same month.

*

I doubt if any one not really familiar with the life of Japan can fully understand this simple history. But to imagine the merely material conditions of the existence here recorded should not be difficult:—the couple occupying a tiny house of two rooms—one room of six mats and one of three;—the husband earning barely per month;—the wife sewing, washing, cooking (outside the house, of course);—no comfort of fire, even during the period of greatest cold. I estimate that the pair must have lived at an average cost of about seven pence a day, not including house-rent. Their pleasures were indeed very cheap: a payment of twopence admitted them to theatres or to gidayū-recitations; and their sight-seeing was done on foot. Yet even these diversions were luxuries for them. Expenses represented by the necessary

purchase of clothing, or by the obligation of making presents to kindred upon the occasion of a marriage or a birth or a death, could only have been met by heroic economy. Now it is true that thousands of poor folk in Tōkyō live still more cheaply than this,—live upon a much smaller income than £1 per month,—and nevertheless remain always clean, neat, and cheerful. But only a very strong woman can easily bear and bring up children under such conditions,—conditions much more hazardous than those of the harder but healthier peasant-life of the interior. And, as might be supposed, the weakly fail and perish in multitude.

*

Readers of the diary may have wondered at the eagerness shown by so shy and gentle a woman to become thus suddenly the wife of a total stranger, about whose character she knew absolutely nothing. A majority of Japanese marriages, indeed, are arranged for in the matter-of-fact way here described, and with the aid of a nakōdo; but the circumstances, in this particular case, were exceptionally discomforting. The explanation is pathetically simple. All good girls are expected to marry; and to remain unmarried after a certain age is a shame and a reproach. The dread of such reproach, doubtless, impelled the writer of the diary to snatch at the first chance of fulfilling her natural destiny. She was already twenty-nine years old;—another such chance might never have offered itself.

*

To me the chief significance of this humble confession of struggle and failure is not in the utterance of anything exceptional, but in the expression of something as common to Japanese life as blue air and sunshine. The brave resolve of the woman to win affection by docility and by faultless performance of duty, her gratitude for every small kindness, her childlike piety, her supreme unselfishness, her Buddhist interpretation of suffering as the penalty for some fault committed in a previous life, her attempts to write poetry when her heart was breaking,—all this, indeed, I find

touching, and more than touching. But I do not find it exceptional. The traits revealed are typical,—typical of the moral nature of the woman of the people. Perhaps there are not many Japanese women of the same humble class who could express their personal joy and pain in a record at once so artless and pathetic; but there are millions of such women inheriting—from ages and ages of unquestioning faith—a like conception of life as duty, and an equal capacity of unselfish attachment.

[1] A kozukai is a man-servant chiefly employed as doorkeeper and messenger. The term is rendered better by the French word concierge than by our English word "porter"; but neither expression exactly meets the Japanese meaning.

[2] The reader must understand that "the man of the opposite house" is acting as nakōdo, or match-maker, in the interest of a widower who wishes to remarry. By the statement, "no preparation has been made," the hither means that he is unable to provide for his daughter's marriage, and cannot furnish her with a bridal outfit,—clothing, household furniture, etc.,—as required by custom. The reply that "no preparation is needed" signifies that the proposed husband is willing to take the girl without any marriage gifts.

[3] Throughout this Ms., except in one instance, the more respectful form Sama never occurs after a masculine name, the popular form Shi being used even after the names of kindred.

[4] The father has evidently been consulting a fortune-telling book, such as the San-zé-sō, or a professional diviner. The allusion to the astrologically determined natures, or temperaments, of the pair could scarcely be otherwise explained.

[5] Miai is a term used to signify a meeting arranged in order to enable the parties affianced to see each other before the wedding-day.

[6] Meaning: "I am ready to become your wife, if you are willing to take me as you have been informed that I am,—a poor girl without money or clothes."

[7] Lucky and unlucky days were named and symbolized as follows, according to the old Japanese astrological system:—

Senkatsu:—forenoon good; afternoon bad.

Tomobiki:—forenoon good; afternoon good at the beginning and the end, but bad in the middle.

Senpu;—forenoon bad; afternoon good.

Butsumetsu:—wholly unlucky.

Taian;—altogether good.

Shakō:—all unlucky, except at noon.

[8] This statement also implies that a professional diviner has been consulted. The reference to the direction, or bōgaku, can be fully understood only by those conversant with the old Chinese nature-philosophy.

[9] Lit. "thrice-three-nine-times-wine-cup."

[10] At a Japanese wedding it is customary to avoid the use of any words to which an unlucky signification attaches, or of any words suggesting misfortune in even an indirect way. The word sumu, "to finish," or "to end"; the word kaēru, "to return," (suggesting divorce), as well as many others, are forbidden at weddings. Accordingly, the term o-hiraki has long been euphemistically substituted for the term oitoma ("honourable leave-taking," i.e. "farewell"), in the popular etiquette of wedding assemblies.

[11] "I felt a tumultuous beating within my breast," would perhaps be a closer rendering of the real sense; but it would sound oddly artificial by comparison with the simple Japanese utterance: "Ato ni wa futari sashi-mukai to nari, muné uchi-sawagi; sono bazukashisa bisthi ni tsukushi-gatashi."

[12] From sato, "the parental home," and kaëri, "to return." The first visit of a bride to her parents, after marriage, is thus called.

[13] Aigasa, a fantastic term compounded from the verb au, "to accord," "to harmonize," and the noun kasa, "an umbrella." It signifies one umbrella used by two persons—especially lovers: an umbrella-of-loving-accord. To understand the wife's anxiety about being seen walking with her husband under the borrowed umbrella, the reader must know that it is not yet considered decorous for wife and husband even to walk side by side in public. A newly wedded pair, using a single umbrella in this way, would be particularly liable to have jests made at their expense—jests that might prove trying to the nerves of a timid bride.

[14] She means the great Buddhist temple of Kwannon,—the most popular, and perhaps the most famous, Buddhist temple in Tokyo.

[15] In the Ōkubo quarter. The shrine is shadowed by a fine grove of trees.

[16] That is to say, "It was agreed that we should all go together to see the flowers." The word hanami ("flower-seeing") might be given to any of the numerous flower-festivals of the year, according to circumstances; but it here refers to the season of cherry blossoms. Throughout this diary the dates are those of the old lunar calendar.

[17] A literal rendering is almost impossible. There is a ferry, called the Ferry of Imado, over the Sumidagawa; but the reference here is really neither to the ferry nor to the ferryman, but to the nakōdo, or match-maker, who arranged for the marriage. Miméguri-Inari is the popular name of a famous temple of the God of Rice, in Mukojima; but there is an untranslatable play here upon the name, suggesting a lovers' meeting. The reference to the Sumidagawa also contains a play upon the syllables sumi,—the verb "sumi" signifying "to be clear." Shirahigé-Yashiro ("White-Hair Temple") is the name of a real and very celebrated Shintō shrine in the city; but the name is here used chiefly to express the hope that the union may last into the period of hoary age. Besides these suggestions, we may suppose that the poem contains allusions to the actual journey made,—over the Sumidagawa by

ferry, and thence to the various temples named. From old time, poems of like meaning have been made about these places; but the lines above given are certainly original, with the obvious exception of a few phrases which have become current coin in popular poetry.

[18] The Soga Brothers were famous heroes of the twelfth century. The word kaichō signifies the religious festival during which the principal image of a temple is exposed to view.

[19] Name of a public hall at which various kinds of entertainments are given, more especially recitations by professional story-tellers.

[20] Lit. "there never yet having been any waves nor even wind between us."

[21] The Shinto parish-temple, or more correctly, district-temple of the Yotsuya quarter. Each quarter, or district, of the city has its tutelar divinity, or Ujigami. Suga-jinja is the Ujigami-temple of Yotsuya.

[22] Iyogasuri is the name given to a kind of dark-blue cotton-cloth, with a sprinkling of white in small patterns, manufactured at Iyo, in Shikoku.

[23] The Kanazawa-tei is a public hall in the Yotsuya quarter. Harimadayū is the professional name of a celebrated chanter of the dramatic recitations called jōruri and gidayū,—in which the reciter, or chanter, mimes the voices and action of many different characters.

[24] She alludes to a popular saying of Buddhist origin:—Jishin, kwaji, kaminari, misoka, kikin, yamai no naki kuni é yuku ("Let us go to the Land where there is neither earthquake, nor fire, nor lightning, nor any last day of the month, nor famine, nor sickness").

[25] Ujigami of the Ushigomé district.

[26] Festival of the "Further Shore" (that is to say, Paradise). There are two great Buddhist festivals thus called,—the first representing a period of seven days during

the spring equinox; the second, a period of seven days during the autumnal equinox.

[27] This drama is founded upon the history of a famous rice merchant named Matsumaëya Gorōbei.

[28] Shiogama-Daimyōjin, a Shinto deity, to whom women pray for easy delivery in child-birth. Shrines of this divinity may be found in almost every province of Japan.

[29] Uréshiki ma wa wazuka nité, mata kanashimi to henzuru; umaréru mono wa kanarazu shizu.—A Buddhist text that has become a Japanese proverb.

[30] Composed by the bereaved mother herself, as a discipline against grief.

[31] Nadéshiko literally means a pink; but in poetry the word is commonly used in the meaning of "baby."

[32] Samidaré is the name given to the old fifth month, or, more strictly speaking, to a rainy period occurring in that month. The verses are, of course, allusive, and their real meaning might be rendered thus: "Oh! the season of grief! All things now seem sad: the sleeves of my robe are moist with my tears!"

[33] The sotoba is a tall wooden lath, inscribed with Buddhist texts, and planted above a grave. For a full account of the sotoba, see the article entitled "The Literature of the Dead," in my Exotics and Retrospectives, p. 102. I am not able to give any account or explanation of the curious superstition here referred to; but it is probably of the same class with the strange custom recorded in my Gleanings in Buddha-Fields, p. 126.

[34] It would be unfair to suppose that this visit to the theatre was made only for pleasure; it was made rather in the hope of forgetting pain, and probably by order of the husband.

Ōkubo Hikozaëmon was the favourite minister and adviser of the Shōgun Iyem-itsu. Numberless stories of his sagacity and kindness are recorded in popular literature; and in many dramas the notable incidents of his official career are still represented.

[35] There are five holidays thus named in every year. These go-sekku are usually called, Jinjitsu (the 7th of the 1st month), Joki (the 3d of the 3d month), Tango (the 5th of the 5th month), Tanabata (the 7th of the 7th month), and Chōyō (the 9th of the 9th month).

[36] A divinity half-Buddhist, half-Shintō, in origin, but now popularly considered Shintō. This god is especially worshipped as a healer, and a protector against sickness. His principal temple in Tōkyō is in the Nihonbashi district.

[37] A festival in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of Tōkyō as the Imperial capital, instead of Kyōtō.

[38] Daimyō-no-g yōretsu. On the festival mentioned there was a pageant representing feudal princes travelling in state, accompanied by their retainers and servants. The real armour, costumes, and weapons of the period before Meiji were effectively displayed on this occasion.

[39] A congratulatory feast, held on the evening of the seventh day after the birth of a child. Relatives and friends invited usually make small presents to the baby.

[40] The first annual Festival of Girls is thus called.

[41] All the objects here mentioned are toys—toys appropriate to the occasion. The Dairi are old-fashioned toy-figures, representing an emperor and empress in ancient costume. Hina are dolls.

[42] Another name for the Buddhist Paradise of the West,—the heaven of Amida (Amitābha).

[43] Nephritis.

[44] Or, "very thin and loose,"—the Karma-relation being emblematically spoken of as a bond or tie. She means, of course, that the loss of the child was the inevitable consequence of some fault committed in a previous state of existence.

[45] Gidayū-bon, "the book of the gidayū." There are many gidayū books. Gidayū is

the name given to a kind of musical drama. In the dramatic composition here referred to, the characters Miyagino and Shinobu are sisters, who relate their sorrows to each other.

[46] I.e. before she herself (the mother) dies;—there is a colloquial phrase in the Japanese text. Ko ga oya ni sakidatsu is the common expression: "the child goes before the parents,"—that is to say, dies before the parents.

[47] A euphemistic expression for death.

[48] Aënaku is an adjective signifying, according to circumstances, "feeble," or "transitory," or "sad." Its use here might best be rendered by some such phrase as "Piteous to say!"

[49] Her poem bears no date.

[50] A necessarily free translation;—the lines might also be read thus: "Having awakened, all the joy fleets and fades;—it was only a dream of Spring." The verb saméru, very effectively used here, allows of this double rendering; for it means either "to awake" or "to fade." The adjective hakanashi also has a double meaning: according to circumstances it may signify either "fleeting" (evanescent) or "hopeless" (wretched).

[51] Lit. "the first two nanuka": one nanuka representing a period of seven successive days from the date of death.

Heiké-gani

In various countries of which the peoples appear strange to us, by reason of beliefs, ideas, customs, and arts having nothing in common with our own, there can be found something in the nature of the land—something in its flora or fauna—characterized by a corresponding strangeness. Probably the relative queerness of the exotic nature in such regions helped more or less to develop the apparent oddity of the exotic mind. National differences of thought or feeling should

not be less evolutionally interpretable than the forms of vegetables or of insects; and, in the mental evolution of a people, the influence of environment upon imagination must be counted as a factor....

*

These reflections were induced by a box of crabs sent me from the Province of Chōshū,—crabs possessing that very same quality of grotesqueness which we are accustomed to think of as being peculiarly Japanese. On the backs of these creatures there are bossings and depressions that curiously simulate the shape of a human face,—a distorted face,—a face modelled in relief as a Japanese craftsman might have modelled it in some moment of artistic whim.

Two varieties of such crabs—nicely dried and polished—are constantly exposed for sale in the shops of Akamagaséki (better known to foreigners by the name of Shimonoséki). They are caught along the neighbouring stretch of coast called Dan-no-Ura, where the great clan of the Heiké, or Taira, were exterminated in a naval battle, seven centuries ago, by the rival clan of Genji, or Minamoto. Readers of Japanese history will remember the story of the Imperial Nun, Nii-no-Ama, who in the hour of that awful tragedy composed a poem, and then leaped into the sea, with the child-emperor Antoku in her arms.

Now the grotesque crabs of this coast are called Heiké-gani, or "Heiké-crabs," because of a legend that the spirits of the drowned and slaughtered warriors of the Heiké-clan assumed such shapes; and it is said that the fury or the agony of the death-struggle can still be discerned in the faces upon the backs of the crabs. But to feel the romance of this legend you should be familiar with old pictures of the fight of Dan-no-Ura,—old coloured prints of the armoured combatants, with their grim battle-masks of iron and their great fierce eyes.

The smaller variety of crab is known simply as a "Heiké-crab,"—Heiké-gani. Each Heiké-gani is supposed to be animated by the spirit of a common Heiké warrior

only,—an ordinary samurai. But the larger kind of crab is also termed Taishō-gani ("Chieftain-crab"), or Tatsugashira ("Dragon-helmet"); and all Taishō-gani or Tatsugashira are thought to be animated by ghosts of those great Heiké captains who bore upon their helmets monsters unknown to Western heraldry, and glittering horns, and dragons of gold.

I got a Japanese friend to draw for me the two pictures of Heiké-gani herewith reproduced; and I can vouch for their accuracy. But I told him that I could not see anything resembling a helmet, either in his drawing of the Tatsugashira, nor in the original figure upon the back of the crab.

"Can you see it?" I asked. "Why, yes,—somewhat like this," he answered, making the following sketch:—

"Well, I can make out part of the head-gear," I said;—"but that outline of yours is not according to facts,—and that face is vapid as the face of the Moon. Look at the nightmare on the back of the real crab!..."

Fireflies

I

I want to talk about Japanese fireflies, but not entomologically. If you are interested, as you ought to be, in the scientific side of the subject, you should seek enlightenment from a Japanese professor of biology, now lecturing at the Imperial University of Tōkyō. He signs himself "Mr. S. Watasé" (the "S" standing for the personal name Shozaburo); and he has been a teacher as well as a student of science in America, where a number of his lectures have been published,[1]—lectures upon animal phosphorescence, animal electricity, the light-producing organs of insects and fishes, and other wonderful topics of biology. He can tell you all that is known concerning the morphology of fireflies, the physiology of fireflies, the photometry of fireflies, the chemistry of their luminous substance, the spectroscopic analysis of

their light, and the significance of that light in terms of ether-vibration. By experiment he can show you that, under normal conditions of temperature and environment, the number of light-pulsations produced by one species of Japanese firefly averages twenty-six per minute; and that the rate suddenly rises to sixty-three per minute, if the insect be frightened by seizure. Also he can prove to you that another and smaller kind of firefly, when taken in the hand, will increase the number of its light-pulsings to upward of two hundred per minute. He suggests that the light may be of some protective value to the insect,—like the "warning colours" of sundry nauseous caterpillars and butterflies,—because the firefly has a very bitter taste, and birds appear to find it unpalatable. (Frogs, he has observed, do not mind the bad taste: they fill their cold bellies with fireflies till the light shines through them, much as the light of a candle-flame will glow through a porcelain jar.) But whether of protective value or not, the tiny dynamo would seem to be used in a variety of ways,—as a phototelegraph, for example. As other insects converse by sound or by touch, the firefly utters its emotion in luminous pulsings: its speech is a language of light.... I am only giving you some hints about the character of the professor's lectures, which are never merely technical. And for the best part of this non-scientific essay of mine,—especially that concerning the capture and the sale of fireflies in Japan,—I am indebted to some delightful lectures which he delivered last year to Japanese audiences in Tōkyō.

II

As written to-day, the Japanese name of the firefly (hotaru) is ideographically composed with the sign for fire, doubled, above the sign for insect. The real origin of the word is nevertheless doubtful; and various etymologies have been suggested. Some scholars think that the appellation anciently signified "the First-born of Fire"; while others believe that it was first composed with syllables meaning "star" and "drop." The more poetical of the proposed derivations, I am sorry to say, are considered the least probable. But whatever may have been the primal meaning of

the word hotaru, there can be no doubt as to the romantic quality of certain folk-names still given to the insect. Two species of firefly have a wide distribution in Japan; and these have been popularly named Genji-botaru and Heiké-botaru: that is to say, "the Minamoto-Firefly" and "the Taira-Firefly." A legend avers that these fireflies are the ghosts of the old Minamoto and Taira warriors; that, even in their insect shapes, they remember the awful clan-struggle of the twelfth century; and that once every year, on the night of the twentieth day of the fourth month,[2] they fight a great battle on the Uji River. Therefore, on that night all caged fireflies should be set free, in order that they may be able to take part in the contest.

*

The Genji-botaru is the largest of Japanese fireflies,—the largest species, at least, in Japan proper, not including the Loochoo Islands. It is found in almost every part of the country from Kyūshū to Ōshū. The Heiké-botaru ranges further north, being especially common in Yezo; but it is found also in the central and southern provinces. It is smaller than the Genji, and emits a feebler light. The fireflies commonly sold by insect-dealers in Tōkyō, Ōsaka, Kyoto, and other cities, are of the larger species. Japanese observers have described the light of both insects as "tea-coloured" (cha-iro),—the tint of the ordinary Japanese infusion, when the leaf is of good quality, being a clear greenish yellow. But the light of a fine Genji-firefly is so brilliant that only a keen eye can detect the greenish colour: at first sight the flash appears yellow as the flame of a wood-fire, and its vivid brightness has not been overpraised in the following hokku:—

Kagaribi mo Hotaru mo hikaru— Genji kana!

"Whether it be a glimmering of festal-fires[3] [far away], or a glimmering of fireflies, [one can hardly tell]—ah, it is the Genji!"

*

Although the appellations Genji-botaru and Heiké-botaru are still in general use,

both insects are known by other folk-names. In different provinces the Genji is called Ō-botaru, or "Great Firefly"; Ushi-botaru, or "Ox-Firefly"; Kuma-botaru, or "Bear-Firefly"; and Uji-botaru, or "Firefly of Uji,"—not to mention such picturesque appellations as Komosō-botaru and Yamabuki-botaru, which could not be appreciated by the average Western reader. The Heiké-botaru is also called Himé-botaru, or "Princess-Firefly"; Nennéi-botaru, or "Baby-Firefly"; and Yuréi-botaru, or "Ghost-Firefly." But these are only examples chosen at random: in almost every part of Japan there is a special folk-name for the insect.

III

There are many places in Japan which are famous for fireflies,—places which people visit in summer merely to enjoy the sight of the fireflies. Anciently the most celebrated of all such places was a little valley near Ishiyama, by the lake of Ōmi. It is still called Hotaru-Dani, or the Valley of Fireflies. Before the Period of Genroku (1688-1703), the swarming of the fireflies in this valley, during the sultry season, was accounted one of the natural marvels of the country. The fireflies of the Hotaru-Dani are still celebrated for their size; but that wonderful swarming of them, which old writers described, is no longer to be seen there. At present the most famous place for fireflies is in the neighbourhood of Uji, in Yamashirō. Uji, a pretty little town in the centre of the celebrated tea-district, is situated on the Ujigawa, and is scarcely less famed for its fireflies than for its teas. Every summer special trains run from Kyōtō and Ōsaka to Uji, bringing thousands of visitors to see the fireflies. But it is on the river, at a point several miles from the town, that the great spectacle is to be witnessed,—the Hotaru-Kassen, or Firefly Battle. The stream there winds between hills covered with vegetation; and myriads of fireflies dart from either bank, to meet and cling above the water. At moments they so swarm together as to form what appears to the eye like a luminous cloud, or like a great ball of sparks. The cloud soon scatters, or the ball drops and breaks upon the surface of the current, and the fallen fireflies drift glittering away; but another swarm quickly collects in

the same locality. People wait all night in boats upon the river to watch the phenomenon. After the Hotaru-Kassen is done, the Ujikawa, covered with the still sparkling bodies of the drifting insects, is said to appear like the Milky Way, or, as the Japanese more poetically call it, the River of Heaven. Perhaps it was after witnessing such a spectacle that the great female poet, Chiyo of Kaga, composed these verses:—

Kawa bakari, Yami wa nagarété—? Hotaru kana!

—Which may be thus freely rendered:—

"Is it the river only?—or is the darkness itself drifting?... Oh, the fireflies!..."[4]

IV

Many persons in Japan earn their living during the summer months by catching and selling fireflies: indeed, the extent of this business entitles it to be regarded as a special industry. The chief centre of this industry is the region about Ishiyama, in Goshū, by the Lake of Ōmi,—a number of houses there supplying fireflies to many parts of the country, and especially to the great cities of Osaka and Kyōtō. From sixty to seventy firefly-catchers are employed by each of the principal houses during the busy season. Some training is required for the occupation. A tyro might find it no easy matter to catch a hundred fireflies in a single night; but an expert has been known to catch three thousand. The methods of capture, although of the simplest possible kind, are very interesting to see.

Immediately after sunset, the firefly-hunter goes forth, with a long bamboo pole upon his shoulder, and a long bag of brown mosquito-netting wound, like a girdle, about his waist. When he reaches a wooded place frequented by fireflies,—usually some spot where willows are planted, on the bank of a river or lake,—he halts and watches the trees. As soon as the trees begin to twinkle satisfactorily, he gets his net ready, approaches the most luminous tree, and with his long pole strikes the branches. The fireflies, dislodged by the shock, do not immediately take flight, as

more active insects would do under like circumstances, but drop helplessly to the ground, beetle-wise, where their light—always more brilliant in moments of fear or pain—renders them conspicuous. If suffered to remain upon the ground for a few moments, they will fly away. But the catcher, picking them up with astonishing quickness, using both hands at once, deftly tosses them into his mouth—because he cannot lose the time required to put them, one by one, into the bag. Only when his mouth can hold no more, does he drop the fireflies, unharmed, into the netting.

Thus the firefly-catcher works until about two o'clock in the morning,—the old Japanese hour of ghosts,—at which time the insects begin to leave the trees and seek the dewy soil. There they are said to bury their tails, so as to remain viewless. But now the hunter changes his tactics. Taking a bamboo broom he brushes the surface of the turf, lightly and quickly. Whenever touched or alarmed by the broom, the fireflies display their lanterns, and are immediately nipped and bagged. A little before dawn, the hunters return to town.

At the firefly-shops the captured insects are sorted as soon as possible, according to the brilliancy of their light,—the more luminous being the higher-priced. Then they are put into gauze-covered boxes or cages, with a certain quantity of moistened grass in each cage. From one hundred to two hundred fireflies are placed in a single cage, according to grade. To these cages are attached small wooden tablets inscribed with the names of customers,—such as hotel proprietors, restaurant-keepers, wholesale and retail insect-merchants, and private persons who have ordered large quantities of fireflies for some particular festivity. The boxes are despatched to their destinations by nimble messengers,—for goods of this class cannot be safely intrusted to express companies.

Great numbers of fireflies are ordered for display at evening parties in the summer season. A large Japanese guest-room usually overlooks a garden; and during a banquet or other evening entertainment, given in the sultry season, it is customary to

set fireflies at liberty in the garden after sunset, that the visitors may enjoy the sight of the sparkling. Restaurant-keepers purchase largely. In the famous Dōtombori of Ōsaka, there is a house where myriads of fireflies are kept in a large space enclosed by mosquito-netting; and customers of this house are permitted to enter the enclosure and capture a certain number of fireflies to take home with them.

*

The wholesale price of living fireflies ranges from three sen per hundred up to thirteen sen per hundred, according to season and quality. Retail dealers sell them in cages; and in Tokyo the price of a cage of fireflies ranges from three sen up to several dollars. The cheapest kind of cage, containing only three or four fireflies, is scarcely more than two inches square; but the costly cages—veritable marvels of bamboo work, beautifully decorated—are as large as cages for song-birds. Firefly cages of charming or fantastic shapes—model houses, junks, temple-lanterns, etc.—can be bought at prices ranging from thirty sen up to one dollar.

Dead or alive, fireflies are worth money. They are delicate insects, and they live but a short time in confinement. Great numbers die in the insect-shops; and one celebrated insect-house is said to dispose every season of no less than five shō—that is to say, about one peck—of dead fireflies, which are sold to manufacturing establishments in Osaka. Formerly fireflies were used much more than at present in the manufacture of poultices and pills, and in the preparation of drugs peculiar to the practice of Chinese medicine. Even to-day some curious extracts are obtained from them; and one of these, called Hotaru-no-abura, or Firefly-grease, is still used by woodworkers for the purpose of imparting rigidity to objects made of bent bamboo.

A very curious chapter on firefly-medicine might be written by somebody learned in the old-fashioned literature. The queerest part of the subject is Chinese, and belongs much more to demonology than to therapeutics. Firefly-ointments used to be made which had power, it was alleged, to preserve a house from the attacks of robbers, to

counteract the effect of any poison, and to drive away "the hundred devils." And pills were made with firefly-substance which were believed to confer invulnerability;—one kind of such pills being called Kanshōgan, or "Commander-in-Chief Pills"; and another, Buigan, or "Military-Power Pills."

V

Firefly-catching, as a business, is comparatively modern; but firefly-hunting, as a diversion, is a very old custom. Anciently it was an aristocratic amusement; and great nobles used to give firefly-hunting parties,—botaru-gari. In this busy era of Meiji the botaru-gari is rather an amusement for children than for grown-up folks; but the latter occasionally find time to join in the sport. All over Japan, the children have their firefly-hunts every summer;—moonless nights being usually chosen for such expeditions. Girls follow the chase with paper fans; boys, with long light poles, to the ends of which wisps of fresh bamboo-grass are tied. When struck down by a fan or a wisp, the insects are easily secured, as they are slow to take wing after having once been checked in actual flight. While hunting, the children sing little songs, supposed to attract the shining prey. These songs differ according to locality; and the number of them is wonderful. But there are very few possessing that sort of interest which justifies quotation. Two examples will probably suffice:—

(Province of Choshū.) Hotaru, koi! koi! Koi-tomosé! Nippon ichi no Jōsan ga, Chōchin tomoshité, Koi to ina!

Come, firefly, come! Come with your light burning! The nicest girl in Japan wants to know if you will not light your lantern and come!

(Dialect of Shimonoséki.) Hōchin, koi! Hōchin, koi! Séki no machi no bon-san ga, Chōchin tomoshité, Koi! Koi!

Firefly, come! firefly, come! All the boys of Séki [want you to come] with your lantern lighted! Come! come!

*

Of course, in order to hunt fireflies successfully, it is necessary to know something about their habits; and on this subject Japanese children are probably better informed than a majority of my readers, for whom the following notes may possess a novel interest:—

*

Fireflies frequent the neighbourhood of water, and like to circle above it; but some kinds are repelled by impure or stagnant water, and are only to be found in the vicinity of clear streams or lakes. The Genji-firefly shuns swamps, ditches, or foul canals; while the Heiké-firefly seems to be satisfied with any water. All fireflies seek by preference grassy banks shaded by trees; but they dislike certain trees and are attracted by others. They avoid pine trees, for instance; and they will not light upon rose-bushes. But upon willow trees—especially weeping willows—they gather in great swarms. Occasionally, on a summer night, you may see a drooping willow so covered and illuminated with fireflies that all its branches appear "to be budding fire." During a bright moonlight night fireflies keep as much as possible in shadow; but when pursued they fly at once into the moonshine, where their shimmering is less easily perceived. Lamplight, or any strong artificial light, drives them away; but small bright lights attract them. They can be lured, for example, by the sparkling of a small piece of lighted charcoal, or by the glow of a little Japanese pipe, kindled in the dark. But the lamping of a single lively firefly, confined in a bottle, or cup, of clear glass, is the best of all lures.

*

As a rule the children hunt only in parties, for obvious reasons. In former years it would have been deemed foolhardy to go alone in pursuit of fireflies, because there existed certain uncanny beliefs concerning them. And in some of the country districts these beliefs still prevail. What appear to be fireflies may be malevolent spirits, or goblin-fires, or fox-lights, kindled to delude the wayfarer. Even real

fireflies are not always to be trusted;—the weirdness of their kinships might be inferred from their love of willow trees. Other trees have their particular spirits, good or evil, hamadryads or goblins; but the willow is particularly the tree of the dead—the favourite of human ghosts. Any firefly may be a ghost—who can tell? Besides, there is an old belief that the soul of a person still alive may sometimes assume the shape of a firefly. And here is a little story that was told me in Izuno:—

*

One cold winter's night a young shizoku of Matsuë, while on his way home from a wedding-party, was surprised to perceive a firefly-light hovering above the canal in front of his dwelling. Wondering that such an insect should be flying abroad in the season of snow, he stopped to look at it; and the light suddenly shot toward him. He struck at it with a stick; but it darted away, and flew into the garden of a residence adjoining his own.

Next morning he made a visit to that house, intending to relate the adventure to his neighbours and friends. But before he found a chance to speak of it, the eldest daughter of the family, happening to enter the guest-room without knowing of the young man's visit, uttered a cry of surprise, and exclaimed, "Oh! how you startled me! No one told me that you had called; and just as I came in I was thinking about you. Last night I had so strange a dream! I was flying in my dream,—flying above the canal in front of our house. It seemed very pleasant to fly over the water; and while I was flying there I saw you coming along the bank. Then I went to you to tell you that I had learned how to fly; but you struck at me, and frightened me so that I still feel afraid when I think of it.. .." After hearing this, the visitor thought it best not to relate his own experience for the time being, lest the coincidence should alarm the girl, to whom he was betrothed.

VI

Fireflies have been celebrated in Japanese poetry from ancient time; and frequent

mention of them is made in early classical prose. One of the fifty-four chapters of the famous novel, Genji-Monogari, for example,—written either toward the close of the tenth century or at the beginning of the eleventh,—is entitled, "Fireflies"; and the author relates how a certain noble person was enabled to obtain one glimpse of a lady's face in the dark by the device of catching and suddenly liberating a number of fireflies. The first literary interest in fireflies may have been stimulated, if not aroused, by the study of Chinese poetry. Even to-day every Japanese child knows a little song about the famous Chinese scholar who, in the time of his struggles with poverty, studied by the light of a paper bag filled with fireflies. But, whatever the original source of their inspiration, Japanese poets have been making verses about fireflies during more than a thousand years. Compositions on the subject can be found in every form of Japanese poetry; but the greater number of firefly poems are in hokku,—the briefest of all measures, consisting of only seventeen syllables. Modern love-poems relating to the firefly are legion; but the majority of these, written in the popular twenty-six-syllable form called dodoïtsu, appear to consist of little more than variants of one old classic fancy, comparing the silent burning of the insect's light to the consuming passion that is never uttered.

*

Perhaps my readers will be interested by the following selection of firefly poems. Some of the compositions are many centuries old:—

Catching Fireflies Mayoi-go no Naku-naku tsukamu Hotaru kana!

Ah! the lost child! Though crying and crying, still he catches fireflies!

Kuraki yori Kuraki hito yobu: Hotaru kana!

Out of the blackness black people call [to each other]: [they are hunting] fireflies!

Iu koto no Kikoëté ya, takaku Tobu hotaru!

Ah! having heard the voices of people [crying "Catch it!"], the firefly now flies higher!

Owarété wa Tsuki ni kakururu Hotaru kana!

Ah, [the cunning] fireflies! being chased, they hide themselves in the moonlight!

Ubayoté Fumi-koroshitaru Hotaru kana!

[Two firefly-catchers] having tried to seize it [at the same time], the poor firefly is trampled to death!

The Light of Fireflies Hotarubi ya! Mada kuréyaranu, Hashi no uri.

Fireflies already sparkling under the bridge,—and it is not yet dark!

Mizu-gusa no Kururu to miété Tobu hotaru.

When the water-grasses appear to grow dark, the fireflies begin to fly.[5]

Oku-no-ma yé Hanashité mitaru Hotaru kana!

Pleasant, from the guest-room,[6] to watch the fireflies being set free in the garden!

Yo no fukuru Hodo ōkinaru Hotaru kana!

Ever as the night grows [deeper, the light of] the firefly also grows [brighter]!

Kusakari no Sodé yori idzuru, Hotaru kana!

See! a firefly flies out of the sleeve of the grass-cutter!

Koko kashiko, Hotaru ni aoshi Yoru no kusa.

Here and there the night-grass appears green, because of the light of the fireflies.

Chōchin no Kiyété, tōtoki Hotaru kana!

How precious seems [the light of] the firefly, now that the lantern-light has gone out!

Mado kuraki, Shōji wo noboru Hotaru kana!

The window itself is dark, but see!—a firefly is creeping up the paper pane!

Moë yasuku, Mata kéyé yasuki, Hotaru kana!

How easily kindled, and how easily put out again, is the light of the firefly!

Hitotsu kité, Niwa no tsuyukéki, Hotaru kana!

Oh! a single firefly having come, one can see the dew in the garden!

Té no hira wo Hau ashi miyuru Hotaru kana!

Oh, this firefly!—as it crawls on the palm of my hand, its legs are visible [by its own light]!

Osoroshi no Té ni sukitōru, Hotaru kana!

It is enough to make one afraid! See! the light of this firefly shows through my hand![7]

Sabéshisaya! Isshaku kiyété Yuku hotaru!

How uncanny! The firefly shoots to within a foot of me, and—out goes the light!

Yuku saki no Sawaru mono naki Hotaru kana!

There goes a firefly! but there is nothing in front of it to take hold of [nothing to touch: what can it be seeking—the ghostly creature?].

Hōki-gi ni Ari to wa miyété, Hotaru kana!

In this hoki-bush it certainly appeared to be,—the firefly! [but where is it?]

Sodé é kité, Yōhan no hotaru Sabishi kana!

This midnight firefly coming upon the sleeve of my robe—how weird[8]!...

Yanagi-ba no Yami saki kaësu Hotaru kana!

For this willow tree the season of budding would seem to have returned in the dark—look at the fireflies!

Mizu soko no Kagé wo kowagaru Hotaru kana!

Ah, he is afraid of the darkness under the water,—that firefly! [Therefore he lights his tiny lantern!]

Sugitaru wa! Mé ni mono sugoshi Tobu hotaru!

Ah, I am going too far!... The flitting of the fireflies here is a lonesome sight!

Hotarubi ya! Kusa ni osamaru Yoäkégata.

Ah, the firefly-lights! As the darkness begins to break, they bury themselves in the grass.

Love-Poems Muréyo, hotaru, Mono iu kao no Miyuru hodo!

O fireflies, gather here long enough to make visible the face of the person who says these things to me![9]

Oto mo sédé, Omoi ni moyuru, Hotaru koso, Naku mushi yori mo Awaré nari-kéri!

Not making even a sound [yet] burning with desire,—for this the firefly indeed has become more worthy of pity than any insect that cries![10]

Yū sareba, Hotaru yori ki ni Moyurédomo, Hikari minéba ya Hito no tsurénaki!

When evening falls, though the soul of me burn more than burns the firefly, as the light [of that burning] is viewless, the person [beloved] remains unmoved.[11]

Miscellaneous Suito yuku, Mizu-gi wa suzushi, Tobu-hotaru!

Here at the water's edge, how pleasantly cool!—and the fireflies go shooting by—suito!

Midzu é kité, Hikuu naritaru Hotaru kana!

Having reached the water, he makes himself low,—the firefly![12]

Kuzu no ha no Ura, utsu amé ya, Tobu-hotaru!

The rain beats upon the Kuzu-plant;[13]—away starts the firefly from the underside of the leaf!

Amé no yo wa, Shita bakari yuku Hotaru kana!

Ah! this rainy night they only go along the ground,—the fireflies!

Yura-yura to Ko-amé furu yo no Hotaru kana!

How they swing themselves, to and fro, the fireflies, on a night of drizzling rain!

Akinuréba, Kusa nomi zo Hotaru-kago.

With the coming of dawn, indeed, there is nothing visible but grass in the cage of the firefly!

Yo ga akété, Mushi ni naritaru Hotaru kana!

With the coming of the dawn, they change into insects again,—these fireflies!

Hiru miréba, Kubi-suji akaki Hotaru kana!

Oh, this firefly!—seen by daylight, the nape of its neck is red!

Hotaru kōté, Shiba shi-go-mai ni Fuzeï kana!

Having bought fireflies, respectfully accord them the favour of four or five tufts of lawn-grass![14]

Song of the Firefly-seller Futatsu, mitsu, Hanashité misénu Hotaru-uri. Mitsu, yotsu wa, Akari ni nokosé Hotaru-uri. Onoga mi wa Yami ni kaëru ya Hotaru-uri.

He will not give you the chance to see two or three fireflies set free,—this firefly-seller.

He leaves in the cage three or four, just to make a light,—this firefly-seller.

For now he must take his own body back into the dark night,—this firefly-seller.

VII

But the true romance of the firefly is to be found neither in the strange fields of Japanese folk-lore nor in the quaint gardens of Japanese poetry, but in the vast profound of science. About science I know little or nothing. And that is why I am not afraid to rush in where angels fear to tread. If I knew what Professor Watasé knows about fireflies, I should feel myself less free to cross the boundaries of relative experience. As it is, I can venture theories.

*

The tremendous hypotheses of physical and psychical evolution no longer seem to me hypotheses: I should never dream of doubting them. I have ceased to wonder at the growth of Life out of that which has been called not-living,—the development of

organic out of inorganic existence. The one amazing fact of organic evolution, to which my imagination cannot become accustomed, is the fact that the substance of life should possess the latent capacity or tendency to build itself into complexities incomprehensible of systematic structure. The power of that substance to evolve radiance or electricity is not really more extraordinary than its power to evolve colour; and that a noctiluca, or a luminous centipede, or a firefly, should produce light, ought not to seem more wonderful than that a plant should produce blue or purple flowers. But the biological interpretation of the phenomenon leaves me wondering, just as much as before, at the particular miracle of the machinery by which the light is made. To find embedded in the body of the insect a microscopic working-model of everything comprised under the technical designation of an "electric plant," would not be nearly so wonderful a discovery as the discovery of what actually exists. Here is a firefly, able, with its infinitesimal dynamo, to produce a pure cold light "at one four-hundredth part of the cost of the energy expended in a candle flame"!... Now why should there have been evolved in the tail of this tiny creature a luminiferous mechanism at once so elaborate and so effective that our greatest physiologists and chemists are still unable to understand the operation of it, and our best electricians impotent to conceive the possibility of imitating it? Why should the living tissues crystallize or build themselves into structures of such stupefying intricacy and beauty as the visual organs of an ephemera, the electrical organs of a gymnotus, or the luminiferous organs of a firefly?... The very wonder of the thing forbids me to imagine gods at work: no mere god could ever contrive such a prodigy as the eye of a May-fly or the tail of a firefly.

Biology would answer thus:—"Though it is inconceivable that a structure like this should have been produced by accumulated effects of function on structure, yet it is conceivable that successive selections of favourable variations might have produced it." And no follower of Herbert Spencer is really justified in wandering further. But I cannot rid myself of the notion that Matter, in some blind infallible way, remembers;

and that in every unit of living substance there slumber infinite potentialities, simply because to every ultimate atom belongs the infinite and indestructible experience of billions of vanished universes.

[1] Professor Watasé is a graduate of Johns Hopkins. Since this essay was written, his popular Japanese lectures upon the firefly have been reissued in a single pretty volume. The coloured frontispiece,—showing fireflies at night upon a willow-branch,—is alone worth the price of the book.

[2] By the old calendar. According to the new calendar, the date of the Firefly Battle would be considerably later: last year (1901) it fell upon the tenth day of the sixth month.

[3] The term kagar-bi, often translated by "bonfire," here especially refers to the little wood-fires which are kindled, on certain festival occasions, in front of every threshold in the principal street of a country town, or village. During the festival of the Bon such little fires are lighted in many parts of the country to welcome the returning ghosts.

[4] That is to say, "Do I see only fireflies drifting with the current? or is the Night itself drifting, with its swarming of stars?"

[5] More literally: "The water-grasses having appeared to grow dark, the fireflies begin to fly." The phrase kururu to miété reminds one of the second stanza in that most remarkable of modern fairy-ballads, Mr. Yeats' "Folk of the Air":—

"And he saw how the weeds grew dark At the coming of night-tide; And he dreamed of the long dim hair Of Bridget his bride."

[6] Oku-no-ma really means the back room. But the best rooms in a Japanese house are always in the rear, and so arranged as to overlook the garden. The composer of the verse is supposed to be a guest at some banquet, during which fireflies are set free in the garden that the visitors may enjoy the spectacle.

[7] That is to say, makes the fingers appear diaphanous, as if held before a bright

candle-flame. This suggestion of rosy semi-transparency implies a female speaker.

[8] The word sabishi usually signifies lonesome or melancholy; but the sense of it here is "weird." This verse suggests the popular fancy that the soul of a person, living or dead, may assume the form of a firefly.

[9] The speaker is supposed to be a woman. Somebody has been making love to her in the dark; and she half doubts the sincerity of the professed affection.

[10] From the Fugetsu-Sh'u. The speaker is a woman: by the simile of the silent-glowing firefly she suggests her own secret love.

[11] From the Kokon Wakashū Enkyō. The speaker is supposed to be a woman.

[12] Or, "he stoops low." The word bikui really means low of stature.

[13] A kind of arrowroot.

[14] Not literal; and I doubt whether this poem could be satisfactorily translated into English. There is a delicate humour in the use of the word fuzei, used in speaking humbly of one's self, or of one's endeavours to please a superior.

A Drop of Dew

Tsuyu no inochi. —Buddhist proverb.

To the bamboo lattice of my study-window a single dewdrop hangs quivering.

Its tiny sphere repeats the colours of the morning,—colours of sky and field and far-off trees. Inverted images of these can be discerned in it,—also the microscopic picture of a cottage, upside down, with children at play before the door.

Much more than the visible world is imaged by that dewdrop: the world invisible, of infinite mystery, is likewise therein repeated. And without as within the drop there is motion unceasing,—motion forever incomprehensible of atoms and forces,—faint shiverings also, making prismatic reply to touches of air and sun.

*

Buddhism finds in such a dewdrop the symbol of that other microcosm which has been called the Soul.... What more, indeed, is man than just such a temporary orbing of viewless ultimates,—imaging sky and land and life,—filled with perpetual mysterious shudderings,—and responding in some wise to every stir of the ghostly forces that environ him?...

*

Soon that tiny globe of light, with all its fairy tints and topsy-turvy picturings, will have vanished away. Even so, within another little while, you and I must likewise dissolve and disappear.

Between the vanishing of the drop and the vanishing of the man, what difference? A difference of words.... But ask yourself what becomes of the dewdrop?

By the great sun its atoms are separated and lifted and scattered. To cloud and earth, to river and sea they go; and out of land and stream and sea again they will be updrawn, only to fall and to scatter anew. They will creep in opalescent mists;—they will whiten in frost and hail and snow;—they will reflect again the forms and the colours of the macrocosm; they will throb to the ruby pulsing of hearts that are yet unborn. For each one of them must combine again with countless kindred atoms for the making of other drops,—drops of dew and rain and sap, of blood and sweat and tears....

How many times? Billions of ages before our sun began to burn, those atoms probably moved in other drops, reflecting the sky-tints and the earth-colours of worlds in some past universe. And after this present universe shall have vanished out of Space, those very same atoms—by virtue of the forces incomprehensible that made them—will probably continue to sphere in dews that will shadow the morning beauty of planets yet to be.

*

Even so with the particles of that composite which you term your very Self. Before

the hosts of heaven the atoms of you were—and thrilled,—and quickened,—and reflected appearances of things. And when all the stars of the visible Night shall have burnt themselves out, those atoms will doubtless again take part in the orbing of Mind,—will tremble again in thoughts, emotions, memories,—in all the joys and pains of lives still to be lived in worlds still to be evolved....

*

Your personality?—your peculiarity? That is to say, your ideas, sentiments, recollections?—your very particular hopes and fears and loves and hates? Why, in each of a trillion of dewdrops there must be differences infinitesimal of atom-thrilling and of reflection. And in every one of the countless pearls of ghostly vapour updrawn from the Sea of Birth and Death there are like infinitesimal peculiarities. Your personality signifies, in the eternal order, just as much as the especial motion of molecules in the shivering of any single drop. Perhaps in no other drop will the thrilling and the picturing be ever exactly the same; but the dews will continue to gather and to fall, and there will always be quivering pictures ... The very delusion of delusions is the idea of death as loss.

There is no loss—because there is not any Self that can be lost. Whatsoever was, that you have been;—whatsoever is, that you are;—whatsoever will be, that you must become. Personality!—individuality!—the ghosts of a dream in a dream! Life infinite only there is; and all that appears to be is but the thrilling of it,—sun, moon, and stars,—earth, sky, and sea,—and Mind and Man, and Space and Time. All of them are shadows. The shadows come and go;—the Shadow-Maker shapes forever.

Gaki

—"Venerable Nagasena, are there such things as demons in the world?"

—"Yes, O King."

—"Do they ever leave that condition of existence?"

—"Yes, they do."

—"But, if so, why is it that the remains of those demons are never found?"...

—"Their remains are found, O King.... The remains of bad demons can be found in the form of worms and beetles and ants and snakes and scorpions and centipedes."...

—The Questions of King Milinda.

I

There are moments in life when truths but dimly known before—beliefs first vaguely reached through multiple processes of reasoning—suddenly assume the vivid character of emotional convictions. Such an experience came to me the other day, on the Suruga coast. While resting under the pines that fringed the beach, something in the vital warmth and luminous peace of the hour—some quivering rapture of wind and light—very strangely bestirred an old belief of mine: the belief that all being is One. One I felt myself to be with the thrilling of breeze and the racing of wave,—with every flutter of shadow and flicker of sun,—with the azure of sky and sea,—with the great green hush of the land. In some new and wonderful way I found myself assured that there never could have been a beginning,—that there never could be an end. Nevertheless, the ideas of the moment were not new: the novelty of the experience was altogether in the peculiar intensity with which they presented themselves; making me feel that the flashing dragon-flies, and the long gray sand-crickets, and the shrilling sémi overhead, and the little red crabs astir under the roots of the pines, were all of them brothers and sisters. I seemed to understand, as never before, how the mystery that is called the Soul of me must have quickened in every form of past existence, and must as certainly continue to behold the sun, for other millions of summers, through eyes of other countless shapes of future being. And I tried to think the long slow thoughts of the long gray crickets,—and the thoughts of the darting, shimmering dragonflies,—and the thoughts of the basking, trilling cicadæ,—and the thoughts of the wicked little crabs

that lifted up their claws from between the roots of the pines.

Presently I discovered myself wondering whether the consequence of such thoughts could have anything to do with the recombination of my soul-dust in future spheres of existence. For thousands of years the East has been teaching that what we think or do in this life really decides,—through some inevitable formation of-atom-tendencies, or polarities,—the future place of our substance, and the future state of our sentiency. And the belief is worth thinking about—though no amount of thinking can enable us either to confirm or to disprove it. Very possibly, like other Buddhist doctrines, it may adumbrate some cosmic truth; but its literal assertions I doubt, because I must doubt the power ascribed to thought. By the whole infinite past I have been moulded, within and without: how should the impulse of a moment reshape me against the weight of the eternities?... Buddhism indeed answers how, and that astounding answer is irrefutable,—but I doubt....

Anyhow, acts and thoughts, according to Buddhist doctrine, are creative. Visible matter is made by acts and thoughts,—even the universe of stars, and all that has form and name, and all the conditions of existence. What we think or do is never for the moment only, but for measureless time: it signifies some force directed to the shaping of worlds,—to the making of future bliss or pain. Remembering this, we may raise ourselves to the zones of the Gods. Ignoring it, we may deprive ourselves even of the right to be reborn among men, and may doom ourselves, though innocent of the crimes that cause rebirth in hell, to reënter existence in the form of animals, or of insects, or of goblins,—gaki.[1]

So it depends upon ourselves whether we are to become insects or goblins hereafter; and in the Buddhist system the difference between insects and goblins is not so well defined as might be supposed. The belief in a mysterious relation between ghosts and insects, or rather between spirits and insects, is a very ancient belief in the East, where it now assumes innumerable forms,—some unspeakably horrible, others full

of weird beauty.

"The White Moth" of Mr. Quiller-Couch would not impress a Japanese reader as novel; for the night-moth or the butterfly figures in many a Japanese poem and legend as the soul of a lost wife. The night-cricket's thin lament is perhaps the sorrowing of a voice once human;—the strange red marks upon the heads of cicadæ are characters of spirit-names;—dragon-flies and grasshoppers are the horses of the dead. All these are to be pitied with the pity that is kin to love. But the noxious and dangerous insects represent the results of another quality of karma,—that which produces goblins and demons. Grisly names have been given to some of these insects,—as, for example, Jigokumushi, or "Hell-insect," to the ant-lion; and Kappa-mushi, to a gigantic water-beetle which seizes frogs and fish, and devours them alive, thus realizing, in a microcosmic way, the hideous myth of the Kappa, or River-goblin. Flies, on the other hand, are especially identified with the world of hungry ghosts. How often, in the season of flies, have I heard some persecuted toiler exclaim, "Kyō no hai wa, gaki no yo da ne?" (The flies to-day, how like gaki they are!)

[1] The word gaki is the Japanese Buddhist rendering of the Sanscrit term "preta," signifying a spirit in that circle or state of torment called the World of Hungry Ghosts.

II

In the old Japanese, or, more correctly speaking, Chinese Buddhist literature relating to the gaki, the Sanscrit names of the gaki are given in a majority of cases; but some classes of gaki described have only Chinese names. As the Indian belief reached Japan by way of China and Korea, it is likely to have received a peculiar colouring in the course of its journey. But, in a general way, the Japanese classification of gaki corresponds closely to the Indian classification of the pretas.

The place of gaki in the Buddhist system is but one degree removed from the region

of the hells, or Jigokudō,—the lowest of all the States of Existence. Above the Jigokudō is the Gakidō, or World of Hungry Spirits; above the Gakidō is the Chikushōdō, or World of Animals; and above this, again, is the Shuradō, a region of perpetual fighting and slaughter. Higher than these is placed the Ningendō, or World of Mankind.

Now a person released from hell, by exhaustion of the karma that sent him there, is seldom reborn at once into the zone of human existence, but must patiently work his way upward thither, through all the intermediate states of being. Many of the gaki have been in hell.

But there are gaki also who have not been in hell. Certain kinds or degrees of sin may cause a person to be reborn as a gaki immediately after having died in this world. Only the greatest degree of sin condemns the sinner directly to hell. The second degree degrades him to the Gakidō. The third causes him to be reborn as an animal.

*

Japanese Buddhism recognizes thirty-six principal classes of gaki. "Roughly counting," says the Shōbō-nen-jō-kyō, "we find thirty-six classes of gaki; but should we attempt to distinguish all the different varieties, we should find them to be innumerable." The thirty-six classes form two great divisions, or orders. One comprises all "Gaki-World-dwellers" (Gaki-Sekai-Ju);—that is to say, all Hungry Spirits who remain in the Gakidō proper, and are, therefore, never seen by mankind. The other division is called Nin-chū-Jū, or "Dwellers among men": these gaki remain always in this world, and are sometimes seen.

There is yet another classification of gaki, according to the character of their penitential torment. All gaki suffer hunger and thirst; but there are three degrees of this suffering. The Muzai-gaki represent the first degree: they must hunger and thirst uninterruptedly, without obtaining any nourishment whatever. The Shōzai-gaki

suffer only in the second degree: they are able to feed occasionally upon impure substances. The Usai-gaki are more fortunate: they can eat such remains of food as are thrown away by men, and also the offerings of food set before the images of the gods, or before the tablets of the ancestors. The last two classes of gaki are especially interesting, because they are supposed to meddle with human affairs.

*

Before modern science introduced exact knowledge of the nature and cause of certain diseases, Buddhists explained the symptoms of such diseases by the hypothesis of gaki. Certain kinds of intermittent fever, for example, were said to be caused by a gaki entering the human body for the sake of nourishment and warmth. At first the patient would shiver with cold, because the gaki was cold. Then, as the gaki gradually became warm, the chill would pass, to be succeeded by a burning heat. At last the satiated haunter would go away, and the fever disappear; but upon another day, and usually at an hour corresponding to that of the first attack, a second fit of ague would announce the return of the gaki. Other zymotic disorders could be equally well explained as due to the action of gaki.

*

In the Shōbō-nen-jō-kyō a majority of the thirty-six kinds of gaki are associated with putrescence, disease, and death. Others are plainly identified with insects. No particular kind of gaki is identified by name with any particular kind of insect; but the descriptions suggest conditions of insect-life; and such suggestions are re-ënforced by a knowledge of popular superstitions. Perhaps the descriptions are vague in the case of such spirits as the Jiki-ketsu-gaki, or Blood-suckers; the Jiki-niku-gaki, or Flesh-eaters; the Jiki-da-gaki, or * * * * * *-eaters; the Jiki-fun-gaki, or * * * *-eaters; the Jiki-doku-gaki, or Poison-eaters; the Jiki-fu-gaki, or Wind-eaters; the Jiki-ké-gaki, or Smell-eaters; the Jiki-kwa-gaki, or Fire-eaters (perhaps they fly into lamps?); the Shikkō-gaki, who devour corpses and cause

pestilence; the Shinen-gaki, who appear by night as wandering fires; the Shin-ko-gaki, or Needle-mouthed; and the Kwaku-shin-gaki, or Cauldron-bodied,—each a living furnace, filled with flame that keeps the fluids of its body humming like a boiling pot. But the suggestion of the following excerpts[2] will not be found at all obscure:—

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"Jiki-man-gaki.—These gaki can live only by eating the wigs of false hair with which the statues of certain divinities are decorated.... Such will be the future condition of persons who steal objects of value from Buddhist temples.

"Fujō-ko-hyaku-gaki.—These gaki can eat only street filth and refuse. Such a condition is the consequence of having given putrid or unwholesome food to priests or nuns, or pilgrims in need of alms.

"Cho-ken-ju-jiki-netsu-gaki.—These are the eaters of the refuse of funeral-pyres and of the clay of graves.... They are the spirits of men who despoiled Buddhist temples for the sake of gain.

"Ju-chū-gaki.—These spirits are born within the wood of trees, and are tormented by the growing of the grain. ... Their condition is the result of having cut down shade-trees for the purpose of selling the timber. Persons who cut down the trees in Buddhist cemeteries or temple-grounds are especially likely to become ju-chū-gaki."[3]

Moths, flies, beetles, grubs, worms, and other unpleasant creatures seem thus to be indicated. But some kinds of gaki cannot be identified with insects,—for example, the species called Jiki-hō-gaki, or "Doctrine-eaters." These can exist only by hearing the preaching of the Law of the Buddha in some temple. While they hear such preaching, their torment is assuaged; but at all other times they suffer agonies unspeakable. To this condition are liable after death all Buddhist priests or nuns who proclaim the law for the mere purpose of making money.... Also there are gaki who

appear sometimes in beautiful human shapes. Such are the Yoku-shiki-gaki, spirits of lewdness,—corresponding in some sort to the incubi and succubi of our own Middle Ages. They can change their sex at will, and can make their bodies as large or as small as they please. It is impossible to exclude them from any dwelling, except by the use of holy charms and spells, since they are able to pass through an orifice even smaller than the eye of a needle. To seduce young men, they assume beautiful feminine shapes,—often appearing at wine parties as waitresses or dancing girls. To seduce women they take the form of handsome lads. This state of Yoku-shiki-gaki is a consequence of lust in some previous human existence; but the supernatural powers belonging to their condition are results of meritorious Karma which the evil Karma could not wholly counterbalance.

Even concerning the Yoku-shiki-gaki, however, it is plainly stated that they may take the form of insects. Though wont to appear in human shape, they can assume the shape of any animal or other creature, and "fly freely in all directions of space,"—or keep their bodies "so small that mankind cannot see them...." All insects are not necessarily gaki; but most gaki can assume the form of insects when it serves their purpose.

[2] Abridged from the Shōbō-nen-jō-Kyō. A full translation of the extraordinary chapter relating to the gaki would try the reader's nerves rather severely.

[3] The following story of a tree-spirit is typical:—In the garden of a Samurai named Satsuma Shichizaëmon, who lived in the village of Echigawa in the province of Ōmi, there was a very old énoki. (The énoki, or "Celtis chinensis," is commonly thought to be a goblin-tree.) From ancient times the ancestors of the family had been careful never to cut a branch of this tree or to remove any of its leaves. But Shichizaëmon, who was very self-willed, one day announced that he intended to have the tree cut down. During the following night a monstrous being appeared to the mother of Shichizaëmon, in a dream, and told her that if the inoki were cut

down, every member of the household should die. But when this warning was communicated to Shichizaëmon, he only laughed; and he then sent a man to cut down the tree. No sooner had it been cut down than Shichizaëmon became violently insane. For several days he remained furiously mad, crying out at intervals, "The tree! the tree! the tree!" He said that the tree put out its branches, like hands, to tear him. In this condition he died. Soon afterward his wife went mad, crying out that the tree was killing her; and she died screaming with fear. One after another, all the people in that house, not excepting the servants, went mad and died. The dwelling long remained unoccupied thereafter, no one daring even to enter the garden. At last it was remembered that before these things happened a daughter of the Satsuma family had become a Buddhist nun, and that she was still living, under the name of Jikun, in a temple at Yamashirō. This nun was sent for; and by request of the villagers she took up her residence in the house, where she continued to live until the time of her death,—daily reciting a special service on behalf of the spirit that had dwelt in the tree. From the time that she began to live in the house the tree-spirit ceased to give trouble. This story is related on the authority of the priest Shungyō, who said that he had heard it from the lips of the nun herself.

III

Grotesque as these beliefs now seem to us, it was not unnatural that ancient Eastern fancy should associate insects with ghosts and devils. In our visible world there are no other creatures so wonderful and so mysterious; and the true history of certain insects actually realizes the dreams of mythology. To the minds of primitive men, the mere facts of insect-metamorphosis must have seemed uncanny; and what but goblinry or magic could account for the monstrous existence of beings so similar to dead leaves, or to flowers, or to joints of grass, that the keenest human sight could detect their presence only when they began to walk or to fly? Even for the entomologist of to-day, insects remain the most incomprehensible of creatures. We have learned from him that they must be acknowledged "the most successful of

organized beings" in the battle for existence;—that the delicacy and the complexity of their structures surpass anything ever imagined of marvellous before the age of the microscope;—that their senses so far exceed our own in refinement as to prove us deaf and blind by comparison. Nevertheless the insect world remains a world of hopeless enigmas. Who can explain for us the mystery of the eyes of a myriad facets, or the secret of the ocular brains connected with them? Do those astounding eyes perceive the ultimate structure of matter? does their vision pierce opacity, after the manner of the Röntgen rays? (Or how interpret the deadly aim of that ichneumon-fly which plunges its ovipositor through solid wood to reach the grub embedded in the grain?) What, again, of those marvellous ears in breasts and thighs and knees and feet,—ears that hear sounds beyond the limit of human audition? and what of the musical structures evolved to produce such fairy melody? What of the ghostly feet that walk upon flowing water? What of the chemistry that kindles the firefly's lamp,—making the cold and beautiful light that all our electric science cannot imitate? And those newly discovered, incomparably delicate organs for which we have yet no name, because our wisest cannot decide the nature of them—do they really, as some would suggest, keep the insect-mind informed of things unknown to human sense,—visibilities of magnetism, odours of light, tastes of sound?... Even the little that we have been able to learn about insects fills us with the wonder that is akin to fear. The lips that are hands, and the horns that are eyes, and the tongues that are drills; the multiple devilish mouths that move in four ways at once; the living scissors and saws and boring-pumps and brace-bits; the exquisite elfish weapons which no human skill can copy, even in the finest watch-spring steel—what superstition of old ever dreamed of sights like these? Indeed, all that nightmare ever conceived of faceless horror, and all that ecstasy ever imagined of phantasmal pulchritude, can appear but vapid and void by comparison with the stupefying facts of entomology. But there is something spectral, something alarming, in the very beauty of insects....

IV

Whether gaki do or do not exist, there is at least some shadowing of truth in the Eastern belief that the dead become insects. Undoubtedly our human dust must help, over and over again for millions of ages, to build up numberless weird shapes of life. But as to that question of my revery under the pine trees,—whether present acts and thoughts can have anything to do with the future distribution and requickening of that dust,—whether human conduct can of itself predetermine the shapes into which human atoms will be recast,—no reply is possible. I doubt—but I do not know. Neither does anybody else.

*

Supposing, however, that the order of the universe were really as Buddhists believe, and that I knew myself foredoomed, by reason of stupidities in this existence, to live hereafter the life of an insect, I am not sure that the prospect would frighten me. There are insects of which it is difficult to think with equanimity; but the state of an independent, highly organized, respectable insect could not be so very bad. I should even look forward, with some pleasurable curiosity, to any chance of viewing the world through the marvellous compound eyes of a beetle, an ephemera, or a dragon-fly. As an ephemera, indeed, I might enjoy the possession of three different kinds of eyes, and the power to see colours now totally unimaginable. Estimated in degrees of human time, my life would be short,—a single summer day would include the best part of it; but to ephemeral consciousness a few minutes would appear a season; and my one day of winged existence—barring possible mishaps—would be one unwearied joy of dancing in golden air. And I could feel in my winged state neither hunger nor thirst,—having no real mouth or stomach: I should be, in very truth, a Wind-eater. ... Nor should I fear to enter upon the much less ethereal condition of a dragon-fly. I should then have to bear carnivorous hunger, and to hunt a great deal; but even dragon-flies, after the fierce joy of the

chase, can indulge themselves in solitary meditation. Besides, what wings would then be mine!—and what eyes!... I could pleasurably anticipate even the certainty of becoming an Amembō,[4] and so being able to run and to slide upon water—though children might catch me, and bite off my long fine legs. But I think that I should better enjoy the existence of a sémi,—a large and lazy cicada, basking on wind-rocked trees, sipping only dew, and singing from dawn till dusk.

Of course there would be perils to encounter,—danger from hawks and crows and sparrows,—danger from insects of prey—danger from bamboos tipped with birdlime by naughty little boys. But in every condition of life there must be risks; and in spite of the risks, I imagine that Anacreon uttered little more than the truth, in his praise of the cicada: "O thou earth-horn,—song-loving,—free from pain>—having flesh without blood,—thou art nearly equal to the Gods!"... In fact I have not been able to convince myself that it is really an inestimable privilege to be reborn a human being. And if the thinking of this thought, and the act of writing it down, must inevitably affect my next rebirth, then let me hope that the state to which I am destined will not be worse than that of a cicada or of a dragon-fly;—climbing the cryptomerias to clash my tiny cymbals in the sun,—or haunting, with soundless flicker of amethyst and gold, some holy silence of lotos-pools.

[4] A water-insect, much resembling what we call a "skater." In some parts of the country it is said that the boy who wants to become a good swimmer must eat the legs of an Amembō.

A Matter of Custom

There is a nice old priest of the Zen sect,—past-master in the craft of arranging flowers, and in other arts of the ancient time,—who comes occasionally to see me. He is loved by his congregation, though he preaches against many old-fashioned beliefs, and discourages all faith in omens and dreams, and tells people to believe

only in the Law of the Buddha. Priests of the Zen persuasion are seldom thus sceptical. But the scepticism of my friend is not absolute; for the last time that we met we talked of the dead, and he told me something creepy. "Stories of spirits or ghosts," he said, "I always doubt. Sometimes a danka[1] comes to tell me about having seen a ghost, or having dreamed a strange dream; but whenever I question such a person carefully, I find that the matter can be explained in a natural way.

"Only once in my life I had a queer experience which I could not easily explain. I was then in Kyūshū,—a young novice; and I was performing my gyō,—the pilgrimage that every novice has to make. One evening, while travelling through a mountain-district, I reached a little village where there was a temple of the Zen sect. I went there to ask for lodging, according to our rules; but I found that the priest had gone to attend a funeral at a village several miles away, leaving an old nun in charge of the temple. The nun said that she could not receive me during the absence of the priest, and that he would not come back for seven days.... In that part of the country, a priest was required by custom to recite the sûtras and to perform a Buddhist service, every day for seven days, in the house of a dead parishioner.... I said that I did not want any food, but only a place to sleep: moreover I pleaded that I was very tired, and at last the old nun took pity on me. She spread some quilts for me in the temple, near the altar; and I fell asleep almost as soon as I lay down. In the middle of the night—a very cold night!—I was awakened by the tapping of a mokugyo[2] and the voice of somebody chanting the Nembutsu[3], close to where I was lying. I opened my eyes; but the temple was utterly dark,—so dark that if a man had seized me by the nose I could not have seen him [hana wo tsumarété mo wakaranai]; and I wondered that anybody should be tapping the mokugyo and chanting in such darkness. But, though the sounds seemed at first to be quite near me, they were somewhat faint; and I tried to persuade myself that I must have been mistaken,—that the priest had come back and was performing a service in some other part of the temple. In spite of the tapping and chanting I fell asleep again, and slept until

morning. Then, as soon as I had washed and dressed, I went to look for the old nun, and found her. After thanking her for her kindness, I ventured to remark, 'So the priest came back last night?' 'He did not,' she answered very crossly—'I told you that he would not come back for seven days more.' 'Please pardon me,' I said; Mast night I heard somebody chanting the Nembutsu, and beating the mokugyo, so I thought that the priest had come back.' 'Oh, that was not the priest!' she exclaimed; 'that was the danka.' 'Who?' I asked; for I could not understand her. 'Why,' she replied, 'the dead man, of course![4] That always happens when a parishioner dies; the hotoké comes to sound the mokugyo and to repeat the Nembutsu ...' She spoke as if she had been so long accustomed to the thing that it did not seem to her worthwhile mentioning."

[1] Danka or danké signifies the parishioner of a Buddhist temple. Those who regularly contribute to the support of a Shintō temple are called Ujiko.

[2] The mokugyo is a very curious musical instrument of wood, in the form of a fish's head, and is usually lacquered in red and gold. It is tapped with a stick during certain Buddhist chants or recitations, producing a dull hollow sound.

[3] The invocation to Amitâbha, Namu Amida Butsu ("Hail to the Buddha Amitâbha!"), commonly repeated on behalf of the dead, is thus popularly named.

[4] The original expression was at least equally emphatic: "Aa, aré desuka?—aré wa botoké ga kita no desu yo!" The word "hotoké" means either a Buddha or, as in this case, the spirit of a dead person.

Revery

It has been said that men fear death much as the child cries at entering the world, being unable to know what loving hands are waiting to receive it. Certainly this comparison will not bear scientific examination. But as a happy fancy it is beautiful, even for those to whom it can make no religious appeal whatever,—those who must

believe that the individual mind dissolves with the body, and that an eternal continuance of personality could only prove an eternal misfortune. It is beautiful, I think, because it suggests, in so intimate a way, the hope that to larger knowledge the Absolute will reveal itself as mother-love made infinite. The imagining is Oriental rather than Occidental; yet it accords with a sentiment vaguely defined in most of our Western creeds. Through ancient grim conceptions of the Absolute as Father, there has gradually been infused some later and brighter dream of infinite tenderness—some all-transfiguring hope created by the memory of Woman as Mother; and the more that races evolve toward higher things, the more Feminine becomes their idea of a God.

Conversely, this suggestion must remind even the least believing that we know of nothing else, in all the range of human experience, so sacred as mother-love,—nothing so well deserving the name of divine. Mother-love alone could have enabled the delicate life of thought to unfold and to endure upon the rind of this wretched little planet: only through that supreme unselfishness could the nobler emotions ever have found strength to blossom in the brain of man;—only by help of mother-love could the higher forms of trust in the Unseen ever have been called into existence.

*

But musings of this kind naturally lead us to ask ourselves emotional questions about the mysteries of Whither and Whence. Must the evolutionist think of mother-love as a merely necessary result of material affinities,—the attraction of the atom for the atom? Or can he venture to assert, with ancient thinkers of the East, that all atomic tendencies are shapen by one eternal moral law, and that some are in themselves divine, being manifestations of the Four Infinite Feelings?... What wisdom can decide for us? And of what avail to know our highest emotions divine,—since the race itself is doomed to perish? When mother-love shall have

wrought its uttermost for humanity, will not even that uttermost have been in vain?

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At first thought, indeed, the inevitable dissolution must appear the blackest of imaginable tragedies,—tragedy made infinite! Eventually our planet must die: its azure ghost of air will shrink and pass, its seas dry up, its very soil perish utterly, leaving only a universal waste of sand and stone—the withered corpse of a world. Still for a time this mummy will turn about the sun, but only as the dead moon wheels now across our nights,—one face forever in scorching blaze, the other in icy darkness. So will it circle, blank and bald as a skull; and like a skull will it bleach and crack and crumble, ever drawing nearer and yet more near to the face of its flaming parent, to vanish suddenly at last in the cyclonic lightning of his breath. One by one the remaining planets must follow. Then will the mighty star himself begin to fail—to flicker with ghastly changing colours—to crimson toward his death. And finally the monstrous fissured cinder of him, hurled into some colossal sun-pyre, will be dissipated into vapour more tenuous than the dream of the dream of a ghost....

What, then, will have availed the labour of the life that was,—the life effaced without one sign to mark the place of its disparition in the illimitable abyss? What, then, the worth of mother-love, the whole dead world of human tenderness, with its sacrifices, hopes, memories,—its divine delights and diviner pains,—its smiles and tears and sacred caresses,—its countless passionate prayers to countless vanished gods?

*

Such doubts and fears do not trouble the thinker of the East. Us they disturb chiefly because of old wrong habits of thought, and the consequent blind fear of knowing that what we have so long called Soul belongs, not to Essence, but to Form.... Forms appear and vanish in perpetual succession; but the Essence alone is Real. Nothing

real can be lost, even in the dissipation of a million universes. Utter destruction, everlasting death,—all such terms of fear have no correspondence to any truth but the eternal law of change. Even forms can perish only as waves pass and break: they melt but to swell anew,—nothing can be lost....

In the nebulous haze of our dissolution will survive the essence of all that has ever been in human life,—the units of every existence that was or is, with all their affinities, all their tendencies, all their inheritance of forces making for good or evil, all the powers amassed through myriad generations, all energies that ever shaped the strength of races;—and times innumerable will these again be orbed into life and thought. Transmutations there may be; changes also made by augmentation or diminution of affinities, by subtraction or addition of tendencies; for the dust of us will then have been mingled with the dust of other countless worlds and of their peoples. But nothing essential can be lost. We shall inevitably bequeath our part to the making of the future cosmos—to the substance out of which another intelligence will slowly be evolved. Even as we must have inherited something of our psychic being out of numberless worlds dissolved, so will future humanities inherit, not from us alone, but from millions of planets still existing.

For the vanishing of our world can represent, in the disparition of a universe, but one infinitesimal detail of the quenching of thought: the peopled spheres that must share our doom will exceed for multitude the visible lights of heaven.

Yet those countless solar fires, with their viewless millions of living planets, must somehow reappear: again the wondrous Cosmos, self-consumed, must resume its sidereal whirl over the deeps of the eternities. And the love forever with rise again, infinitudes of the everlasting battle. The light of the mother's smile will survive our sun;—the thrill of her kiss will last beyond the thrilling of stars;—the sweetness of her lullaby will endure in the cradle-songs of worlds yet unevolved;—the tenderness of her faith will quicken the fervour of prayers to be made to the hosts of another

heaven,—to the gods of a time beyond Time. And the nectar of her breasts can never fail: that snowy stream will still flow on, to nourish the life of some humanity more perfect than our own, when the Milky Way that spans our night shall have vanished forever out of Space.

Pathological

Very much do I love cats; and I suppose that I could write a large book about the different cats which I have kept, in various climes and times, on both sides of the world. But this is not a Book of Cats; and I am writing about Tama for merely psychological reasons. She has been uttering, in her sleep beside my chair, a peculiar cry that touched me in a particular way. It is the cry that a cat makes only for her kittens,—a soft trilling coo,—a pure caress of tone. And I perceive that her attitude, as she lies there on her side, is the attitude of a cat holding something,—something freshly caught: the forepaws are stretched out as to grasp, and the pearly talons are playing.

*

We call her Tama ("Jewel")—not because of her beauty, though she is beautiful, but because Tama is a female name accorded by custom to pet cats. She was a very small tortoise-shell kitten when she was first brought to me as a gift worth accepting,—a cat-of-three-colours (miké-neko) being somewhat uncommon in Japan. In certain parts of the country such a cat is believed to be a luck-bringer, and gifted with power to frighten away goblins as well as rats. Tama is now two years old. I think that she has foreign blood in her veins: she is more graceful and more slender than the ordinary Japanese cat; and she has a remarkably long tail, which, from a Japanese point of view, is her only defect. Perhaps one of her ancestors came to Japan in some Dutch or Spanish ship during the time of Iyéyasu. But, from whatever ancestors descended, Tama is quite a Japanese cat in her habits;—for example, she eats rice!

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The first time that she had kittens, she proved herself an excellent mother,—devoting all her strength and intelligence to the care of her little ones, until, by dint of nursing them and moiling for them, she became piteously and ludicrously thin. She taught them how to keep clean,—how to play and jump and wrestle,—how to hunt. At first, of course, she gave them only her long tail to play with; but later she found them other toys. She brought them not only rats and mice, but also frogs, lizards, a bat, and one day a small lamprey, which she must have managed to catch in a neighbouring rice-field. After dark I used to leave open for her a small window at the head of the stairs leading to my study,—in order that she might go out to hunt by way of the kitchen roof. And one night she brought in, through that window, a big straw sandal for her kittens to play with. She found it in the field; and she must have carried it over a wooden fence ten feet high, up the house wall to the roof of the kitchen, and thence through the bars of the little window to the stairway. There she and her kittens played boisterously with it till morning; and they dirtied the stairway, for that sandal was muddy. Never was cat more fortunate in her first maternal experience than Tama.

But the next time she was not fortunate. She had got into the habit of visiting friends in another street, at a perilous distance; and one evening, while on her way thither, she was hurt by some brutal person. She came back to us stupid and sick; and her kittens were born dead. I thought that she would die also; but she recovered much more quickly than anybody could have imagined possible,—though she still remains, for obvious reasons, troubled in spirit by the loss of the kittens.

*

The memory of animals, in regard to certain forms of relative experience, is strangely weak and dim. But the organic memory of the animal,—the memory of experience accumulated through countless billions of lives,—is superhumanly vivid,

and very seldom at fault.... Think of the astonishing skill with which a cat can restore the respiration of her drowned kitten! Think of her untaught ability to face a dangerous enemy seen for the first time,—a venomous serpent, for example! Think of her wide acquaintance with small creatures and their ways,—her medical knowledge of herbs,—her capacities of strategy, whether for hunting or fighting! What she knows is really considerable; and she knows it all perfectly, or almost perfectly. But it is the knowledge of other existences. Her memory, as to the pains of the present life, is mercifully brief.

*

Tama could not clearly remember that her kittens were dead. She knew that she ought to have had kittens; and she looked everywhere and called everywhere for them, long after they had been buried in the garden. She complained a great deal to her friends; and she made me open all the cupboards and closets,—over and over again,—to prove to her that the kittens were not in the house. At last she was able to convince herself that it was useless to look for them any more. But she plays with them in dreams, and coos to them, and catches for them small shadowy things,—perhaps even brings to them, through some dim window of memory, a sandal of ghostly straw....

In the Dead of the Night

Black, chill, and still,—so black, so still, that I touch myself to find out whether I have yet a body. Then I grope about me to make sure that I am not under the earth,—buried forever beyond the reach of light and sound.... A clock strikes three! I shall see the sun again!

Once again, at least. Possibly several thousand times. But there will come a night never to be broken by any dawn,—a stillness never to be broken by any sound.

This is certain. As certain as the fact that I exist.

Nothing else is equally certain. Reason deludes; feeling deludes; all the senses delude. But there is no delusion whatever in the certain knowledge of that night to come.

Doubt the reality of substance, the reality of ghosts, the faiths of men, the gods;—doubt right and wrong, friendship and love, the existence of beauty, the existence of horror;—there will always remain one thing impossible to doubt,—one infinite blind black certainty.

The same darkness for all,—for the eyes of creatures and the eyes of heaven;—the same doom for all,—insect and man, ant-hill and city, races and worlds, suns and galaxies: inevitable dissolution, disparition, and oblivion.

And vain all human striving not to remember, not to think: the Veil that old faiths wove, to hide the Void, has been rent forever away;—and Sheol is naked before us,—and destruction hath no covering.

So surely as I believe that I exist, even so surely must I believe that I shall cease to exist—which is horror!... But—

Must I believe that I really exist?... In the moment of that self-questioning, the Darkness stood about me as a wall, and spake:—

"I am only the Shadow: I shall pass. But the Reality will come, and will not pass.

"I am only the Shadow. In me there are lights,—the glimmering of a hundred millions of suns. And in me there are voices. With the coming of the Reality, there will be no more lights, nor any voice, nor any rising, nor any hope.

"But far above you there will still be sun for many a million years,—and warmth and youth and love and joy.. .. Vast azure of sky and sea,—fragrance of summer bloom,—shrillings in grass and grove,—flutter of shadows and flicker of light,—laughter of waters and laughter of girls. Blackness and silence for you,—and cold blind creepings."

I made reply:—

"Of thoughts like these I am now afraid. But that is only because I have been startled out of sleep. When all my brain awakens, I shall not be afraid. For this fear is brute fear only,—the deep and dim primordial fear bequeathed me from the million ages of the life of instinct.... Already it is passing. I can begin to think of death as dreamless rest,—a sleep with no sensation of either joy or pain."

The Darkness whispered:—

"What is sensation?"

And I could not answer, and the Gloom took weight, and pressed upon me, and said:—

"You do not know what is sensation? How, then, can you say whether there will or will not be pain for the dust of you,—the molecules of your body, the atoms of your soul?... Atoms—what are they?"

Again I could make no answer, and the weight of the Gloom waxed greater—a weight of pyramids—and the whisper hissed:—

"Their repulsions? their attractions? The awful clingings of them and the leapings?... What are these?... Passions of lives burnt out?—furies of insatiable desire?—frenzies of everlasting hate? —madnesses of never ending torment?... You do not know? But you say that there will be no more pain!..."

Then I cried out to the mocker:—"I am awake—awake—fully awake! I have ceased to fear;—I remember!... All that I am is all that I have been. Before the beginnings of Time I was;—beyond the uttermost circling of the Eternities I shall endure. In myriad million forms I but seem to pass: as form I am only Wave; as essence I am Sea. Sea without shore I am;—and Doubt and Fear and Pain are but duskings that fleet on the face of my depth.. .. Asleep, I behold the illusions of Time; but, waking, I know myself timeless: one with the Life that has neither form yet also one begins and the grave and graves,—the the eater of neither form nor name, yet also one with

all that begins and ends,—even the grave and the maker of graves,—the corpse and the eater of corpses...."

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A sparrow twittered from the roof; another responded. Shapes of things began to define in a soft gray glimmering;—and the gloom slowly lightened. Murmurs of the city's wakening came to my ears, and grew and multiplied. And the dimness flushed.

Then rose the beautiful and holy Sun, the mighty Quickener, the mighty Putrefier,—symbol sublime of that infinite Life whose forces are also mine!...

Kusa-Hibari

Issun no mushi ni mo gobu no tamashii.—Japanese Proverb.

His cage is exactly two Japanese inches high and one inch and a half wide: its tiny wooden door, turning upon a pivot, will scarcely admit the tip of my little finger. But he has plenty of room in that cage,—room to walk, and jump, and fly; for he is so small that you must look very carefully through the brown-gauze sides of it in order to catch a glimpse of him. I have always to turn the cage round and round, several times, in a good light, before I can discover his whereabouts; and then I usually find him resting in one of the upper corners,—clinging, upside down, to his ceiling of gauze.

Imagine a cricket about the size of an ordinary mosquito,—with a pair of antennae much longer than his own body, and so fine that you can distinguish them only against the light. Kusa-Hibari, or "Grass-Lark," is the Japanese name of him; and he is worth in the market exactly twelve cents: that is to say, very much more than his weight in gold. Twelve cents for such a gnat-like thing!...

By day he sleeps or meditates, except while occupied with the slice of fresh egg-plant or cucumber which must be poked into his cage every morning. ... To keep him clean and well fed is somewhat troublesome: could you see him, you would

think it absurd to take any pains for the sake of a creature so ridiculously small.

But always at sunset the infinitesimal soul of him awakens: then the room begins to fill with a delicate and ghostly music of indescribable sweetness,-a thin, thin silvery rippling and trilling as of tiniest electric bells. As the darkness deepens, the sound becomes sweeter,—sometimes swelling till the whole house seems to vibrate with the elfish resonance,—sometimes thinning down into the faintest imaginable thread of a voice. But loud or low, it keeps a penetrating quality that is weird.... All night, the atomy thus sings: he ceases only when the temple bell proclaims the hour of dawn.

*

Now this tiny song is a song of love,—vague love of the unseen and unknown. It is quite impossible that he should ever have seen or known, in this present existence of his. Not even his ancestors, for many generations back, could have known anything of the night-life of the fields, or the amorous value of song. They were born of eggs hatched in a jar of clay, in the shop of some insect-merchant; and they dwelt thereafter only in cages. But he sings the song of his race as it was sung a myriad years ago, and as faultlessly as if he understood the exact significance of every note. Of course he did not learn the song. It is a song of organic memory,—deep, dim memory of other quintillions of lives, when the ghost of him shrilled at night from the dewy grasses of the hills. Then that song brought him love—and death. He has forgotten all about death; but he remembers the love. And therefore he sings now—for the bride that will never come.

So that his longing is unconsciously retrospective: he cries to the dust of the past,—he calls to the silence and the gods for the return of time.... Human lovers do very much the same thing without knowing it. They call their illusion an Ideal; and their Ideal is, after all, a mere shadowing of race-experience, a phantom of organic memory. The living present has very little to do with it.... Perhaps this atomy also

has an ideal, or at least the rudiment of an ideal; but, in any event, the tiny desire must utter its plaint in vain.

The fault is not altogether mine. I had been warned that if the creature were mated, he would cease to sing and would speedily die. But, night after night, the plaintive, sweet, unanswered trilling touched me like a reproach,—became at last an obsession, an affliction, a torment of conscience; and I tried to buy a female. It was too late in the season; there were no more kusa-hibari for sale,—either males or females. The insect-merchant laughed and said, "He ought to have died about the twentieth day of the ninth month." (It was already the second day of the tenth month.) But the insect-merchant did not know that I have a good stove in my study, and keep the temperature at above 75° F. Wherefore my grass-lark still sings at the close of the eleventh month, and I hope to keep him alive until the Period of Greatest Cold. However, the rest of his generation are probably dead: neither for love nor money could I now find him a mate. And were I to set him free in order that he might make the search for himself, he could not possibly live through a single night, even if fortunate enough to escape by day the multitude of his natural enemies in the garden,—ants, centipedes, and ghastly earth-spiders.

*

Last evening—the twenty-ninth of the eleventh month—an odd feeling came to me as I sat at my desk: a sense of emptiness in the room. Then I became aware that my grass-lark was silent, contrary to his wont. I went to the silent cage, and found him lying dead beside a dried-up lump of egg-plant as gray and hard as a stone. Evidently he had not been fed for three or four days; but only the night before his death he had been singing wonderfully,—so that I foolishly imagined him to be more than usually contented. My student, Aki, who loves insects, used to feed him; but Aki had gone into the country for a week's holiday, and the duty of caring for the grass-lark had devolved upon Hana, the housemaid. She is not sympathetic, Hana

the housemaid. She says that she did not forget the mite,—but there was no more egg-plant. And she had never thought of substituting a slice of onion or of cucumber! ... I spoke words of reproof to Hana the housemaid, and she dutifully expressed contrition. But the fairy-music has stopped; and the stillness reproaches; and the room is cold, in spite of the stove.

*

Absurd!... I have made a good girl unhappy because of an insect half the size of a barley-grain! The quenching of that infinitesimal life troubles me more than I could have believed possible. ... Of course, the mere habit of thinking about a creature's wants—even the wants of a cricket—may create, by insensible degrees, an imaginative interest, an attachment of which one becomes conscious only when the relation is broken. Besides, I had felt so much, in the hush of the night, the charm of the delicate voice,—telling of one minute existence dependent upon my will and selfish pleasure, as upon the favour of a god,—telling me also that the atom of ghost in the tiny cage, and the atom of ghost within myself, were forever but one and the same in the deeps of the Vast of being.... And then to think of the little creature hungering and thirsting, night after night, and day after day, while the thoughts of his guardian deity were turned to the weaving of dreams!... How bravely, nevertheless, he sang on to the very end,—an atrocious end, for he had eaten his own legs!... May the gods forgive us all,—especially Hana the housemaid!

Yet, after all, to devour one's own legs—for hunger is not the worst by that can happen to a being cursed with the gift of song. There are human crickets who must eat their own hearts in order to sing.

The Eater of Dreams

Mijika-yo ya! Baku no yumé kū Hima mo nashi!

—"Alas! how short this night of ours! The Baku will not even have time to eat our

dreams!"—Old Japanese Love-song.

The name of the creature is Baku, or Shirokinakatsukami; and its particular function is the eating of Dreams. It is variously represented and described. An ancient book in my possession states that the male Baku has the body of a horse, the face of a lion, the trunk and tusks of an elephant, the forelock of a rhinoceros, the tail of a cow, and the feet of a tiger. The female Baku is said to differ greatly in shape from the male; but the difference is not clearly set forth. In the time of the old Chinese learning, pictures of the Baku used to be hung up in Japanese houses, such pictures being supposed to exert the same beneficent power as the creature itself. My ancient book contains this legend about the custom:—

"In the Shōsei-Roku it is declared that Kōtei, while hunting on the Eastern coast, once met with a Baku having the body of an animal, but speaking like a man. Kōtei said: 'Since the world is quiet and at peace, why should we still see goblins? If a Baku be needed to extinguish evil sprites, then it were better to have a picture of the Baku suspended to the wall of one's house. Thereafter, even though some evil Wonder should appear, it could do no harm.'"

Then there is given a long list of evil Wonders, and the signs of their presence:—

"When the Hen lays a soft egg, the demon's name is Taifu.

"When snakes appear entwined together, the demon's name is Jinzu.

"When dogs go with their ears turned back, the demon's name is Taiyō.

"When the Fox speaks with the voice of a man, the demon's name is Gwaishū.

"When blood appears on the clothes of men, the demon's name is Yūki.

"When the rice-pot speaks with a human voice, the demon's name is Kanjo.

"When the dream of the night is an evil dream, the demon's name is Ringetsu...."

And the old book further observes: "Whenever any such evil marvel happens, let the name of the Baku be invoked: then the evil sprite will immediately sink three feet

under the ground."

*

But on the subject of evil Wonders I do not feel qualified to discourse: it belongs to the unexplored and appalling world of Chinese demonology, and it has really very little to do with the subject of the Baku in Japan. The Japanese Baku is commonly known only as the Eater of Dreams; and the most remarkable fact in relation to the cult of the creature is that the Chinese character representing its name used to be put in gold upon the lacquered wooden pillows of lords and princes. By the virtue and power of this character on the pillow, the sleeper was thought to be protected from evil dreams. It is rather difficult to find such a pillow to-day: even pictures of the Baku (or "Hakutaku," as it is sometimes called) have become very rare. But the old invocation to the Baku still survives in common parlance: Baku kuraë! Baku kuraë!—"Devour, O Baku! devour my evil dream!"... When you awake from a nightmare, or from any unlucky dream, you should quickly repeat that invocation three times;—then the Baku will eat the dream, and will change the misfortune or the fear into good fortune and gladness.

*

It was on a very sultry night, during the Period of Greatest Heat, that I last saw the Baku. I had just awakened out of misery; and the hour was the Hour of the Ox; and the Baku came in through the window to ask, "Have you anything for me to eat?"

I gratefully made answer:—

"Assuredly!... Listen, good Baku, to this dream of mine!—

"I was standing in some great white-walled room, where lamps were burning; but I cast no shadow on the naked floor of that room,—and there, upon an iron bed, I saw my own dead body. How I had come to die, and when I had died, I could not remember. Women were sitting near the bed,—six or seven,—and I did not know any of them. They were neither young nor old, and all were dressed in black:

watchers I took them to be. They sat motionless and silent: there was no sound in the place; and I somehow felt that the hour was late.

"In the same moment I became aware of something nameless in the atmosphere of the room,-a heaviness that weighed upon the will,—some viewless numbing power that was slowly growing. Then the watchers began to watch each other, stealthily; and I knew that they were afraid. Soundlessly one rose up, and left the room. Another followed; then another. So, one by one, and lightly as shadows, they all went out. I was left alone with the corpse of myself.

"The lamps still burned clearly; but the terror in the air was thickening. The watchers had stolen away almost as soon as they began to feel it. But I believed that there was yet time to escape;—I thought that I could safely delay a moment longer. A monstrous curiosity obliged me to remain: I wanted to look at my own body, to examine it closely.... I approached it. I observed it. And I wondered—because it seemed to me very long,—unnaturally long....

"Then I thought that I saw one eyelid quiver. But the appearance of motion might have been caused by the trembling of a lamp-flame. I stooped to look—slowly, and very cautiously, because I was afraid that the eyes might open.

"'It is Myself,' I thought, as I bent down,—'and yet, it is growing queer!'... The face appeared to be lengthening.... 'It is not Myself,' I thought again, as I stooped still lower,—'and yet, it cannot be any other!' And I became much more afraid, unspeakably afraid, that the eyes would open....

"They opened!—horribly they opened!—and that thing sprang,—sprang from the bed at me, and fastened upon me,—moaning, and gnawing, and rending! Oh! with what madness of terror did I strive against it! But the eyes of it, and the moans of it, and the touch of it, sickened; and all my being seemed about to burst asunder in frenzy of loathing, when—I knew not how—

I found in my hand an axe. And I struck with the axe;—I clove, I crushed, I brayed

the Moaner,—until there lay before me only a shapeless, hideous, reeking mass,—the abominable ruin of Myself....

"—Baku kuraë! Baku kuraë! Baku kuraë! Devour, O Baku! devour the dream!" "Nay!" made answer the Baku. "I never eat lucky dreams. That is a very lucky dream,—a most fortunate dream.... The axe—yes! the Axe of the Excellent Law, by which the monster of Self is utterly destroyed!... The best kind of a dream! My friend, I believe in the teaching of the Buddha."

And the Baku went out of the window. I looked after him;—and I beheld him fleeing over the miles of moonlit roofs,—passing, from house-top to house-top, with amazing soundless leaps,—like a great cat....

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK KOTTO: BEING JAPANESE CURIOS, WITH SUNDRY COBWEBS ***

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