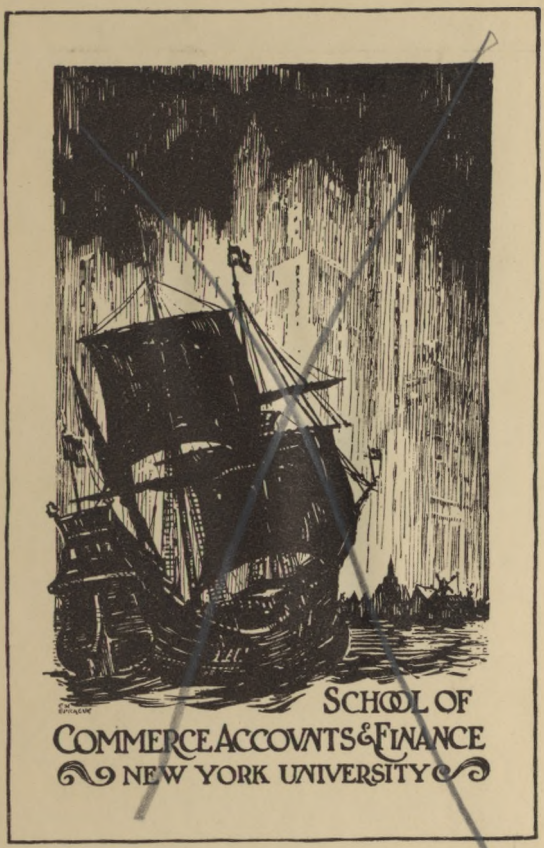
THE CANNERY BOAT

by TAKIJI KOBAYASHI



The Cannery Boat

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By

Takiji Kobayashi

and other

Japanese

short stories

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE virile proletarian literary movement in Japan has, for some years now, had connection with other countries, notably China, U.S.S.R. and Germany. But this is the first representation of it in English. The stories are translated by various hands and give a clear view of its notable character. The movement has had to fight not only against disruptive ideological enemies in the same field, but also against bitter Government oppression, witnessed in the extreme case by the death of Takiji Kobayashi, recorded at the end of this volume. Readers will find a full account of the growth of the movement in *Literature of the World Revolution*, No. 1, 1931, p. 83.

THE CANNERY BOAT

by

TAKIJI KOBAYASHI

THE CANNERY BOAT

I

"HALLO, we're going off to hell."

Two fishermen were leaning against the railings of the deck. Their gaze was fixed on the town of Hakodate as it lay enfolding the sea. One of them spat out the cigarette which he had smoked up to the butt. It rolled over and over comically and then fell over the edge, grazing the high side as it went. The man's whole body smelled of *sake*.

Steamers floating on their red bellies; vessels loading cargo inclined to one side as if something from out of the deep was pulling at their sleeves; squat yellow funnels; big bell-shaped buoys; launches, looking like vermin, plying from ship to ship; soot, bits of bread, rotten fruit all swishing together on the water like some strange-patterned fabric; a choking coaly smell brought by the smoke which was swept along the waves by the wind. Now and again a rattling sound of winches came clear over the waves.

Next to this crabcanning steamer, the *Hakko Maru*, lay a sailing vessel, her paint peeling off and the chains of her anchor hanging down from holes in the bow that looked like the nostrils of an ox. Two foreigners could be seen with pipes in their

mouths walking backwards and forwards all the time, like mechanical dolls, over the same strip of deck. It seemed to be a Russian ship—evidently told off to keep the Japanese crab steamers under surveillance.

On the deck the captain, looking like an admiral at least, smoked a cigarette as he sauntered up and down. At a short distance from his nose the exhaled smoke bent at an acute angle and blew away in separate puffs. One of the crew, swinging a bucket of food, passed hurriedly into the front cabin and then came out again. They were all ready to sail.

The two fishermen peered down into the dark hold where factory hands could be seen like birds popping their heads out of the nest. They were mere boys of fourteen or fifteen.

"Where are you from?"

"Street," those in the bunk answered. They were all children of the Hakodate slums, and formed a group by themselves.

"That bunkload?"

"Nambu."

"That one!"

"Akita."

Each bunkfull was different.

"What part of Akita?"

"The north," they answered. They were an unhealthy-looking lot. Their noses seemed to be running pus and their lower eyelids, also discharging, were red as if pulled back.

"From farms?"

"Yes."

The stuffy air had a sour smell like from rotting fruit. In the next compartment were dozens of barrels of pickles which added their pungent odour.

In a dark corner some mother, wearing a working coat and tight trousers, and with a three-cornered cloth folded over her head, peeled an apple and handed it to her child who lay on his stomach in the berth. She watched him eating it and herself munched at the spiral of peel. Other women talked among themselves and fumbled with little bundles near their children. Altogether there were about seven or eight such mothers. Other children who were without guardians stole an occasional glance in their direction.

One woman, her hair and clothes powdered with cement dust, divided up a packet of caramels and gave them round to the children near her.

"Mind you work well along with my Kenkichi, won't you?" she said, putting out her huge unshapely hands, knotted like the roots of a tree.

Other mothers wiped their children's noses or rubbed their faces with a towel, while some mumbled something among themselves.

"Your boy's healthy."

"Fairly."

"Mine's awful weak. I wonder what's best to do with him, but in any case . . ."

"Yes, it's the same all over, ain't it?"

The two fishermen hurried back to their own "nest" further aft. There, every time the anchor was raised or lowered, they were shaken up and knocked together.

In the dim light fishermen were lying round like pigs. The stench was that of a pigsty and made the newcomers' stomachs turn.

"What a stink."

"What d'ye expect. It's us. Of course we smell pretty high."

A fisherman with a big red face poured *sake* from a gallon bottle into a cracked cup and gulped it down, chewing some dried cuttlefish at the same time. By his side was another lying on his back who was eating an apple and reading some old magazine.

"I've made up me mind to give up the sea, but you know how it is," said one young fisherman loudly. His hair was in a tuft in front and his face was bloated and puffy from drink.

A pair of bow legs appeared in the hatchway and a man came down the stairs with a big old-fashioned bag strung over his shoulders. He glanced round and, discovering an empty place in a bunk, in he climbed. His complexion was dark and oily as if stained with something.

"I've come to join you, mates."

Before coming to this ship he had worked in the Yubari coal mine for seven years. After being almost fatally injured in an explosion he left the mines. The explosion occurred as he was pushing a truck he had loaded along to the next man. It was if hundreds of sticks of magnesium had been suddenly thrust in his face. In less than 1/5000 of a second after he felt his body float up like a sheet of paper. Truck after truck flew around like empty match-boxes. That was all he knew. How long

after he didn't know, but he awoke to hear his own groans. In order to stop the explosion spreading the management and the workers were building a wall in the gallery. From behind the wall he heard the voice of a miner, who, if anyone had tried, could have been saved, calling for help. Those cries once heard could never be forgotten. He jumped up and flung himself like a madman into the midst of the men building the wall and cried: "You can't do that, you can't!"

But couldn't they understand that the voice was getting fainter and fainter? He rushed wildly along the passage waving his arms and shouting. He fell forward several times and banged his forehead on the props. His whole body was soaked with mud and blood. Then he tripped over one of the sleepers and, turning a somersault, struck the rail and again lost consciousness.

The young fisherman who had been listening to the story said, "Cripes, it's not so much different here."

The other, without answering, rested his eyes —the typical dazzled yellowish lustreless eyes of the miner—on the fisherman.

Several of the "farmer-fishermen" were sitting glumly with their legs crossed flat, while others, leaning against the posts and hugging their knees, listened to the rest who were drinking and telling yarns. All had left home because they could not make a living there, where they started work in the fields before sunrise. They had left their eldest sons in charge and the womenfolk had to work in factories while the other sons had also to seek work elsewhere.

They all hoped to save money and go home. But, once they set foot in Hakodate or Otaru, they were stuck there like birds caught in quicklime. And then, simply " in their birthday suits," they were turned out. They could no longer return home. So in snowy Hokkaido they were forced to sell their bodies for next to nothing.

A girl pedlar with a box of cakes strapped on her back, a medicine dealer and other petty traders came on board. In a separate place like a little island in the centre of the compartment they set out their goods. The men from the bunks on all four sides leaned out and rallied and joked at them.

Among the fishermen were some who had been sold as " octopuses " to the navvies' shacks, on tracts of land just being opened up, or to railway construction camps in the interior of Hokkaido; others were wanderers who had sought and failed to get a living anywhere, and some only thought of getting enough *sake* to drink. There were also farmers from around Aomori, soft-hearted greenhorns, chosen by the heads of their villages. To draw them all like this from different parts was found, from the point of view of getting work out of them, to be the very best policy.

The Hakodate Labour Unions were struggling desperately to get organizers in on the crab canneries and among the fishermen going to Kamchatka. The Aomori and Akita Unions were joining in too. This was the great fear of the exploiters.

A steward in a short white starched coat kept coming and going busily, bringing beer and fruit and wine-glasses into the saloon aft.

In the saloon the captain was entertaining the head of the Marine Police and the big bugs of the Seamen's Unions.

"Blast them, they're just guzzling it down," said the steward sulkily.

The fishermen's "den" was lit by a tiny electric light about as big as a berry. The air was foul and stinking with tobacco smoke and crowded humanity. Sprawling in their bunks the men looked like wriggling maggots.

The boss, followed by the captain, the company's factory representative and the foreman came down the hatch into the men's quarters. In the passage-way apple peel, banana skins, sodden cardboard, a straw sandal and wrapping paper with bits of rice sticking to it were all piled up in a heap. A drain had been blocked. The boss glanced down at it, and then without ceremony spat. All of them had been drinking and their faces were red.

"I want to say a few words." The boss, whose body was strong as iron, put one foot on the partition between the bunks and, picking at his teeth and spitting, spoke to the men.

"This crab cannery is not a mere profit-making concern for the company," he said, "it is, above all, a concern of great international significance. Are we, citizens of the Japanese Empire, greater—or are the Russians? It's a kind of man-to-man fight. So if—but of course there's no possibility of it happening—but *if* it ever came to us being beaten, you Japanese men, if you've got any guts, would commit hara-kiri and drop into the Sea of Kamchatka. Just because you're small, would you

go and let yourselves be licked by those bloody fools of Russians ?

" Then, not only our crab canneries but also our salmon and trout fisheries in Kamchatka give us a great advantage over the other nations. And they are of special importance in such a densely populated country as ours, besides helping to supply the community with food supplies. I want you all to realize we are serving our Empire when we risk our lives braving the stormy seas of Hokkaido. So if any one of you start imitating the Russian tactics that are popular nowadays and stir up trouble, I tell you, that man would be doing nothing short of selling his country. I don't think such a thing is likely, but I give you fair warning." The boss sneezed as if recovering from intoxication.

One important guest, who was a little drunk, went down the gangway with jerky, uncertain steps to get into the waiting launch. Sailors lifted him like a big sack of pebbles, but he was almost too much for them. He waved his arms and kicked out with his legs, and screamed out all sorts of things, and the sailors kept getting a shower of spit right in their faces.

" In public they say all sorts of fine things, but this is about all it amounts to," the sailor remarked.

Having got him aboard, one of them, undoing the rope from the bottom of the gang way and glancing over at the launch, said in a low voice :

" Shall we do for him ? "

They held their breath for a moment and then burst out laughing.

II

The Shukutsu lighthouse could be seen far to the right through a curtain of mist, grey as the sea itself. It shot its long silver-white ray over countless miles of sea.

A fine drizzling rain started to fall. The fishermen's hands became as stiff as crabs' claws with the cold and they had to keep slipping them in under their coats or blowing on them. Like greyish threads the rain fell on the opaque, slate-coloured sea. As the ship approached Wakkanai, however, the drizzle changed to pelting drops and the sea took on the appearance of a vast waving flag. Further on it broke up into small choppy waves. The wind howled against the masts ominously. A steady creaking as of rivets being loosened became audible. This ship of nearly three thousand tons shook as if seized with hiccoughs. She seemed to be lifted up by some gigantic force. Now she was floating in space, and now was sinking with a thud to her former position. The boys on board felt a sick, tickling sensation like that when a lift goes down too fast. Their faces were yellow, they retched over the side.

At times, through the round portholes dimmed with spray, they could glimpse the firm line of the snow-clad Sagahlien ranges. But soon this was hidden by the waves which rose like great frozen alps. These came nearer and nearer, dashing against the porthole, and spattering their spray. Then, washing down the glass, they receded and the ship shook herself like a peevish child. The thumping

of the engines throughout the ship boomed as an accompaniment to the quick vibrating. Sometimes when riding on the crest of a wave, the screw would come out of the water and beat the surface with its blade.

The wind became stronger and stronger. It screeched in the masts, bending them like fishing-rods. The waves surged violently from one side of the ship to the other, and then ebbed away. At such times the sluices were like rushing cataracts. Up the fearful slopes of these mountains this little toy ship climbed alone. Then with a stagger, as if about to fall head first, she descended into the trough. Now they were sinking!—but soon another wave was smashing at the side of the ship.

When they entered Ohotsk Sea the colour of the water was a more distinct grey. The cold stabbed at the workers through their clothes. Their lips were blue. A fine snow, dry as salt, started to fall. Like specks of glass it stunned the hands and faces of the men as they crawled and crouched at their work on deck. After each wave washed over the ship the deck became a skating rink. A rope was fastened across the deck to which the crew hung. They looked like clothes on a line. The boss kept shouting at everybody.

A second crabcanning ship which had left Hakodate at the same time was now out of sight. From the summit of the waves, in the distance could be seen its two masts as they rocked up and down like a drowning man waving his arms. A trail of smoke, thin as if from a cigarette, was blown in puffs along the waves. At intervals,

above the waves, shouting was heard and a whistle from the second ship. It was no longer heard as the *Itaki Marru* rolled down again.

On the crab ship were eight small boats, which had to be lashed as the waves, attacking like thousands of sharks with white teeth bared, threatened to wrench them away. The sailors and fishermen were thus forced to risk their lives.

"What do one or two of your lives count?" shouted the boss. "Do you think we are going to stand by and watch the boats being lost?"

Roaring like famished lions, the waves came rushing and the ship was powerless as a rabbit. The snowstorm came sheeting down like a white waving flag. Evening approached but the storm showed no signs of abating.

When work was finished the fishermen filed down into their quarters. Their frozen limbs were stuck numbly on to their bodies. Like worms, they crawled into their separate bunks, with never a word. They grasped the iron rails because the ship shook herself desperately, like a horse trying to drive off gadflie. Some cast an aimless glances at the ceiling whose white paint had become yellowed with smoke, or at the black porthole almost buried in the depths of the ocean; others lay with their mouths half open, a blank expression on their faces. Not one was capable of thinking. A vague consciousness of danger kept them all in eerie silence.

One may lay on his back, taking swigs from a whisky bottle. The edge of the bottle gleamed in the dull yellowish light of an electric lamp. Then

with a crash the empty bottle was flung away, striking several objects and glancing off in a zig-zag. All turned their heads and followed the bottle with their eyes. From a corner someone cried out in an angry voice. Distorted by the storm, the words sounded like mere gibberish.

"We're leaving Japan," said one, wiping the porthole with his elbow.

The stove did nothing but smoke, as if mistaking for salmon these humans who were shivering away. Over the hatches, covered with canvas, the waves passed with great swishing strides. Against the wall of the bunks the men heard a banging as though some hefty shoulder were breaking it down.

Now the steamer heaved like a whale in its death throes.

"Dinner," shouted the cook, poking his head in the door and putting his hand up to his mouth. "No soup, because of the storm."

"What is there?"

"Stinking fish," he answered, withdrawing his head. One after another they got up. They were as crazy for their food as convicts. They were ravenous.

Placing their plates between their legs and blowing the steam, they crammed the hot lumpy rice into their mouths and loading it on their tongues moved it around from side to side. It was the first time anything hot had come in contact with their noses, which ran in a continuous trickle which threatened to fall into the food.

While they were eating the boss came in.

"You're like bloody starving beggars the way you're stuffing it down. What do you mean by filling up your bellies when you've done no proper work!"

Then, glancing from the upper to the lower berths, he sidled out again.

"Has that fellow got the right to speak to us like that?" muttered one student, worn to a shadow with sea-sickness and overwork.

"Ah, he's Asakawa, and he just about owns the ship."

"The Emperor's above the clouds, so whatever he does doesn't hurt us, but Asakawa's here with us all the time."

From a different direction another man spoke, sticking out his lips: "He's as mean as hell!" he said. "What's a plate or two of rice anyhow! Let's set on to him!"

"That's the stuff. It'd be better still if you said it to his face."

They were all angry but they could do nothing, so they laughed.

Late at night the boss came down once more while they were asleep. Catching hold of the rails to support himself, he walked along, shining a lantern on to each fisherman. He turned round heads, which looked like scattered pumpkins, and examined them by the light of the lantern. No one would have awoken even had they been kicked. When the boss came to the end, he stood still for a moment, wondering what to do next, but he soon walked off toward the cook's galley next door.

Next morning they learned that one of the hands was missing.

Everyone remembered the cruel work the day before and thought, " He's been washed overboard by the waves." It was a nasty feeling, but as they were set to all kinds of jobs at dawn they had no opportunity to discuss it among themselves.

" Who'd go and throw themselves into freezing water like this ! He's hiding. If I find him, the bastard. I'll half murder him ! "

The height of the storm had passed, but when the ship struck the waves which rose up in front of her they washed over the deck as easily as you cross your own threshold. As if its whole body was wounded after this long day and night struggle, the ship made a kind of limping sound. Light smoke-like clouds, so low that you could almost reach them, struck the masts and were curved downwards. The cold rain continued. As the waves rose, it could be seen piercing right into them. It was more eerie than the rain a lost traveller meets in a forest.

The rope was frozen hard as an iron bar. One student met the cabin-boy rushing up the companionway two steps at a time.

" Listen a minute," said the boy, pulling him into a corner away from the wind, " I've got something interesting to tell you."

It had happened at about two o'clock that morning. The waves were dancing up as high as the deck, at times breaking over it in great cascades. Their bared teeth showed up blue-white through the darkness. Because of the storm no one could sleep.

Just at that time the wireless operator had rushed excitedly into the captain's cabin.

"There's something up, sir. Just had an S.O.S.!"

"S.O.S.! What ship?"

"The *Chichibu Maru*, sir. The ship that's been going along with us."

"She's an old rattletrap anyhow, that ship," put in Asakawa who, still wearing his oilskins, was sitting in the corner with his legs stretched out. He was smiling and tapping scornfully on the floor with one foot. "If it comes to that, though, they're all rattletraps."

"They seem desperate!"

"Huh! That's bad."

The captain in haste, without putting on any coat or hat, had started to open the door in order to go to the steering-room. Before he could get it open, Asakawa, without warning, seized him by the right shoulder.

"Who's ordered you to go out of your course unnecessarily?"

Who had ordered him? Wasn't he the captain? Taken aback for the moment, he became as stiff as a poker but then he soon reasserted his position.

"As captain, I do it."

"Captain is it?" The boss, with his arms stretched out sideways in front of the captain, raised his voice insultingly at the last word. "Look here, whose ship d'ye reckon this is? The company's chartered and paid for it. The only ones who've got any say are Mr. Sugi and me. You, you're called the captain and you think yourself bloody

important, but as a matter of fact you don't count any more than a scrap of stinking fish. D'ye understand? If we go getting mixed up in these kind of things we'll lose a week. It's no joke even to get a day behind. And then it's just cruel the amount of insurance she carries. The old blub, we'd make more out of her if she sank."

The cabin-boy thought to himself, "Now for a devil of a row!" It couldn't end just with that. But wasn't the captain standing there paralysed, as if cotton wool had been stuffed down his throat? This was the first time the boy had seen him in such a position. Didn't the captain's words carry any weight? That was nonsense! The boy couldn't make it out at all.

"I didn't expect pity from a man of your type, and if you begin showing it now do you think we can get the better of other countries?" the boss spat out.

In the wireless room the receiving apparatus was ticking continuously and at times giving out bluish sparks. Everyone went into the room to know how things were going.

"Listen! It's getting quicker all the time!"

The operator translated for the captain and the boss. They all stood dead still with their chins set involuntarily and their shoulders braced. Their eyes were glued on the operator's fingers and followed them as they glided deftly over the different switches and buttons.

Every time the ship pitched the electric light, set like a pimple in the wall, brightened and dimmed. The sound of the waves breaking side on mingled

with the ceaseless sinister whistling of the distress signal. The wind was blowing; the whistle sounded first far away and then just above their heads, and then again as if shut off from them by a great iron door.

"Jii—jii—i!" A spark, trailing a long tail, flashed out, and then all sound stopped completely. At that instant everyone's heart gave a leap. The operator fingered the switch and adjusted the apparatus but with no result. Not another tap. He twisted around in his chair.

"Sunk!"

Taking off the head-piece, he continued in a low voice, "A crew of 425. The end has come. No hope of being saved. S.O.S.! S.O.S.! It was repeated two or three times and then nothing more."

When he heard this, the captain had stretched his neck and shook his head as if he had difficulty in breathing. He cast a vacant glance around him and then turned towards the door. He began fingering the knot of his tie. He was a pitiful sight.

The cabin-boy finished his story.

A gloominess came over the student and he gazed at the sea, which was still heaving with a heavy swell. One instant the horizon would appear right beneath them, while a minute later they were looking up at the narrow strip of the sky from a deep valley.

"I suppose it's really sunk," the student murmured to himself. It troubled him sorely. The thought came to him that they too were in a similar old tub.

All the crabcanning boats were old tubs. That workers should perish in the sea was no concern of the directors in the Marunonchi Building.*

These ships were like factories rather than merchantmen. The mercantile law did not apply to them. Doddering dyspeptic old hulks which for twenty years had been left moored away, waiting to be scrapped, were now brazenly given a thin coat of paint and then came crawling into Hakodate. Government ships and transports damaged while on service in the Russo-Japanese war, and cast aside as worthless as fish guts, now once more showed their ghostly hulks. The slightest speeding up would burst the pipes. And if when chased by a Russian patrol (and such occasions were many) they made a dash the whole ship would creak and threaten to fall to pieces any minute. They would shake all over like a palsied man.

But such things did not count; everything had to be utilized for the sake of the Empire. The ships were factories but they did not come under the Factory Law. The managing director, an intelligent man, tacked on to this venture the phrase, "for the sake of the Empire," and soon a secret stream of ill-gotten gold started to flow into his pockets.

Thus meditated the student as he went down the companionway.

At the bottom of the stairs a notice had been pasted. There were many mistakes in spelling and the surface was all lumpy because rice had been used for paste.

* The business quarter of Tokyo.

A Reward of 2 Packets of Bat * and
1 Towel will be given to the one
who finds the hand Miyaguchi.

ASAKAWA,
Superintendent.

III

The rain and fog continued for several days more. The blurred coastline of Kamchatka stretched out like a twisting eel. The *Hakko Mara* dropped anchor four miles out at sea—up to three miles were Russian waters, and so it was forbidden to go within those limits.

When the nets had been untangled, all necessary preparations were made for fishing for crabs. In Kamchatka the sun rose about two o'clock and so the fishermen, all ready dressed, even to long gumboots, reaching up to their thighs, sat themselves in the cases for the crabs and dropped off to sleep.

Deluded by the agent and brought here all the way from Tokyo, the party of students grumbled among themselves that they hadn't expected it would be like this.

"A nice tale he spun us, that we'd all sleep separately."

There were seventeen or eighteen students. It had been settled that they receive sixty yen each in advance, but out of that came train fare, lodging on the way, blankets and bedding and the agent's commission, so that finally when they arrived at

* A well-known brand of cigarettes.

the ship each one found himself seven or eight yen in debt! When they first realized this they became very dispirited. At the start they huddled together in one group, surrounded by the fishermen, like lost souls.

About the fourth day after leaving Hakodate they began to feel ill from the effects of eating the hard rice and the same soup every day. When they got into bed they would draw up their knees and prod their fingers into one another's calves. Their spirits alternately clouded or brightened as they fancied the finger left a dent or did not leave a dent. To make matters worse their bowels did not work for several days. One of them went to the doctor to get some medicine. When he came back his face was pale with excitement.

"He said he didn't have any luxuries like that."

"What did you expect? All ship's doctors are the same," said one young fisherman who had overheard.

"All doctors anywhere are like it, I tell you. The one at the company I was working at was just the same," said the fisherman who had been a miner.

When they had all lain down that night the boss came along.

"Are you all asleep? Listen a minute. There's been a wireless to say that the *Chichibu Maru* has sunk. It said that the fate of the crew was not known for certain." With a twist of his lips he spat on the floor. Such was his habit.

What they had heard from the cabin boy flashed into the students' minds. Drowning would be

too good for a fellow who could speak so calmly about the death of the 400 or 500 workers whom he had not attempted to save. They raised their heads and began talking together noisily. Asakawa slouched off with his left shoulder forward.

The missing worker had been caught two days ago as he came out from the side of the boilers. He had remained in hiding for two days, but his stomach had been gnawing and at last he had been forced to come out. He was caught by an old fisherman. One of the younger fishermen was furious over this and threatened to strike the old man.

"You blasted scut! Kidding yourself you're enjoying that tobacco when you're not even a smoker!" he said to the old fisherman, who, having received the two packets of Bats, was puffing away at one as if he relished it.

The boss stripped the worker and pushed him into one of two W.C.'s, fastening the lock on the outside. At first no one wanted to go to the W.C. They could not bear to hear that crying voice in the next compartment. On the second day the voice was fainter and came in sobs. Then there were intervals between the crying. As soon as they finished work the fishermen hurried to the W.C. Even when they made signals from their side no answer came. Late that night Miyaguchi was dragged out. They found him with one arm leaning on the urinal, having fallen forward with his head in the box for toilet paper. His lips were an inky blue, just like a dead man's.

The morning was cold. It was already light

although it was only three o'clock. With their numbed hands tucked in under their coats and their backs arched they got up. The boss began hunting through the workers' cabins, the fishermen's, the sailors', even the firemen's. He dragged everyone out regardless of whether they had colds or were ill. There was no wind, but as they worked on the deck their fingers and toes lost all power of feeling. The foreman, cursing in a loud voice, drove fourteen or fifteen of them into the factory. There was a leather thong on the end of his bamboo whip.

"Just now he was kicking that Miyaguchi fellow he dragged out last night, and telling him he's got to start work again from this morning, even though he can't speak," said one weak-looking fisherman who had become friendly with the students, eyeing the foreman as he spoke. "But he seems to have given him up at last because he couldn't get a move out of him."

The boss appeared pushing along with vigorous prods from behind another worker, whose body was trembling all over. Through being made to work in the cold rain he had caught a cold, which turned to pleurisy. Even when it was not cold he shivered all the time. With his thin, bloodless lips strangely contorted, his eyes had an expression of intense timidity in spite of the furrows between the brows. He had been discovered wandering about in the boiler-room, tired of enduring the cold.

The fishermen at the winches, lowering the boats to put out fishing, followed with their eyes the two

figures without saying anything. One of them about forty turned away as if he could not bear the sight and shook his head with disgust.

" We didn't pay a nice sum of money and bring you here just to have you catching cold and skulking round, thank you. And you, you bastards, mind your own business." The boss hammered on the deck with his bludgeon.

" If hell is any worse than this, I'd like to see it."

" When we get back home no one'll believe these things, no matter how much we tell them."

" You're right. I'm bloody sure there's nothing worse than this."

The steam winches rattled round and round. A boat, hanging out in mid-air, all at once began to drop down. The sailors and firemen hurried about the deck, watching their step at the same time. Like an old cock with his comb standing up, the boss watched them.

During a lull in the work the students sat down behind some cargo to avoid the wind. The fisherman who came from the coal-mine suddenly turned the corner.

" It's risking our lives ! " This sentence, fraught with real feeling, that had slipped out was like a direct stab into the students' breasts. " And in the mine it was just the same. You don't seem able to live without being haunted by death. I was scared of the gas there ; I'm scared of these waves here too."

In the afternoon the sky changed. There was a mist so light as to seem almost unreal. Myriads of three-cornered waves sprang up across the great

cloth of sea. Suddenly the wind began to howl through the masts. The bottoms of the tarpaulins covering the cargo flapped against the deck.

"The rabbits are scampering! Look, the rabbits!" cried somebody in a loud voice as he ran along the starboard deck. The words were carried away on the strong wind and his voice was heard just as a meaningless shouting.

By now the crests of the triangular waves were flinging their white spray over the whole surface of the sea, for all the world like thousands of rabbits scampering over a vast plain. This was the herald of one of Kamchatka's sudden storms. All at once the tide began to ebb quickly.

The ship started to swing round on herself. Kamchatka, which until now had been visible on the starboard side, suddenly appeared on the port side. There was great excitement among fishermen and sailors. Above their heads sounded an alarm whistle. They all stood looking up at the sky. The funnel shook and rattled. Maybe because they were standing directly under it, it seemed incredibly wide, like a great bath-tub, sloping away out backwards. The piercing note from the alarm whistle had something tragic in it. Warned by its prolonged blowing, the boats out fishing far from the main ship returned home through the storm.

The fishermen and sailors grouped together noisily near the trapdoor leading down to the dark engine-room. With every roll of the ship a beam of faint light filtered down slantingly from

above, and the men's excited faces were lit up and lost again in the gloom.

"What's up?" The miner had made his way among them. "That bloody Asakawa; I'll pound him to death," he blurted out.

Early that morning the boss had received warning of the storm from the *Maru*, which was anchored about ten miles away. The message also said that if the boats were out they should be recalled immediately. Asakawa had said: "If we're going to take notice of every little thing that comes along, do you think we'll ever get finished with the job we came all the way to Kamchatka to do?" This information had leaked out through the wireless operator.

The first sailor to hear this had started to roar at the operator as if he had been Asakawa. "What does he think human lives are, anyway?"

"Human lives?"

"Yes."

"But Asakawa never thinks of us fellows as human beings."

The fisherman wanted to answer, but he was dumbfounded and just became red in the face. Then he had gone along to join his companions.

They stood there scowling but docile in spite of the excitement welling in them. One hand, whose father was out in the boats, hung round full of suspense on the outside of the ring.

Towards evening there was a great shouting from the bridge. The men below rushed up the companionway two steps at a time. Two boats had been sighted, drawing near. They had been

lashed together with ropes. They came very close, but, just as if they were at one end of a see-saw with the ship at the other, the big waves lifted them up and down in turns. One after another great roaring waves rose up between them. Although so near, they made no progress. Everyone felt the tension. A rope was thrown from the deck, but it did not reach. It only fell on the water with a vain splashing. Then, twisting like a water-snake, it was hauled back. This was repeated several times. From the ship all shouted in one voice, but no answer came. Their faces were like masks. Their eyes were immobile. The whole scene, with its unbearable grimness, seared their hearts.

By dusk all the boats except two had got safely back. As soon as the fishermen came on deck they lost consciousness. One of the boats, having become full of water, had been anchored and its crew transferred into another boat. The other one together with its crew was missing.

The boss was fuming with rage. He kept on going down into the fishermen's cabin and then up again. The men cast sullen glances at him throughout this performance.

The next day, partly to search for the missing boat, partly to follow up the crabs, it was decided that the ship should move on. The loss of the carcasses of five or six men was nothing, but it would be a pity to lose the boat.

From early morning the engineers were busy. The vibrations caused by raising the anchor sent the fishermen who were in the compartment next

the chain-box spinning. The steel plates on the side were worn out and with each shake fell loose. The *Hakko Maru* searched as far north as 51.5° for the first boat, which had lost its anchor. Fragments of ice showed themselves, floating like living creatures between the slow-moving waves. Then a great mass of these broken pieces appeared, stretching out as far as the eye could reach. The next moment the fragments encircled the whole ship, giving off a kind of foam and a vapour like steam. Suddenly cracking sounds came from all over the ship, and the decks and railings, which were wet with water, became covered with ice. The ship's sides shone brightly with frost crystals, like a coating of face powder. Pressing hands to faces the sailors and fishermen ran along the deck.

The Kawasaki boat was not to be found.

Just before nine a boat was made out floating ahead. The boss rushed jubilantly along the deck, crying, "Damn her, we've found her at last, damn her!" Soon a motor-launch was lowered, but it turned out that the boat was not the one they were looking for, but a much newer boat with number "36" on it.

Asakawa drummed on the side of the boat with his fingers.

"She's in fine condition," he grinned. "We'll take her along with us."

The boat No. 36 was hoisted on to the bridge of the *Hakko Maru*. As she hung in mid-air drops of water fell from her on to the deck. With an air of pride which seemed to say, "That's a nice bit of work," the boss surveyed the boat as she was

being raised up and murmured to himself, " She's a beauty, a real beauty."

The fishermen watched him as they untangled the nets. " He's nothing but a blasted robber! I'd like to see the chains snap and let it fall on the blighter's head."

He passed close by them as they worked, looking down at them. Then he shouted to the carpenter in an impatient, gruff voice.

The carpenter poked his head out of a hatchway. " What is it? "

The boss answered angrily. " What is it? You fool. I want you to scrape off the number."

The carpenter looked blank.

" Come on, you slacker! "

Behind the broad-shouldered boss the little carpenter, a saw in his belt and a chisel in his hand, trailed over the deck with cautious steps like a lame man. Boat No. 36 became boat No. 6.

" That'll do fine. Ah, ha, we've got one on them! " Twisting his mouth up into a three-cornered shape, the boss laughed expansively.

Even had they sailed farther north they could not have found the missing boat. The ship, which had been standing still during all these proceedings, now began to describe a wide curve to get back again to her original position. The sky had cleared and was as fresh-looking as if it had just been washed. The Kamchatka ranges showed up distinctly like the Swiss mountains you see in picture post cards.

Still the lost boat did not return. The fishermen gathered together the belongings of the missing

men, looking for the addresses of their families and getting everything ready in case the worst came to the worst. It wasn't the pleasantest of jobs. As they worked they had the feeling that they were examining their own remains. Various parcels and letters addressed to women relatives were discovered in the missing men's baggage. Among one man's things there was a letter written in a mixture of the two scripts, Katakana and Hiragana, obviously with a frequently licked pencil. This was passed from one rough sailor's hand to another's. Each one spelled the words out to himself laboriously, but with intense interest, and shaking his head passed it on to his neighbour. It was a letter from the man's child.

One man raised his head from the page and whispered, "It's all through Asakawa. If we know for sure he's dead we'll revenge him." The speaker was a big, hefty fellow who had left a past behind him in the interior of Hokkaido. In a still lower voice one young, round-shouldered fisherman said, "I reckon we could beat-up one like him."

"Ah, that letter was no good; it's made me homesick."

"Look here," said the first speaker, "if we don't look out the swine will get us. We've got to look out for ourselves."

One man who had been sitting in the corner with his knees up, biting his thumb-nails and listening to every word, remarked, "Leave it to me; when the time comes, I'll lay into the swine!"

They were all silent, but they felt relieved.

Three days after the *Hakko Maru* returned to her original position and the missing boat came back. Everyone on board was safe and sound.

Because of the storm they had lost control of their boat. They were more helpless than babes strung up by the neck. They were all prepared for death. Fishermen must always be ready for death.

Their boat had been washed up on the coast of Kamchatka, and they were rescued by some Russians living near. The Russians were a family of four. Thirsty as they were for a " home " with women and children in it, this place held an indescribable attraction for the sailors. Added to that everyone was kind, offering all kinds of help. Still, at first the fact that their rescuers were foreigners, with different coloured hair and eyes, using incomprehensible words, made the sailors feel rather strange. The thought soon occurred to them, however, that after all these were just human beings like themselves.

Hearing of the wreck, many people from the village gathered. The place was a long way off from the Japanese fishing waters.

They stayed there two days recovering and then started back. " We didn't want to come back; who would, to a hell like this ? "

Their story didn't end there. There was another interesting thing which they were hiding.

It happened just on the day they were to leave. As they were standing round the stove, putting on their clothes and talking, four or five Russians entered, and with them was one Chinese. One

Russian, with a large face and a short, thick brown beard, rather round-shouldered, burst into a flood of loud talking and gesticulating. In order to let him know that they could not understand Russian the sailors waved their hands in front of their faces. Then the Russian said a single sentence and the Chinese, who was watching his lips, started to speak in Japanese. It was strange Japanese, with the order of the words all mixed up, more likely to confuse the listeners than do anything else. Word after word came reeling out drunkenly.

"You, for sure, have no money?"

"Too true, we haven't."

"You are poor men."

"Too true, we are."

"So you're proletarians. Understand?"

"Yes."

The Russian, smiling, started to walk around. Sometimes he would stop and look over at them.

"Rich man, he do this to you" (gripping his throat). "Rich man become fatter and fatter" (swelling out his stomach). "You no good at all, you become poor. Understand? Japan no good. Workers like this" (pulling a long face and making himself look like a sick man). "Men that don't work like this" (walking about haughtily).

The young fishermen were very amused at him. "That's it, that's it," they said and laughed.

"Workers like this. Men that don't work like this" (repeating the same gestures). "Like that no good. Workers like this!" (this time just the opposite, swelling out his chest and walking haughtily). "Men that don't work like this!"

(looking like a decrepit beggar). "That very good. Understand? That country, Russia. Only workers like this!" (haughty). "Russia. We have no men who don't work. No cunning men. No men who seize your throat. Understand? Russia not at all terrible country. What everyone say only lies."

They were all vaguely wondering whether this wasn't what was called "terrible" and "Red." But if it was "Red" one part of them couldn't help feeling that it sounded very "right."

"Understand? Really understand?"

Two or three of the Russians started to jabber something among themselves. The Chinese listened to them. Then in a stuttering kind of way he began again to speak Japanese:

"Among men who don't work, many make profits. Proletariat always like this" (a gesture of being gripped by the throat). "This no good! You proletarians, one, two, three, a hundred, a thousand, fifty thousand, a hundred thousand, all of you, all like this" (swinging his hands like children do when walking along together). "Then become strong. It's quite safe" (tapping the muscles of his arm). "You won't lose. Understand?"

"Yes."

"The men who don't work, they run away" (running for his life). "It's safe, really. The workers, proletariat, become proud" (walking solemnly). "Proletariat is greatest. If no proletariat, no bread, all die. Understand?"

"Yes."

" Japan no good yet. Workers like this " (bending and cringing). " Men who don't work like this " (haughty and pretending to punch and knock over his neighbour). " That no good! . . . Workers like this " (straightening up his body in a threatening way and advancing ; then pretending to knock his neighbour down and kick him). " Men who don't work like this " (running away). " Japan only workers. Fine country. Proletarians' country ! Understand ? "

" Yes, yes, we understand."

The Russian raised a strange voice and began a kind of dance.

" Japan workers, act ! " (straightening himself and making to attack). " Very glad. Russia all glad. *Banzai !* . . . You go back to ship. In your ship men who don't work like this " (haughty). " You, proletariat, do this ! " (pretending to box —then swinging hands as before—then advancing). " Quite safe. You win ! Understand ? "

" We understand." The young fishermen, who before they knew it had become very much excited, suddenly squeezed the Chinese man's hand.

" We'll do it . . . for sure we'll do it ! "

The head sailor thought all this was " Red," that they were being egged on to do very terrible things. Like this, by such tricks, Russia was making a complete fool of Japan, he thought.

When the Russian had finished he shouted something and then pressed their hands with all his might. He embraced them and pressed his bristly face to theirs. The flustered Japanese, with their heads pushed back, did not know what to do.

They all pressed to hear more in spite of occasional glances towards the door. The fishermen went on telling them many other things about the Russians. There minds lapped it all up as if they were blotting paper.

"Hey, there, that's about enough!" The head sailor, seeing how impressed they all were by these tales, tapped the shoulder of one young fisherman, who was talking for all he was worth.

IV

The wireless operator listened-in to messages between other ships and told every piece of information he got to the boss. Their ship was clearly behind the others. The boss was beside himself with impatience, which he vented on the fishermen and sailors. He held them responsible for everything. The boss and the foreman began to plan so that they could make the work a kind of competition between the seamen and the fishermen.

They were all set to the same work of breaking open the crabs; then, if the fishermen were beaten by the seamen (though they got none of the profits whichever way it went), they were heartily cursed. An unbroken succession of gruelling, killing days. At first the output increased from 50 to 60 per cent., but after five or six days both sides became stale and their work much less productive. Their heads would fall forward on their chests as they worked, and then the boss, without wasting any words, would strike them. Taken unawares, they would

let out a yell of pain that surprised even themselves. With this enmity between them, they worked in complete silence, like men who have forgotten how to speak. They had no surplus energy to expend on the luxury of talking.

Next the boss started to give "prizes" to the winning side. The smouldering fire was once more fanned into flame.

"They soon fall for it," he said as he sat drinking beer with the captain in the latter's cabin. The captain had dimpled hands like a plump woman. Tapping a gold-tipped cigarette on the table, he answered with an amiable uncomprehending smile. He was in a continuous state of frustrated annoyance because the boss was always intruding on his rights. He wondered whether the men might not suddenly seize an opportunity to beat-up the fellow and dump him into the Sea of Kamchatka!

The boss made a practice of branding the man who did least work each day. He did this with a red-hot rod applied to the man's body. The men worked on—all the time in dread of that brand, which would cling to them for ever like their own shadow. An upward curve was again noticeable in the work.

What are the limits of physical endurance? At any rate the boss knew them better than the men. When the day's work was over they rolled like logs into their bunks, unable to repress their groans.

One student remembered how, as a small boy, he had seen pictures of hell on the gloomy walls of a temple where he had been taken by his grandmother, and how he had wondered whether there

really were such a place. To his child's mind they had brought the image of some horrible monster crawling stealthily over a marsh.

No one could sleep because of over-work. Even after midnight, suddenly, from somewhere in the darkness, the sound would arise of someone grinding his teeth—a creepy sound like glass being scratched—or of someone talking in his sleep, or a startled cry as if someone were being beaten.

While they were lying sleepless they would whisper to their own throbbing bodies, " I'm lucky to be still alive ! "

" Lucky—to be still alive "—such words to their own bodies !

The students felt it the worst.

" Take Dostoievsky's ' The House of the Dead.' When you think of it now it doesn't seem much." The speaker had been constipated for days and could not sleep unless he tied a towel tightly round his head.

" I dare say you're right," answered his friend, lapping with the tip of his tongue at the whisky he had brought from Hakodate as if it were medicine. " But then you must remember, after all, it's a great undertaking. I tell you, it's a big thing, this developing the natural resources of virgin territories. Take these crab boats, anyhow ; they say they're better than they used to be. They say that in the pioneering days, when there were no reports about weather, or tides, and the topography was not properly mastered, countless wrecks occurred. Sunk by Russian ships, captured, killed—but even then those men did not give in, but battled on.

And it was because we did stand up again and came through this desperate struggle that this great wealth has become ours. . . . I guess we've got to grin and bear it."

That was how it was always written in the history books, and so he supposed it was true. But it did not help to ease in the least the deep-rooted grudge he felt. He did not say anything, however, but only rubbed his stomach, which was as hard as a board. And in his thumb he felt a tingling like a weak electric shock. It was a nasty feeling. Bringing the thumb up to the level of his face, he rubbed it with his other hand.

They had all finished dinner and had drawn round the one cracked, rickety old stove set in the middle of the room. When their bodies became a little warm they started to steam. The strong fishy smell from the crabs almost choked them.

"I bloody well don't understand anything about the reasons, but I only know I'm not anxious to be killed!"

"Nor me either!"

A feeling of gloom descended on the company. They were on the road to being killed! They all began to feel irritable without their irritation having any definite focus.

"A–a–are we b–b–bloody well going to let ourselves b–b–be killed?" blurted out one fisherman in a loud voice, impatient at his own slowness of speech. His face was scarlet and the veins stood out on his forehead.

For a moment no one spoke. It was as if something had given a sudden pull at their vitals.

"I don't want to die in Kamchatka——"

"The transport has left Hakodate. The wireless man said so."

"It'd be fine to go home, wouldn't it?"

"There's no chance of that."

"But they say there's lots get away on the transport."

"Do they? . . . That'd be good, wouldn't it?"

"They say that some make out they're going fishing and then escape to the mainland of Kamchatka, and once there start on Red propaganda with the Bolshies."

"For the sake of our Empire—they've thought of a good name for it!" The student undid his front buttons, showing his hollow chest and, with a yawn, started to scratch it. The dirt was caked on, and as he scratched it fell off in fine flakes.

"Yes, and when the bloody plutocrats of the company are pocketing everything!"

From under his eyelids, puckered up into loose folds like oyster shells, one old fisherman gazed with dull, listless eyes at the stove and then spat on it. When it fell on the top of the stove the spit became a little round ball and sizzled and danced, becoming smaller and smaller until it vanished, leaving behind a little case about as big as a pea. They all watched it indifferently.

"What you say may be right."

But just then the chief sailor said, "Hi there, you, don't be starting any insubordination!"

"You go to hell, you swine," said the stutterer, sticking out his lips like an octopus.

There was a nasty smell of burning rubber.

"Look out, uncle—the rubber!"

"Ah, yes, I've burnt them!"

Waves seemed to have sprung up and were beating faintly against the side of the ship, which was rocking in lullaby time. The shadows of the circle of men fell in a tangled fringe on the floor behind them. It was a calm night. From out of the door of the stove a red glow was reflected on the lower parts of their legs. The strange calmness of the night gave them a respite—a momentary respite only—to look back over their miserable lives.

"Haven't you got a cigarette?"

"No."

"Not one?"

"No."

"Hell!"

"Hey, pass the whisky over this way."

The owner held the square bottle upside down and shook it.

"Look out, don't go wasting it."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"It's a hell of a place, but we're here, me too. . . ." The fisherman who spoke had formerly worked in a Shibaura factory, and now he went on to tell of his experiences there. To these Hokkaido workers this factory sounded a wonderful place, beyond all imagination. "If they had even a hundredth of what we put up with here there'd be a strike," he said.

This story led on to others, until they had all related their life experience. Opening up new

roads, irrigation works, laying railroads, harbour construction and reclamation, sinking new mines, clearing new lands, wharf lumping, herring fishing —almost all of them had been engaged in one or another of these.

When in Japan itself a deadlock had been reached because the workers had refused to be imposed upon, and because all the markets had been flooded, the capitalists made a grab at Hokkaido and Saghalien. There they were able to exploit as ruthlessly as in the colonies of Korea and Formosa. But these same capitalists knew many things which no one dared to mention. In their quarters at these road construction and railroad construction works navvies were killed with less ceremony than lice. Exploited beyond endurance, some ran away. If they were caught they were tied to a stake. Horses could kick them with their hind legs. Sometimes they were handed over to dogs, who chewed them to death. All this, moreover, was done in public. If the victim lost consciousness water was thrown over him to revive him, and this would be repeated many times. Finally, held in the animal's powerful jaws and shaken round like a bundle, he died. Even after he had been thrown away limp and left in a corner of the open space there were still some convulsive movements from the body. To have red-hot tongs applied to their backs and to be beaten with a six-sided bludgeon until they couldn't stand up was a daily occurrence. When they were eating their dinner, suddenly from the back a piercing cry arose, and then a pungent smell of human flesh burning was wafted to them.

"Give it up; it's no good trying to eat or anything with that going on."

They threw down their chopsticks and eyed each other blackly.

Many died of beri-beri through having been made to work when unfit. As there was no time to spare even in case of death, they were left lying for days on end.

In the darkness outside, sticking out beyond the end of the matting which had been roughly thrown over, two legs, a dull yellowish-black colour and strangely shrunken to the size of a child's, could be seen.

"The face is all swarming with flies. It might spring up and yell at you when you pass," said one man as he came in, rubbing his forehead with his hand.

They were sent off to work before it was light and continued at it until they could not see around them and only the heads of their picks gleamed a pale bluish gleam. The convicts who were building a jail nearby were envied by everyone. The Koreans were treated the worst; they were kicked and trampled on by their own Korean foremen and bosses as well as by their Japanese fellow-workers.

The policeman stationed at the village five or six ri away occasionally paid a visit, trudging along, notebook in hand, to make inquiries. If it got late he would stay over-night, but he never once showed himself in the navvies' quarters. He would go home with a scarlet face. . . .

Every sleeper on every track in Hokkaido

represents the corpse of some worker. And the piles sunk in the harbour reclamation are all the bodies of workers who died of beri-beri.

Profits were just scooped up. Then very skilfully such catch phrases as "the development of *national* wealth" were tacked on to these enterprises, which were thus completely justified. The capitalists were very shrewd. "For the sake of their country" the workers were starved and beaten to death.

"It's only by the mercy of God that I ever got back alive, I can tell you. I feel grateful to Him. But if I go and get killed in this ship it'll amount to about the same thing, anyway, won't it?" said one fisherman, breaking into toneless laughter. But when he'd finished laughing he began to scowl fiercely and looked away.

It was the same in the mines. In learning what kind of gases might come out, or what untoward changes take place, and thus finding the best plan of procedure, the capitalists calmly sacrificed worker after worker—anyhow, they were cheaper to buy for the purpose than guinea-pigs. They used them up more casually than toilet paper. In these places too, far from cities, appalling things occurred —terrible accidents.

All the miners, like men who have been in prison a long time, had sallow complexions and listless faces. What with lack of sunlight, and coal dust and air full of obnoxious gases, and abnormal temperatures and pressures, they could notice their own bodies deteriorate. "If you were a miner for seven or eight years, then for roughly four or

five years out of it you were in a pit of darkness, without one chance of ever worshipping the sun—for four or five years!" But, no matter what happened, the capitalists didn't mind very much, as they could always buy up plenty of new workers as substitutes. When winter came the workers continued to pour into those mines.

There were also "pioneer farmers"—that is to say, farmers who had immigrated to Hokkaido. Through cinema propaganda these poor peasants had been induced to leave their own holding and settle on land which four or five inches below the surface was nothing but clay. All the fertile land was already claimed. There were many actual cases where whole families, buried in the snow without even potatoes to eat, had died of starvation before the spring came. Not until the snows melted and the neighbours—who lived at least a ri away—came to see how they were was this discovered.

When they did manage to escape starvation it was only to face long years of toil. The capitalists—the bankers and millionaires—merely lent out what was really false money, and in course of time the peasants' barren land, now transformed into sleek, fat acres, passed automatically into these gentlemen's hands. Imitating them, many sharp-eyed speculators flooded Hokkaido, and the farmers had their property snatched from them, so that in the end they became tenant-farmers just like at home.

Hoping to make even a little money and then go back to their native villages, they had crossed

Tsukaru Strait and come to snowy Hokkaido. In the crab ships were many such ones who had been driven off their own lands by other people.

In the mainland the workers united into one huge mass and resisted the capitalists. But workers in the colonies were cut off completely from any such things.

Before bed the fishermen stripped off their shirts, which had become hard like dried fish with grime, and spread them before the stove. Standing round in a circle, they each held an edge of the clothes and, when they became hot, waved them up and down. Fleas and bugs fell on top of the stove and crackled, smelling disgustingly. When the shirts got so hot that the fleas could not bear it they came out from the seams, scurrying along in a frenzy.

"Here, take hold of the end."

Getting someone to hold one end of his loincloth, one man unrolled it and started catching fleas.

But in spite of such precaution the men were not able to sleep. All night long they were attacked by lice and fleas and bugs. No matter how they tried they could not exterminate them all. As soon as they got up into their bunks dozens of fleas would start crawling stealthily up their legs.

At first they had been allowed a bath every other day, and even then their bodies were always smelly and dirty. After a week it became every third day, and after about a month once a week. Finally they were reduced to twice a month. This was to save water. But the captain and the boss had a bath every day. The men became filthy with the

juice from the crabs and stayed like that for days on end, so that it was no wonder lice and bugs began to swarm.

"These fleas will be the death of us, I tell you."

"Oh, well, it'll be a nice end."

And as there was nothing else to do they laughed.

V

Two or three excited fishermen rushed along the deck. When they reached the end they reeled and grasped hold of the railing. The carpenter, who was doing some repairing on the saloon deck, looked over in the direction the men had gone. The cutting wind brought tears to his eyes, so that at first he could not see clearly. He turned his head aside and blew his nose vigorously.

The port-quarter winch was rattling. As all were out fishing now there was no reason to be working it. Something was dangling from it, and that something was shaking. The wire, which hung down vertically, was swinging round, describing circles. "What is it?"—his heart gave a leap.

"He's at it again." Wiping his tears on his sleeve again and again, he assured himself that it was so. From where he stood he could see, against a background of livery-grey sea, the jutting-out derrick of the winch, and hanging from it one of the workers, completely bound, defined in clear black. The winch was raised up as far as it would go and he was left hanging there like that for a long while—twenty minutes at least. After that it

started to move downwards. He seemed to be straining and twisting his body, and was waving both his legs like a fly caught in a spider's web.

At last he was lost from sight behind the saloon, and only the wire stretching down vertically could be seen, swaying now and then like a swing.

Tears seemed to have got into the carpenter's nose, for it was trickling all the time. Again he blew it. Then, taking out the hammer which had been moving round in his side pocket, he started to work.

Suddenly, pricking up his ears, he looked round. The wire rope was shaking as if someone below was pulling at it and a dull, uncanny splashing sound was heard.

The strung-up man's face had changed colour. From between his lifeless, tightly-closed lips foam was coming. When the carpenter went down below he passed the foreman with a lump of wood under his arm. " That's what he hit him with," thought the carpenter, glancing at the wood.

The fishermen, through long-continued overwork, gradually found themselves unable to get up in the mornings. The boss found an empty petrol can and walked round hammering on it close to the ears of the sleepers. He hammered on it desperately until they opened their eyes and got up. Those with beri-beri half raised their heads and said something, but the boss, pretending not to have noticed them, went on hammering. After he had hammered what he considered a reasonable amount he shouted at them : " What's

wrong; are you not going to get up? If this work is for the sake of your country, then you've got to count it like war. You've got to risk your lives for it, you bastards."

The sick men had all their coverings pulled off them and were then pushed up on to the deck. Those with beri-beri banged their toes against the stairs. They climbed up, clutching the rail with one hand, grasping their feet with the other to help them up. At every step each heart would give a horrible kick.

The boss and the foreman tormented the sick men very slyly. When they were working at canning the meat they would be driven out and set to breaking claws on deck. When they had been at that for a little while they would be sent off to paste labels. They were made to stand in the bitter cold until their legs had less feeling than artificial limbs. If they just relaxed their knee-joints would crack like a hinge coming apart and they would almost double up in a heap.

One student started to tap his brow lightly with the back of a hand all dirtied with breaking the crabs. Then just in that position he fell backwards. A pile of empty cans beside him clattered over noisily and nearly buried him. Because of the ship's slope some of them rolled among the machinery and the cargo. The student's mates carried him towards the hatchway and ran into the boss. He glanced at them and said, "Who's stopped their work?"

"Who?" echoed one student, looking as if he would like to strike him.

"Who . . . you bastard?" Then, suddenly twisting up his mouth and stretching himself up, he burst out into a loud laugh.

"Fetch some water."

He took the pail of water and dashed it on the face of the student, who had been left lying prone on the floor like a railroad sleeper.

"He'll be all right—there's no need for you to be looking at what's not your business. Get on with your work."

Next morning the hands saw the student of the day before tied up to one of the pillars. His head was sunk down on his chest like a chicken whose neck has been wrung, and just at the nape one big round bone of his back showed, sticking out clearly. Then in front of him, like a child's pinafore, a piece of cardboard was hanging with something written on it, obviously in the boss's handwriting:

"As this is a disloyal malingerer it is forbidden to undo the rope."

When they felt his forehead it was like touching cold steel. Up to the time they entered he had been jabbering to himself, with no one to answer him. When they heard the voice of the foreman coming down after them, they moved on from the machine to which the student was bound, dividing into two streams until they had all reached their proper places.

When the crab-fishing got busier things became worse. They had their teeth smashed in and spent all night spitting blood; they fainted from overwork. Their extreme tiredness made them more

helpless than if they had been drunk. At stopping time they breathed sighs of relief, as much as to say, "That's the end," and then for a moment everything went blank.

Just as they were clearing up the boss came along and thundered at them, "Work until nine o'clock to-night."

Once again they all dragged themselves up like figures in a slow-motion picture. They had no energy left to do anything else.

Sometimes the boss would lecture them. "D'you understand? We can't come back here a second time or a third time. And we can't get the crabs just at any time we please. Just because you've worked ten hours or thirteen hours in a day, if you go stopping exactly at that, it'd be a hell of a mess. This work is different. D'ye get me? But to make up for it, when there are no crabs, it's almost a cruel waste the easy time you have.

"The Bolshies, no matter how many shoals of fish come right in front of their eyes, if time is up they'll throw up the work. That's what they're like and that's why Russia's like she is. You Japanese men must never go copying them."

"What's he talking about, the damn fool?" thought some and did not listen. On hearing the boss's words the majority felt that Japan was indeed a great country. The hardships they suffered every day seemed somehow heroic, and that was at least some consolation for them.

While working on deck they saw a cruiser moving across the horizon towards the south. They could see the Japanese flag waving at the stern. Their

eyes filled with tears and they waved their hats. "That's our only protection," they thought.

"Damn it all, when I see her it makes me blub!"

They watched it as it got smaller and smaller, until it disappeared wrapped up in smoke.

Returning to their quarters they all shouted, "Blast!" In the darkness their voices, full of hatred, sounded like the bellowing of bulls. Although they did not know against whom they were aimed, the thoughts, the words and actions of these 200 men, talking freely together day after day, came imperceptibly to move in one direction.

. . . . .

It was morning. Climbing slowly up the companionway the miner said, "I can't keep it up."

The day before he had worked almost till ten, and his body was like a half-broken machine. As he was climbing up he dozed off. Shouted at from behind, he began to move his feet and legs mechanically. He slipped but continued crawling up on his belly.

Before beginning work they gathered together in a corner. Their faces were the colour of clay.

"I'm going to try sabotage. I can't work," said the miner.

They all looked expressively silent for a while, and then someone said, "It means a big branding——"

"I'm not shirking. It's because I can't work, I tell you." The miner rolled his sleeve right up and then held his arm out level with his eyes and examined it.

"It won't be long. I'm not shirking, I tell you."

"If you're not, then it's all right."

That day the boss stamped round again like a fighting cock. "What's the matter? What's the matter?" he shouted. As it was not just one or two men, however, who were taking their time, but almost everyone, he could do nothing but fume inwardly as he went round. It was the first time that the fishermen and sailors saw the boss like this. On the deck hundreds of crabs let out of the nets made a grating sound as they crawled about. The work accumulated like a blocked drain.

. . . . .

"The transport! The transport!" This cry from the upper deck was heard below. Everyone jumped out of his bunk just as he was, in his sleeping rags. The transport aroused the men more than a woman would. It alone did not smell of the salt sea, but had a breath of Hakkodate clinging to it. It smelled of the land, the land which did not move and which they had not trodden for many months. And this boat delivered letters, shirts, underwear, magazines and many other things.

Seizing their parcels in their knotted, crab-greasy hands, the men rushed back excitedly to their quarters. Then, sitting up in their bunks with their legs crossed, they undid their parcels. All sorts of things came out: letters in their children's unsteady handwriting, written with the mother standing near telling them what to say;

towels, tooth paste, tooth-brushes, toilet paper, kimonos, and underneath all these, unexpectedly, letters from their wives. All the men tried to get from these things a sniff of their homes. They sought for the milky smell of children or the strong fleshy smell of their wives.

Those sailors and fishermen who had received nothing mooned around with their hands stuck in their trouser pockets. Everyone teased them, saying, "I wouldn't be surprised if she hasn't called in some other fellow to keep her company while you're away."

With his face buried in a dark corner, heedless of the others' noisy clatter, one man stood counting over and over again on his fingers. He had received news of his child's death. The child had died two months ago, but he had received no word till now. The letter said that there had been no money for a wireless.

On the other hand there was just an opposite case. In another letter was a photograph of a baby, podgy like a young octopus.

"This, mine!" laughed the father in a funny voice. Then, with a grin on his face, he paraded it round, saying, "What d'ye think of it? They say this has arrived."

In their parcels were trivial little things, but things which only the careful forethought of a wife remembers. At the sight of them their hearts began to beat strangely, and they felt a strange longing to be home.

On the transport had come a party of movie men sent by the company. It was arranged to have a

movie show on the ship the night the cans were loaded on the transport.

Two or three young men, all very much alike in appearance, with flattened caps a little on one side and bow-ties and wide trousers, came aboard carrying a heavy-looking trunk.

"What a smell!" they said as they took off their coats, and then, whistling a tune, began putting up a screen, measuring off the distance and fixing up the stand. The fishermen got from these men the feeling that they were not of the sea, and therefore were different from themselves, and this attracted them very strongly. Both sailors and fishermen, in a light airy mood, helped the newcomers with their work.

The oldest and flashiest of them, who wore gold-rimmed glasses, stood a little apart and wiped the sweat from his neck.

"Look out; if you stand there you'll have lice crawling up your legs." He gave a shriek and jumped up as if he had trodden on a sheet of red-hot steel. The fishermen burst out laughing.

"But I say, this is a dreadful place to be in, isn't it?" His voice was husky. Then he continued, "I don't expect you know, but how much profit do you think this company makes by coming here and doing this. Something tremendous, I tell you! Five million yen in six months! Ten million a year. If you say it quickly it doesn't sound much, but actually it's tremendous. Not many companies in Japan can pay the huge dividend of 22½ per cent. to shareholders. The head director is going to become an M.P., they say, and

then everything will be rosy. But I suppose with all that they wouldn't make the profits they do unless they treated the men as badly as this."

Night came.

Partly to celebrate the "ten thousandth can," *sake*, raw spirits, dried cuttlefish, boiled vegetables, cigarettes and caramels were distributed among them.

Four or five in the front row began clapping and all the others followed suit. The boss appeared before the white screen. He straightened himself and, folding his arms behind him, started to speak, making use of such polite words as "gentlemen" which rarely came from his lips, mixed in with his usual stuff about "you men of Japan" and "national wealth." Most of them did not listen to him. They chewed away at cuttlefish.

"Shut up, shut up!" someone in the rear yelled.

"Sit down, you!"

They began to whistle and clap madly.

In such circumstances the boss could not very well get angry. His face went red and he said something (which no one heard because of the uproar) and then sat down. The movies began.

The first was "educational." Scenes of the Imperial Palace, Matsushima, Enoshima, Kyoto flickered across the screen. After that followed some Western and Japanese dramas. Then men were all absolutely enthralled. When a fine-limbed Western girl appeared they whistled and snorted like pigs.

The Western picture was an American one,

built round the opening up of the West. It told of men attacked by savages, overwhelmed by the ravages of Nature, but rising up again and laying the railroad foot by foot. The towns which sprang up overnight seemed just like joints of the railway. As the railroad was pushed forward new towns appeared further and futher westward.

All these various trials and hardships were interwoven with the love story of a navvy and the director's daughter; sometimes the one and sometimes the other was in the foreground. In the last scene the man who showed the picture raised his voice:

"Helped on by the countless sacrifices of these young men, the hundreds of miles of railroad were at last completed and linked together mountain and valley, transforming lands which until yesterday were a wilderness into National Wealth."

The end showed the director's daughter and the navvy, now changed miraculously into a gentleman, in the act of embracing.

Between this and the next film was a short Western comic, pure nonsense which made them all laugh.

The Japanese one was a film showing a poor young man who started by peddling beans, then sold newspapers and step by step came to shoe shining; next he entered a factory, became a Model Worker, was made much of and finally became a millionaire.

The lecturer added, though it was not in the titles, "Verily if industry is not the mother of success, what is?" The young hands applauded earnestly.

From among the fishermen and sailors came a loud voice, "Bloody lies! If that was true I'd have been director before now!" and again everyone laughed.

Afterwards the lecturer said that he had been ordered by the company to lay special stress on places like that to bring the moral home to the men.

The last picture showed the company's different factories and offices. Many workers were depicted working "industriously."

When the movies had finished they drank the *sake* given to celebrate the ten thousandth can.

Not having tested *sake* for ages and being worn out, the men soon became drunk. Dense clouds of tobacco smoke hung round the dim electric light. The air was thick and stuffy. Stripping off their clothes, twisting towels round their heads, sprawling about crosslegged or tucking the bottoms of their kimono up to their waists, they shouted out all sorts of things in chorus. Sometimes fish fights developed.

This did not stop till after midnight.

One fisherman came rolling like a great sack down the stairs. His clothes and right hand were smothered in blood.

"A knife! A knife! Get me a knife!" he cried, crawling along the floor. "Where's that devil Asakawa gone. He's not there. I'm going to kill him!"

He was one of the fishermen whom the boss had ordered to be beaten. He seized a poker and, blind with rage, rushed out again. No one stopped him.

Next morning they discovered that every thing on the boss's table had been smashed to pieces. The boss, however, was unhurt, as he had been elsewhere.

. . . . .

[For various reasons it is impossible to give this story in full. The translator summarizes the conclusion in the following note. It is hoped that later circumstances may permit a full version.]

SUMMARY OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

In the concluding chapters conditions become worse. One man dies of beri-beri and at the all-night vigil held beside the body one man gets up and makes a fiery speech, telling them to revolt before they themselves are killed. A committee is formed and the men are organized. One morning they are ordered to set out fishing in the boats, although a storm is clearly approaching. One boat refuses and the revolt spreads all over the ship. A student goes down below to tell the firemen and a mass meeting is held. A deputation goes to the boss with demands, which he refuses. The deputation attacks the boss. He is afraid to use his revolver. Everyone is jubilant but later the cruiser is seen approaching and the men realize they have been fooled and that the boss has sent a wireless. Still the cruiser is their protection and will understand their point of view, think the simple ones. Sailors come aboard and the nine ringleaders are seized and carried off. Everyone

is at first dazed by this failure but gradually they realize that cruisers are owned by capitalists and plan to organize a new revolt more carefully.

A short appendix is added with the following notes :

(*a*) The second revolt succeeded perfectly. The boss found they had taken possession of the wireless room and could do nothing.

(*b*) The *Hakko Maru* was not the only ship that had strikes and sabotage at the end of the season. Red propaganda was found at work on two or three ships.

(*c*) The boss and the foreman, faithful dogs of the company, were not awarded for their services, but dismissed. The boss is said to have said, " Ah, I've been deceived by the company."

This work is one page of the History of the Penetration of Capitalism into the Colonies.

30th March, 1929.

THE MAN WHO DID NOT APPLAUD

by

SEIKICHI FUJIMORI

THE MAN WHO DID NOT APPLAUD

I SUDDENLY noticed him.

A peculiar type indeed—why doesn't he join in the applause?

The whole assembly greeted the speakers' burning words with rounds of hearty applause. The sound of clapping as it filled the hall was like a storm. Many cried aloud in their excitement.

"Right for you!"

"Quite true!"

"The police arrested all the comrades!"

"They're increasing armaments, but as for unemployment insurance . . .!"

At this moment the police, who formed a cordon round the hall, brandished their swords menacingly. This had no effect on the meeting. The revelations of the speakers, their description of the colossal growth of armaments and the astronomical figures for expenditure on the war industry proved too convincing. Then they went on to expose the preparations being made for fresh bloodshed—all carried on under the cover of pacifist phrases and paper pacts. This meeting of protest against the threatened war had turned into a trial of its instigators, with the crowded audience as jury. The heated addresses of the prosecutors, eagerly seized upon by the jury, left no doubt concerning the

crushing verdict. For defendants there were these gendarmes encircling the hall, visible representatives of the criminal system on trial. Should the gendarmes resort to force, they would find themselves up against a huge agitated mass of workers, silently clenching their fists and ready to defy provocation. This, the defendants—the gendarmes—understood perfectly, and so they contented themselves with malicious glances and the brandishing of swords.

The trial of the war-makers continued in full swing.

But why is this one man so indifferent? He sat next to me. His pale face was distorted by a huge scar. And under his right eye there was a deed wrinkled cavity instead of a cheek bone. Apparently some shrapnel had smashed the bone. The right eye, above the cavity, had an uncanny stare. He wore the rough khaki clothes of a labourer, and in every respect looked like an elderly workman. His lips were pressed tightly and he stared at the speaker fixedly.

The scoundrel! Why does he stare so? Why does he glare at the speaker's face as if he were noting every detail?

It's plain, the last war did not decorate him enough! Just look at that mark, the mercenary dog! What more does he want? I am only sorry that the gun which sent millions of honest workers to their grave didn't consign the whole of your ugly mug to hell!

I looked at him challengingly and stubbornly. He didn't clap once the whole time, nor make a

single exclamation. It seemed as if the orator's words had no effect on him.

A strange feeling came over me.

Either he is a novice in the spy business or else a hardened old wolf.

"Look here," I shouted aloud, unable to hold myself and paying no attention to the speaker.

Just then a strange light seemed to shine in his eyes.

Funny! Surely the cur can feel *something*.

The man lifted his arm as if with the intention of clapping but it fell heavily on to his knees.

His eyes glared in the gathering twilight. In an instant the very blood froze in my veins.

On his knees were two artificial arms.

The man had no hands.

THE FIFTEENTH OF MARCH, 1928

by

TAKIJI KOBAYASHI

THE FIFTEENTH OF MARCH, 1928

A True Account of Events

I

Okee could not get accustomed to it. The police came to the house quite often now, but she was just as alarmed as she had been the first time.

Her husband's comrades from the trade union used to come to the house, and Okee would bring them tea. She often heard her husband say, "Yes, but I can't alter my wife all at once."

"I suppose you realize, comrade, that the revolution will have to go through the kitchen too," someone said, "but you are too soft."

"Well, that's true, maybe, but you can't do much with my wife. She's rather backward."

"You're too easy-going, that's what it is," his comrades taunted him.

Rinkichi gave an embarrassed snigger. He was a little ashamed of his weakness.

One morning Rinkichi was cleaning his teeth, and his wife was standing by pouring warm water into the wash-basin, he asked suddenly, with the tooth-brush still in his mouth, "Do you know who Rosa was?"

"Rosa—a man or a woman?"

"Rosa."

"I know Lenin, but Rosa—no. I've no idea who that could be. Who is it?"

She had often heard the names of Lenin and Marx from the lips of her daughter Yukiko, and she remembered them. The people from the trade union, Kudo, Sakanishi and Senzomoto, often mentioned Lenin and Marx. Once she asked her husband, "Is Marx the workers' god?"

He nodded and smiled, "How did you guess?" She could not understand why he was so pleased at her question.

When the general strike started, Okee heard many strange tales. She did not quite grasp all she was told. She could not believe that this terrible strike was being organized by that same Mr. Kudo or Mr. Senzomoto that came to her house. "And who do you think the strike hurts?" asked her husband. "The rich or the poor?" But the question was beyond her.

Every day the newspapers came out with flaring headlines about the strike.

"Strikers bringing ruin on the whole town! Houses of rich men to be burnt to the ground!" or "Clash between strikers and police! Hundreds arrested!" "Strike still hanging over the town like a curse!" Kudo and Watari had already been arrested.

Okee knew that her husband spent nearly every night at the trade union. That he was taking part in organizing the strike she also knew. He would come home at last, weary-eyed, and ask her to wake him at five in the morning. She would sit by his bed for hours, never taking her eyes from

his face. Okee could not understand him. Did he never think of his little daughter Yukiko ?

But later on when active workers from the union came and told her of the workers' bitter lot, she sympathized with the workers' struggle. She herself grew to hate the exploiters who were robbing the oppressed classes. She came to understand that the work of her husband and his comrades was indeed a great work. Okee began to feel a pride in her husband, and to agree with the movement for which he laboured, though she did not believe in its success.

After his third detention Rinkichi lost his post as teacher. Then he opened a tiny shop and sold haberdashery, hoping in this way to support his family. Okee had expected that he would lose his his job. She had known for a long time that it would turn out like that. Still, tears would not help, she thought, and so had remained silent.

Rinkichi had more time to spare now, and he worked for the trade union with greater zeal than ever.

As a result the attention of the detectives redoubled.

The first time Okee noticed that a spy was strolling up and down in front of their shop she was terrified. The worst was yet to come, however. Sometimes one of these persons would study the signboard for some time, suddenly enter the shop and announce, " Come with me to the police station, will you ? "

A couple of policemen would then come up and Rinkichi would be taken to the police station.

Okee could not overcome her terror. The visits of the police always upset her, and Rinkichi had to calm her.

Early on the morning of 15th March, Okee was rudely awakened from her sleep. Another search! Five or six policemen dragged Rinkichi away with them, without giving him a chance to exchange a word with his wife. This time Okee was thrown into a kind of stupor from terror.

II

It was three o'clock in the morning. The cold nipped one's hands and face and pierced through one's clothes to the very bone.

Five or six men were tramping over the frozen snow.

They came out of dark, narrow alleys and turned up the wide street leading to the union hall. The street was lined with tall, naked telegraph poles.

These men were police and they had their belts in readiness, their sabres grasped firmly in their hands.

They halted before the trade union headquarters and then burst into it without even stopping to take off their shoes.*

The members of the union had laid down to sleep only an hour before. They had fixed on 15th March for a public protest against the force of arms. The entire membership had been mobilized.

*In Japan it is regarded as very bad manners for a person to enter a house with his shoes on. They should be left in the hall.

Leaflets had been pasted at every corner. Agreements had been concluded with the owners of the meeting halls.

The executive committee had met once more and by two o'clock that morning preparations had been completed. And now, instead of the rest that everyone stood in so much need of, a raid. Seven or eight of the comrades suddenly became aware that the blankets were being torn roughly off them.

They all scrambled to their feet in silence, heavy as lead, staggering from want of sleep. Senzomoto was in despair. He had feared this before, but still a faint ray of hope had sometimes lightened his heart. "These dogs want to arrest our speakers the night before Tanaka's reactionary government should resign! It's a favourite trick of theirs! Just what one would expect of them."

Sakanishi, nicknamed by his comrades "Don Quixote," was still half-drunk with sleep. He asked one, of the intruders.

"Well, what's up now?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? Don't try to fool me!"

The officer was silent.

The police started to search among the books and papers.

"If you lazy hogs would work more, you wouldn't have the time to go poking your nose in everything! It's all your own fault," said one of the police to Senzomoto in a loud, insolent tone so that everyone could hear him. Senzomoto snapped at him:

"Stop your your nonsense there! I didn't ask you to speak."

Watari was trying to make his way unnoticed towards the staircase. One of the police became aware of his movements and caught him.

"Where are you making for? Don't you dare to budge!"

Senzomoto had been watching Watari for some days. He was astonished. What could be the matter with him? Watari was usually so quiet. Just now his face was whiter than chalk. Watari, in spite of his youth, had always worked in the front ranks. He had seemed like a man forged out of iron, and now?—Senzomoto felt puzzled and alarmed.

At length the prisoners, surrounded by the police, started to descend the stairs. With the exception of Watari, they were all lively and even nonchalant. Sessito—who always encouraged them with "Heads up! The great thing is not to lose courage"—was the most lively of all. He edged closer to Senzomoto, and whispered:

"We must be firm, otherwise——"

"Yes, that's so, or——"

"What are you muttering about there?"

The policeman caught hold of Sessito and flung him away.

"The people's flag" somebody in front was singing. The sound of a heavy blow followed.

"You've gone crazy, you swine!"

A worker gave one of the police a great push with his shoulder. There was a blow of a sabre, a loud smack, and then silence.

The workers marched in step, arm in arm.

"Halt!" shouted Sessito and stood still. "Halt, comrades! I protest against our being arrested without any explanation. We want to know the reason."

"That's right!" shouted the rest. Senzomoto glanced at Watari. In cases like these Watari was usually ready to fly out at the faintest provocation. This time he was perfectly quiet. He stood still as if chained to the floor.

The police surrounded little Sessito. The workers shouldered their way in between the police.

"Are you going to tell us, devil take you, what we've been arrested for?"

"You'll find out at the police-station."

"Always the same answer! We're not going to be locked up in those dirty, stinking cells again!"

Somebody shouted from the rear:

"It's an abuse of government."

One of the police started to beat Sessito.

A clump of human bodies swayed to and fro. The workers fought their way into the centre of the group. A general scrimmage ensued.

"You—swine, you——" came the half-choked voice of Sessito.

"You think—you can put down our movement—like this—you dogs—you think you can do that——" The disorder increased.

Watari, who had stood motionless up to now, suddenly threw the full weight of his hulky body into the tussle. Senzomoto felt something like relief.

"Unless you tell us the reason, we shan't admit

ourselves arrested. We'll fight with all our might!" Watari roared in his deep voice. His sonorous tones never failed to make a profound impression.

Ishida stood apart and watched his comrades. Childish would have been too mild a term to apply to their conduct, in his opinion. He always got angry when people like Sessito—and there were many such in the union—made rows on the slightest provocation. According to Ishida, it was advisable only to use defensive methods on exceptionally important occasions, and then do it thoroughly. In general, it was better to save one's strength than to get worked up over every trifle.

"What is all this rubbish for, anyhow? Fine militants they are! What good are they?"

Ishida was almost beside himself with rage.

The workers felt surer of themselves after Watari had joined in the fray, but ten more policemen soon appeared on the scene and the unequal fight had to be given up.

It grew lighter. The icy fingers of the morning crept inside the prisoners' clothes and made them shiver.

The snowy street lay silent under a grey and heavy sky.

Ishida and Sessito were dressed in thin corduroy jackets thrown on hastily next their skin. Their bodies ached from cold. Their fingers and toes were numb.

Shibata, a lad of twenty who had only joined the union a few weeks before, had not yet recovered from his fright at being arrested. He saw the others

defend themselves and shout. He also wanted to shout, but had momentarily lost all control over the muscles of his face. His mouth moved heavily and clumsily, as if his lips were made of wet clay, and he could not emit a sound. He knew that more than one arrest was before him now, and still his teeth went on chattering involuntarily.

The comrades marched in rows, forming a solid mass. They kept very close to each other so as to get a little warmer, and tried to march in step. The footsteps of the twenty men gave back a hollow sound in the empty morning streets. No one spoke. But in the hearts of all a feeling of mutual sympathy and kinship arose. Senzomoto, Watari, Sakanishi, "Don Quixote," Sessito, Ishida, the novice Shibata and all the other members were conscious of this feeling. In moments of danger it never left them; it was the feeling of solidarity—the solidarity that unites the proletariat into one unbroken front.

These members of the union were no longer a loose conglomeration of individuals, but one tremendous united whole. They marched hand in hand, their dark eyes saw only one great end, to which they were all moving. This end was called—revolution.

III

"Get up!" shouted the policeman. He groped about in the dark for the electric switch. Kudo's three children awoke and began to cry. The police could not find the switch and went on groping

about in the dark. Then they found it and snapped it twice.

"What's the matter?"

"We have no lights."

Kudo spoke in a slightly irritated tone. The light had been cut off two months previously. Kudo had not enough money to buy candles. In the evening they would send the children out to the neighbours, and go themselves to the union. They had lived like that for sixty days now. "Bright lamps are the best adornment for rooms," said the advertisements in the shops for electrical goods.

"Hush, children, they won't eat you," said Kudo, laughing. His wife, Oyoshi, tried to soothe them, too.

"There's nothing to be frightened about, these gentlemen come to see us quite often now."

So, one after another, the children stopped crying. These visits were indeed no new thing to them.

Kudo's comrades from the union had asserted, more than once, that Oyoshi was developing class-consciousness in her children. As a matter of fact, their upbringing was not carried on along any definite principles. Life itself educated them.

Oyoshi's hands hung down to her knees and seemed too large and heavy, like the claws of a crab. Dirt had eaten into her skin, which had grown as coarse and rough as a potato-grater. She never washed now.

In the course of her short life Oyoshi had more than once discovered who were her "enemies." When her husband joined the union this knowledge

became even more plain to her. Sometimes, when when there was much work at the union, Kudo did not return home for weeks on end. Then Oyoshi had to work alone. She did everything: helped to coal ships down at the dockside, and made sacks for potatoes and other vegetables. Sometimes she was lucky enough to find work in the canning factories, where she had to wash bones. Before she gave birth to her third child, she worked right up to the last moment as a coolie, carrying sacks of coal.

In Kudo's room the wall-paper had long since peeled away. The wind blew freely in through the cracks. Oyoshi had no money to buy new wall-paper, so she went to the union and got a few old numbers of the *Workers' and Peasants' Chronicle* and the *Proletarian News*. These she pasted over the cracks in the door. The flaming announcements of the strike stretched the length and breadth of the door panels. Whenever Oyoshi had a few moments to spare, she would read the headings of the articles. Sometimes the children would point to different words and ask what they meant. She would read slowly out loud to them. She pasted old leaflets and proclamations all over the half-ruined walls. Once Kudo and Watari and Senzomoto came in and looked around at the walls with astonishment. Then they said: "This is indeed our house." They were delighted with it.

Kudo got up and dressed himself.

How would his wife and family exist while he was in prison?

Every time he was arrested he asked himself this question.

He tried not to think of this when working with his comrades in the union, but as soon as he was alone for a moment the thought of his family would come to disturb him.

Oyoshi helped him to collect his things, and then nodded to him:

"Don't worry about us! We'll manage without you."

Her voice rang out bravely.

The eldest boy, who understood something of what was going on, ran up to his father and said: "Well, good-bye, then, father, good luck!"

The policeman was astonished. "What a disgusting family," he thought to himself, and said aloud: "They all take it as if it was the proper thing, and wish each other good luck into the bargain!"

"Oh, well, if we started to bawl every time this happened, we'd have no time left to work for the movement." Kudo spoke lightly, trying to disguise the fact that his spirits were low.

"Hey, you dog, we'll plug you if you start any of your impudence!" the policeman roared.

Kudo wanted to say something more to his wife, but his mind seemed a blank.

"Don't be upset. We'll get on somehow," said Oyoshi with conviction. She looked at her husband. He was silent. He could only nod his head.

The door closed behind them.

IV

Okee learned from Oyoshi that there had been more arrests this time than ever before. The metal-workers had been dragged off to prison just as they were, in their overalls. Every day from five to ten dockers were seized. There were many students among those arrested.

Seato, a clerk, was arrested two days later. He had been in the habit of visiting Rinkichi on Thursdays, when all the comrades came together. He lived with his old mother, who had worked her fingers to the bone for many a year, so that he could attend a commercial college. She had hoped that when he graduated from college he would get a good post in some big company or bank. She would be able to boast of her son's salary to the neighbours. And she need not work any more then, but could go every year to her home place. Or her son would pay for her to go to one of those health resorts. There would be no need to tremble for fear that the rent would not be paid in time, nor to go to the pawnbrokers, nor put off the creditors. How fine it would be then! She had dreamed of this all her long life of toil, and this dream gave her the strength to carry on.

At last Seato finished college and got a post. When he brought home his first earnings and put them on her knees, she sat for a long time with closed eyes, pressing the envelope with the money to her wrinkled brow. Later, when Seato came down to supper, he saw a new candle burning on the altar. His pay lay beside it.

"I have been showing the money to your dead father," the old woman said in a broken voice.

On March 16th Seato heard that the comrades met at Rinkichi's and the trade union had been arrested. Seato went home immediately, collected all his books and papers and took them over to some neighbours. Nothing happened that day. Seato wanted to go to the trade union but the others dissuaded him. The place was occupied just now by a number of detectives and it would be dangerous to show up there. Several comrades had dropped into the union and they were arrested immediately.

Seato was glad he had not gone there. The same evening, however, he was arrested at his house.

As soon as it grew dark Okee left Kudo's wife and made her way home along the crowded main street. Sleighs, motor-cars and buses raced past. A young couple were standing gazing in a brightly-lighted shop window.

They stood close together, whispering. Women in warm coats and men in thick camel-hair jackets went by. Workers and young lads with big empty bowls, children arm-in-arm, strolled past. Okee's sorrow grew and grew. Hundreds of people were sacrificing their lives—and for what? For the workers. Was it right, was it just—that nobody thought anything about it, that people went by laughing and chattering as if nothing had happened? Okee could not understand it. Here in the street there did not seem to be any signs of trouble. Maybe the passers-by did not know anything about

the arrests, and that was why they had such happy faces. Of course, the government would not permit any news to be printed about the arrests.

"Why did my husband do that? For whom?" Okee asked herself. She felt terribly lonely. The world was very empty. All her husband's comrades had been fooled. Nonsense—that wasn't true, either.

V

It was the 16th of March. All the morning the door of the police headquarters kept opening and shutting, letting in and out police armed to the teeth. Police motors with blue-striped wheels had kept driving up with a loud hooting of horns. The door of the head office would be flung open, out would come a few police with sabres in their hands. They would board the cars, the engines would hum, and the cars glide away down the street. After a few minutes they would return with a new batch of prisoners. The prison in the police headquarters was full. Every time the keys grated in the lock the prisoners inside would stop their talk and look up eagerly. Watari, Senzomoto, Sessito and Sakanishi would recognize the newcomers and welcome them. The policeman standing guard would get as red as a turkey-cock. He would puff out his chest and make a fuss and splutter. Nobody paid any attention to him. All the fifteen men locked in this cell had been comrades, had fought side by side in the front rank.

Since they were all together they amused themselves by making as much noise as possible.

Sessito curled himself into a ball, and threw himself with all his force on the wall. Then again he bit his lips, puffed out his cheeks and hurled himself on it like a bull. "Be quiet there!" shouted the guard.

When Sessito saw that this was no good, he began to kick the walls. The others followed his example, and the wooden walls creaked. Only Ishida remained quiet.

He walked up and down with folded arms, muttering something to himself.

The door opened again. Senzomoto and Watari were led away. What did that mean? Left without their leaders, the others no longer kicked the walls.

Ishida's eyes fell on Rinkichi, who was sitting in a corner with his eyes closed. "He is here, too," thought Ishida. He was afraid that there was something more serious behind to-day's arrests than they had all imagined. He went up to Rinkichi Ogawa.

"Comrade Ogawa."

Rinkichi raised his head.

"Comrade Ogawa, what does this all mean?"

"I can't make it out myself. I was just intending to ask Comrade Watari about it."

"It's evidently connected with our meeting about the present cabinet."

"Yes, I thought of that, too. But if such is the case they need to lock us up for one day. But as it is——"

The others crowded round them, listening

eagerly. They got more and more excited. When had it started, this habit of seizing workers like puppies and throwing them into prison for no reason whatever?

"Look here, the law says—'It is forbidden to enter anyone's house without permission of the occupants, understand—against the will of those living in a house, either after or before sunrise, except in cases where the life, health or property of the population is endangered.' This law applies to all save gambling dens and brothels. And what are they doing to us? They have attacked us in the middle of the night, when we were sleeping peacefully, and arrested us without giving any reason for it. The police allow themselves all sorts of licence."

The workers listened attentively to Rinkichi Ogawa. Sometimes they shouted excitedly and stamped their feet.

Rinkichi added:

"It says in our constitution, comrades—'No Japanese subject can be arrested, imprisoned or punished without lawful reason.' And how do things really stand? We have never done anything that could be regarded as lawful reason for arrest. We have been thrown into prison without trial and sentence. Our laws and constitution are a network of lies and fraud."

His words found their mark easily, since the workers themselves felt the injustice of their treatment. At the realization of their helplessness they shuddered, as one shudders when a nerve is laid bare.

"I say, let's break down the door and go to the Chief of the Police! Make him tell us why we've been arrested!"

"Yes, come on!"

"Let's do some shouting!"

"It's no use." Rinkichi shook his head.

"Why isn't it any use?" Seato started on him, as he had always done in the trade union during a hot debate.

"Now there's no sense in that. We're locked in. If we make a row it'll only make things worse for us, and give them a reason to wipe us out. Our movement must develop in the streets, we must have the support of the whole working population. And actions like these, carried out by a score or so of people—are no good for anyone. Besides, things like that are altogether against our principles. We should never forget that."

"But how can we sit here quietly and do nothing? Should we just listen to your theories?"

At that moment four policemen entered the cell. One of them, a thick-set man with a square beard, looked at them quietly for a moment and then said:

"You know, I hope, that you're in a police cell now. What's all this noise about?"

He started to knock the workers about. When he went for Seato, the latter jumped quickly aside and the policeman struck out too far and lost his balance. Enraged, he shouted, "Eh, you rascal!" and threw himself upon Seato. In a second Seato's body struck the wall with a dull, heavy thud. The policeman was breathing heavily.

"Remember!" he shouted hoarsely, "you'll have to pay dearly for your insolence!"

Another policeman called out the names of several men from a list he was holding. These were led out. As they passed through the low door they stooped slightly. Now only six men remained in the cell.

Seato tried to rise from the floor, but the policeman kicked him twice.

Some more police came in after a while to guard the six men left. All converation was forbidden.

Rinkichi sat near the high-barred window. The outlines of the people in the room swam.

It seemed as if shadows and not people were moving up and down the cell. The yellow lamps paled. It was growing light. The cell became a faint blue. Rinkichi's head ached from weariness. Day began. It was very quiet in the police headquarters now. A sort of frozen silence lay over everything. Footsteps now approaching, now receding, could be heard. They would halt for a moment and then begin again. A door would open.

Every few minutes a noise would come from the next cell. The sound of a heavy body being dragged along. Some resistance seemed to be made against the dragging. Dead silence. Somebody passed by, yawning loudly under the window, in the street below.

"Why don't they let me go to sleep?" somebody muttered in a dark corner of the cell. "It's getting light. It'll soon be day." The eyes of the

police on guard were swollen from want of sleep and their faces were pale.

When Rinkichi awoke, the pale morning light was pouring into the cell. It lighted up the weary faces of the prisoners. One sat with his head dropped on his chest, another stood leaning against the wall, a third stared fixedly before him.

Every time that Rinkichi was taken to prison he felt a terrible yearning to see his child. It grew well-nigh unbearable and robbed him of much strength. He had often noticed how fear for their families had drawn many of his comrades away the movement. He knew that this fear was an enemy of the movement. He tried to jump over it like an acrobat.

A new set of police came to relieve those on guard. One of them, Senda, went up to Rinkichi. He had known the latter for a long time, and had frequently been sent to take Rinkichi to the police headquarters.

"You know, Mr. Ogawa," he addressed Rinkichi, "these arrests give the police a lot of trouble. We're called out on duty even in our spare time, and no matter how tired we may be we've got to go. I'm absolutely worn out." He sounded sincere enough. Rinkichi wondered for a moment if the man was sincere or not.

"Well, I'm sorry for you," he answered without the slightest touch of irony.

As the other police went out of the room, Seato shouted jeeringly:

"I'm sorry for you, too!"

Senda waited until the others had left, and then asked Rinkichi softly :

" Is there any message you'd like sent to your family ? "

Rinkichi was silent for a few seconds. He stared in a bewildered way at the policeman.

" No, no," he said at last: " No, I don't want anything."

VI

As Seato was being led to the lavatory in the morning, he heard a voice calling out " Hallo ! " from a cell at the end of the corridor.

Seato stopped. It was Watari's voice. Seato saw Watari's face pressed against the bars of the grating.

" Is that you, Watari ? "

" Yes, that's me."

" Are you alone ? "

" Yes. How are all the others ? "

The policeman escorting Seato came up at that moment. " Be quiet ! " whispered Seato and passed on. Why should Watari be in solitary confinement ? What was behind all this ? Seato could not guess for the life of him. When he came back to his own cell he told Rinkichi about it. The latter listened in silence and bit his lip.

Ishida also met Watari in the lavatory. He had no chance to speak to him, but he saw his quiet, resolute face.

" Listen, do you know Bancroft ? " Ishida asked Rinkichi on his return.

" No, who is he ? A Communist ? "

"No, he's a film-actor."

"Well, why should I have such aristocratic friends?"

The fact was that Watari's appearance reminded Ishida of Bancroft, the film-actor who had played the part of the hero in some pictures of the life of New York dockers. Like Watari, the hero had met every danger with a calm and courageous face.

THE FACTORY IN THE SEA

by

DENJI KUROSHIMA

THE FACTORY IN THE SEA

I

At high tide the factory floated into the sea.

The tall chimneys, with their three-pronged lightning rods, were reflected upside down in the water, where they wriggled and twisted with the undulating of the waves.

This factory, built on reclaimed land, was surrounded on three sides by a concrete wall that gave it the appearance of a prison. Solid and gloomy it towered, but its twin brother below was broken up by the ripples, like a fat man's reflection in a cracked mirror.

When the gates were shut all communication with the village was cut off. Another world arose, a world completely cut off from demonstrations, from leaflets, from the groans of starving men. Provisions, raw materials, men—a launch brought all these from the mainland.

Here the bosses prided themselves on being out of reach of the unions' clutches.

Through the thin, damp morning mist came the loud thudding sound of a launch as it approached the pier. From the strikers' headquarters on the mainland, Handa, who had been awakened by a gnawing emptiness in his stomach, watched the boat. The deck was thick with workers, like

clustering ants. They seemed so close you could almost reach them with your hand. These were scabs who went back and forth to Factory No. 11—the factory that floated in the sea.

Handa's stomach ached from hunger and there was a bitter taste in his mouth. A stuffy odour of grimy humans and of soy filled the room. It was crowded with strikers who had come in worn out from picketing. They were huddled together and were sleeping soundly under dirty blankets. Handa sidled over to the bin which held the rice balls.

"The fellows who came in last night from picketing ate them all," said Oki, sensing Handa's intentions, and without turning round he scratched away pleasantly at his flea-bites.

"Did they? I wonder if there's any tea?

"I think there is."

Handa picked up an enamel tea-pot and raised the spout to his lips. The taste was more like rust than tea. His finger on the lid, he swallowed it down until the pot was drained.

As soon as the strike had been declared, twelve out of a total of thirteen factories came completely to a standstill. Only in No. 11, the largest and most up-to-date, did work continue. At first its employees had walked to work, but Handa and his men would waylay them and drag them into the ranks of the strikers. Those who refused they would beat up and then drive away. The company then started bringing blacklegs by boat from the neighbouring village to the factory pier, sending them back the same way in the evening. A gang

of thugs was always in readiness on the wharf. The scabs were farmers and fishermen. When these were taken on temporarily, during the slack season on the farms, they were called unskilled and received only 60 per cent. or 70 per cent. of the full wage. Now they got 20 per cent. or 25 per cent. over the regular wages.

When the boat drew alongside the pier, the human ants crawled down the gangway. They were so placed as to make them look as numerous as possible. But the strikers were up to such tricks.

"What of it? They haven't got eighty real workers," they sneered. When counted from the distance, one by one, the men who looked really capable of working amounted to only sixty-five.

"D'ye think they've got eighty? With a handful like that it'll take them all their time to mix the pulp."

"You've said it."

But as the strikers weakened under the strain the number of workers began to increase. Eighty became 100; 100 became 120.

The farmers made not the least response to the strikers' leaflets and house-to-house canvassing. The leaflets they used as toilet-paper. These farmers, who, working on their farms from morning till night, just managing to pay their rent and buy manure, had never known what it was to hold ready cash in their hands and felt unbounded gratitude for this work in the soy factory where they could make more than two yen a day.

"I don't suppose there's any chance of calling up spirits by daylight," said Oki, still scratching away at his flea-bitten hands and legs and back.

"Hardly!——"

"By the look of things now, unless we get a ghost to appear, we haven't much chance of winning."

"Who's that?" Machida, who had come from Tokyo to help them, turned suddenly round. "Who's talking about spooks?"

Oki drew in his neck comically.

"Hell, were you listening in? I wouldn't have said it if I'd known." He grinned at Handa.

The company, hoping to crush the union, had planned and constructed Factory No. 11 on a grand scale. Even if all its other factories were to be razed to the ground, they need not turn a hair so long as No. 11 was immune. All the workers employed were steady farmers' sons who had been testified by their headmaster as "free from dangerous thoughts."

While the foundation stone of the factory was being laid, a Korean named Chiun had been buried alive there. He was a young fellow, with the unmistakable eyebrows and nose of a Korean, but he spoke Japanese without an accent. Now he was petrified in the concrete. He had slipped and fallen into the sticky mass flowing down the chute; as he sank he trod with his feet and waved his arms in the air as if swimming, but his limbs only sank deeper and deeper in the concrete, which was as treacherous as a bog. The contractor had been a party to graft as regards the proportion

of cement, so that once you slipped in you went down and down into a bottomless quicksand.

Within the space of raising his legs two or three times, he sank from his waist up to his chest. Had anyone attempted to rescue him he, too, would have been drowned. Chiun, with his mouth wide open, showing all his yellowed teeth, was crying out in Korean. He was like one of those retainers in ancient times who were buried alive with their dead lord. He pawed and kicked with his hands and legs frantically, but even when he exerted all his strength he could scarcely raise himself an inch.

The bystanders shared all his sensations. They felt as though their own limbs were stiffening so that they could not move them.

The head kept frantically bobbing up and down, only to sink deeper after each exertion, until at last it was swallowed up completely. It all took less then two minutes. The onlookers pictured him still struggling.

It was near this spot that Factory No. 11 had been built.

Every night, about 2 o'clock, Chiun's groaning would echo through the concrete with blood-curdling reverberations. That was why no one would sleep in the dormitory of No. 11. Anyone who slept there would be seized by the ghost, and his limbs become paralysed, it was said. About a year later, priests and sacred dancing-girls were called to offer up prayers. The ghost, however, was not quietened by invocations. By night it would appear and seize workers from out of the factory. This was what Oki had in mind when he

asked whether spirits could be called up by daylight.

No, this was not a feasable proposal. Ghosts have no say in the class battles. Machida knew they must win by their own strength. He was dead against salvation from above, whether from arbitration or from ghosts. But Oki, Handa and the others were no use at any other job but soy brewing; they hoped to see the strike settled as soon as possible; that would be better than to see their union completely crushed. But they were afraid of being talked down, so these thoughts were not expressed.

From one end of the village to the other stood the soy factory buildings with their sooty roofs, like rows of black boxes. The chimneys were no longer belching smoke. The bean pulp which had not been stirred for over a month bubbled and fermented.

Gohei's house was sandwiched in between two factory buildings. There the strikers cooked their rice. His stove was too small, so in front of his thatched cottage they hollowed a sort of fireplace in the ground, and placing two pots on it side by side they boiled the rice in the open air. Every day thirteen sacks of rice were emptied, but that only meant two balls of rice for each of them.

Those who were too hungry to wait for their portions, which would be brought round by special "waiters," came over to the cook-house. There they filled their bellies by eating burnt rice mixed with hot water. Old men with towels tied round their heads, young men and boys who acted as messengers, gulped down this strange beverage.

They considered it a stroke of good luck when they got an extra rice ball; it gave them a pleasant glow of satisfaction.

Handa was one of the hungry fellows, and went over to the fire, followed by Machida. Women and girls, dragging hungry-looking children, came over to help. One measured out the rice in a bowl and handed it to the next one, who sprinkled it with salt and then squeezed it tightly into a ball. Alongside stood the children, fingers in their mouths and cheeks all smudgy, looking on longingly. The whole scene was strange to Machida.

Gohei was gathering wood and dried leaves for the fire. He chopped up bits of the factory fence which had fallen down. Anything belonging to Uematsu that could be laid hands on, ought to be taken and used; such were Gohei's sentiments, and Machida seconded them. Uematsu was the owner of this Uemaru Soy Company.

"Those palings that are still standing, knock them down and use them too," said Machida.

Machida liked the way these soy workers managed to live in such surroundings, quite insensitive to all the filth and stench; their perseverance and economizing interested him. He hadn't experienced such things before. He strove to become one of them. It was really fine to live with these workers, in dirty ragged clothes, regardless of filth and the bad food.

Gohei, who had been brought up and almost pickled in soy from childhood, was rather distant towards Machida.

"That girl with the 'Uemaru' towel on her head, whose daughter is she?"

"What?"

Gohei left off his chopping and straightened himself to take a look at the girl. She was helping to make the rice balls. Then, without bothering to answer, he relapsed into a disgruntled silence.

Machida went over to Handa, who was standing near the step, eating. As the girl was sitting quite near, he put his mouth up to Handa's ear.

"Who is she?"

"Her, don't you know her? She's the daughter of Niemon, the cooper."

"She looks fine, doesn't she?"

The girl seemed to know that they were talking about her; you could tell it by the way she deliberately refrained from looking in their direction. Machida kept on staring at her, until Handa poked him on the elbow.

The girl was not so very beautiful; her features were regular and her nose was good, but she was under-nourished. It was as if the odour of her father's barrels had been communicated to her, too. This girl had left her own home and was staying at Gohei's.

When they first went on strike, in order to rally their spirits, they had all formed up in columns and marched out of the factory. Now, whenever they looked up at the smokeless chimneys they felt their power. If we don't work, not a puff of smoke comes out, not a barrel can be moved—this they understood and their blood danced and pulsed in their veins. But at home, wives were trying to

make them scab. The women worried over the approach of starvation; they worried over the grizzling of hungry children, and not only that, they worried over there being no money for paint and powder.

As often happens in times of strikes, the newspapers reported pathetic cases of men fighting on at the cost of parting with their wives. But these men couldn't turn out their wives and children, even when the latter did urge them to be scabs. From the age of fifteen or sixteen they longed to possess a wife, but, not earning enough to keep one, and being only soy workers, they had had to abstain for long years. The wife they had at last got, after ten or fifteen years of hardship, saving up little by little! And as for the children, who was going to bring them up if the bread-winner deserted them? Whichever way they turned there was no hope, but in Niemon's case his wife was the least of his troubles. He had, in addition, an old father and mother and he had no way of getting rid of them. They were against the strike. The old mother in a shrill, piercing voice cursed as sons of bitches the leaders who had begun the strike. Was her son going to kill the parent who had given him birth, and brought him up, she raged. Niemon was at a loss to answer. The one who had silenced his mother and stopped her from uttering one word more of complaint was that girl.

"She's pretty smart," said Machida approvingly later, when he heard of this. "Her face is that meek and mild, but she must be pretty strong."

"She can make a speech, too—not too bad."

"Can she? I've fallen for her at the first glance."

"What's so pretty about her?"

"What? Why everything about her's pretty. I like such a worker's daughter."

Handa knew full well that strikes—most strikes—act as matchmakers for girls and fellows. But this girl was already keen on a fellow called Yamaguchi. He knew that too, but he didn't tell it to Machida; you never knew what trouble love might cause.

II

At night the launch, after taking the scabs home, came back again to the factory pier. There it lay dreamily at anchor.

At headquarters, under the dim electric light, Himuro, one of the committee, was planning an attack with the others. Instead of petitioning Chiun's ghost to carry off the scabs it would be a quicker and surer method to sink the boat. Even Himuro, who prided himself on being moderate, seemed to realize that something had to be done.

It was decided to ask for volunteers.

The job didn't involve much danger; therefore every hand went up.

It was a dark clear night with stars shining brightly. The voice of autumn whispered in the breeze from the oak-clad hills at the back of the village. Handa put on some old clothes and brought with him his chisel, hammer and screw-driver.

"All ready?"

"Yes."

Just when they had taken the oar and were pushing their little boat off from the shore, Machida came rushing along, stumbling over the stony wharf.

"You can't row, can you?" called out Yamaguchi, who had until recently been a sailor.

"Row? Of course I can."

"If we have too many, they'll only get in the way. . . . the boat'll capsize."

Machida appeared not to hear, and, jumping in at the stern, made the whole boat rock.

"Look there! Damn you!"

Only the waves lapped the side of the boat; not a single fish was heard leaping in the water. The launch, with her lights extinguished, lay alongside the pier looking like a whale as she showed faintly through the darkness. The row-locks were dry and creaked, but when water was poured on them the noise stopped. Their boat drew near the launch.

Machida's heart was beating with excitement. To tell the truth, he could not row. This was the first time in his life he'd tried rowing and he exerted himself to save his face.

"If the thugs appear I'll try some ju-jutsu on them and chuck them into the sea."

"Don't speak so loud!" grumbled Yamaguchi.

The sound of a motor truck on the shore came through the chilly air. Every light in the village was out, and from the water they couldn't see a thing. The truck had come under cover of darkness to carry off the pickets.

" They're after another of our men," whispered Handa as he rowed. " They'll drag him off and lock him up in the factory."

If five or six pickets were together the truck would drive past; but when one was seen by himself, suddenly it would pull up and from the top down would spring two or three thugs. Then they'd grab the picket roughly by the wrists and drag him up into the truck; it didn't trouble them how his shins got barked on the steel fastenings on the side. Their attitude was: if you don't come we'll kill you.

From beyond a row of houses came a scream. It seemed to shout, " They've got me."

" They're at it again."

" That's what happens when we stay on the defensive, nice and quiet and gentle; the more we're like that, the more they attack us," they murmured as they rocked in the boat. Machida's shoulders and arms trembled from cold and excitement.

" Turn her, turn her," whispered one man who was standing in the bow.

The boat was just about to bang into the side of the launch. Handa reversed the oar. The boat wheeled round to the left and grazed the launch, coming just below where the cargo was unloaded.

The ship's hands seemed to be asleep. Sheltered by the high factory buildings, the wind did not reach the pier. Yamaguchi stretched up and, grasping the launch's iron railing, lightly, like a gymnast, vaulted on to the deck. He turned to the boat and gave some signal. Machida could not

make out what it meant; he felt something like antagonism arising in himself, but the others had all given nods of approval.

Handa promptly took the chisel and hammer to make a hole in the side of the ship. He drove the chisel in on the red paint, about five inches under the water.

The noise of the chisel echoed through the whole big craft. Handa gripped the side of the launch with one hand, and with the other gave great swinging blows with the hammer.

Over the night sea, where all other sounds had died, the clang of the hammer echoed far. It seemed to penetrate far beyond the shore, into the very heart of the village. Machida awaited eagerly the appearance of the gang of thugs; if only they showed up, everyone would see his strength! Again and again Handa struck the chisel, but before he could make the hole big enough, Yamaguchi, who had gone aboard to take out the sparking plug, ran stamping over the deck.

"All right! Run for it!"

One of the crew had woken up and, grabbing an axe, rushed out.

Yamaguchi had passed through the engine-room into the sleeping stern to see how things were there. The lamp was out and it was pitch dark, but judging by their breathing the crew were pretty sound asleep. Yamaguchi had formerly worked on a cargo boat, and hence knew the ins and outs of the vessel. He groped around in the darkness and approached the engine stealthily. The hammering outside was audible in the engine-

room. . . . Why weren't they more quiet? . . . His irritation was stronger than his fear. He himself strove to make as little noise as possible, as, deliberately, he put all his strength into the screwdriver. In the cabin the even breathing stopped and there was a sound of coughing.

He dashed out on deck, but it wasn't possible to jump into the boat from there; the little thing seemed packed with black forms. On the other hand, delay was impossible. Instantly he dived from the deck. The water splashed in all directions. Machida started, but the next instant Yamaguchi's head appeared above the water.

"Let's go, let's go!"

Handa stuck at his job. Just a bit more, just a bit more! But the others were trying to push off from the side.

When they set sail they could feel the cold wind blowing down from the hills. A chill came into their sweating bodies. Behind them the voices of the sailors raging and cursing drifted over the water.

Yamaguchi, all dripping wet, took someone's hand and climbed into the boat.

The next morning Handa's sleep was broken by the daily sound of the engine. There was the "chut-chut" of the launch disturbing the peace of the morning.

"T–t–then it was no good!" He jumped out of bed in amazement. "She's going, after all, she's going!"

"She can't be. She can't possibly be." Yamaguchi rubbed his eyes in astonishment. "I

took out the sparking plug; without that you'd never get her going."

Handa consoled himself with the thought that, even if they hadn't succeeded, they'd at least done their best. So he had gone to sleep, his mind at ease. At least they'd put all their heart into the job.

He gazed steadily through the mist and there he saw last night's boat; like a dead whale she lay motionless with just a little of the bottom showing above the water.

He had heard another boat.

Though they smashed up one, there was another to take its place. If they smashed up that, still a third would appear. And if they smashed the last one, probably Uematsu would manage to mend it and load it up with scabs again.

This was not the first time that dogged old Uematsu had got the better of them. Ever since childhood Handa had known only too well the old boss with his square-shaped skull, so flat on top that he would have had no difficulty in running with a cup of water set on it. Every morning, without fail, before anyone else was up, he would go prowling round the works. In one factory they had been wasting rope; in another they had spilt some beans. He nosed out all such minute shortcomings and then came and made his complaints.

And it was not only four or five farmers, who, through that big-skulled old boss, had lost their paddy-fields and their other lands, lost their homes inherited from their forefathers.

Formerly everyone in the village kowtowed to Uematsu, hoping to gain his favour.

How Handa, in his youth, had cherished the hope of becoming like Uematsu's son! To wear Western clothes, and go to a town school; to be free to play all day!

But now he was proud of the fact he hadn't been to school.

The songs they sang as they stirred the pulp, monotonous plaintive songs; the sound of hammering the hoops on the barrels with wooden mallets; the smell of the yeast which had made him want to be sick . . . all these memories of childhood were still vivid in Handa's mind. The people of the village led hopeless, servile lives of misery. His father used to work from sunrise to sunset, and even then could not make enough to feed them all. When the boss wasn't looking he used to scoop out some rice from the bin, wrap it up in a towel and bring it home. Handa's mother and grandmother and sisters would eat every grain up hungrily.

On such land as was not taken up by the factories, they grew rice and other crops. That was the work of the women and the old men who could not work in the factory. The buildings blocked out the sun and the ground was salt, so the oats and rice were stunted, their leaves shrivelled, and the yield was only half. Beans were affected by the poisonous smoke and could not be grown at all.

Still the farmers, loath to lose the lands inherited from their fathers, clung to them as a drowning man clings to a sinking ship.

But the onward march of industrialism got the better of the farmers' tenacity, and this land, too, became factory sites.

The farmers had worked because they hoped to become rich like the soy manufacturer; that was why doddering old men and children went out into the fields.

When Uematsu changed his concern into a company, and increased the capital, he urged the farmers to take shares in it. They, with five or six shares each, were in high joy, feeling that they too had entered the ranks of the soy manufacturers. They mortgaged their property to make the payments. To make sure the stocks wouldn't be stolen, they hid them under the old matting and just as before went on toiling away in rags. The farmers, rejoicing at the prospect of dividends, did everything possible to scrape together the money for the payments.

They paid at the rate of fifty yen a share. Next came the dividends.

But actually what did happen next? . . . The bonds they had hidden so they wouldn't be stolen were taken from them, with their paddy-fields and the rest of their lands.

"This is no good!" They found themselves completely fleeced. "Ah, ah, what a pity we did it!"

But still they did not know how to defy Uematsu.

Now the case was different.

Now the soy workers felt independent of Uematsu; they did not bow and scrape. They planned how they could get back what had been

taken from them. Handa, if only for the sake of his father, who had been forced to steal rice, felt he could not stand still and suffer any longer.

III

On October 13th the following notice was posted up.

"Workers! The pledge which you tendered to the strike leaders—If I betray the strike, I hereby promise to pay a fine of 500 yen'—is not legally binding. Workers! You are absolutely free. Should anyone try to claim 500 yen from you, the company will gladly undertake all court proceedings for you. Workers! You must act according to your own free will! You are absolutely free."

The contents of the pledge had been kept a dead secret. How then did the company find out?

Who was the spy?

Suspicion fell everywhere, but it was risky to be too sure.

Ever since the founding of the union, Yamaguchi had quarrelled with his uncle and cousin. They felt honoured at being given the rank of assistant manager and foreman by Uematsu, and sided with him. In fact, all Yamaguchi's relatives united in a chorus of criticism and abuse against him.

"Damn them! D'ye think I'll give it up, no matter what they say!"

Struggling against a deep sense of isolation, he pitted all his strength against Uematsu. Relatives

he considered were in the way all the time. At the same time it would be difficult to turn them out.

His mother had died a long time ago. His father was not one to say anything to his son in a hurry, even when the other relatives egged him on. He refused, however, to accept a penny from a "socialist" son; he thus showed his hostility to his son's ideas. Twenty shares which would pay a dividend of 12½ per cent. a year he treasured more than he did his son.

Whenever Yamaguchi went to the union, his father grumbled at him.

"You good-for-nothing lout, you take a holiday from your ship for any bloody reason," he stormed. "When I die I won't leave these shares to you. I'll give them to the village, or I'll leave them to Tokujiro."

"I don't want any of your shares."

"You idiot, you damned fool," he thundered, "you dare say that! That's not the right spirit!"

After his death the shares were found with the name changed, showing that he intended them for his son. Yamaguchi promptly sold them. This had happened two months ago.

His cousin, Tokujiro, was a foreman in No. 8 Factory. After the strike began he changed over to No. 11. Yamaguchi only made use of his cousin when he had to. And the cousin did the same with him. Otherwise, even when they met in the street, they did not even nod.

Yamaguchi went to see Tokujiro, hoping to find out who was the spy.

"Your crowd started the quarrel, didn't they?"

Tokujiro was always at pains to prove that the company had been forced into the dispute. Yamaguchi soon tumbled to the fact that he was acting on orders from Uematsu.

" . . . But having once accepted the challenge, as men, we'll keep on to the end.—To win or to lose, to live or to die——"

Tokujiro meant this as a hint of Uematsu's resolve never to rest until the union was completely crushed. His tone was that of a thief priding himself on his thefts.

" Keep on, keep on as much as you like, but you don't suppose Yamaki's are going to miss this chance, do you ? " said Yamaguchi, smiling.

Yamaki's was a rival company. Everyone imagined that they would use the strike to oust Uematsu from the market.

To quarrel and curse one another in this fashion had become habitual with Yamaguchi and Tokujiro. There are some people who, when you meet them, are so irritating that you can't help picking a quarrel with them. These two felt like that towards each other.

" Your crowd at first put forward thirteen demands and now, in less than two months, aren't you talking of reducing them to seven ? In another couple of months I reckon you'll be ready to cut them down another five or six, eh ? "

Yamaguchi jumped with surprise, but did not let himself be baited.

" Who told you that we were going to reduce the——"

Tokujiro interrupted him. His tone was domineering and full of contempt for Yamaguchi.

"I know all that. 'Though we reduce the number, we'll never concede the essential demands' . . . I know all that. . . ." (For a second time Yamaguchi jumped. These identical phrases had been used at one meeting of the leaders.) ". . . But, actually, by bringing on this strike you will lose. Why, up to four years ago you were only making sixty yen a year, now you are getting forty yen a month? That ——"

"Who told you we were going to make concessions?"

Tokujiro's manner seemed to say, "Keep your hair on, there's nothing I don't know about you."

"Even you, I guess I know more about you than you do yourself," he grinned, trying to irritate Yamaguchi.

"You can talk big, you crowd, but do you think you're going to divide the ranks of our workers? From all accounts you, yourselves, are being split up on all sides. Isn't that the case?"

Yamaguchi left off the conversation and went away. He felt very downhearted. "He must be the spy." In his mind he had picked Tokujiro's informant. It was a man who had a reputation of being one of their able leaders. "It must be him. He's the only one who could have told Tokujiro all those inside details about us," he mumbled to himself as he walked towards the strikers' headquarters.

IV

In front of the barrelling-shop towered a mountain of washed barrels. There was a continuous dull noise of lids being hammered on the barrels. From the big vat the undiluted soy gushed with terrific force. Four-gallon barrels formed a row over the matting that had been spread for them. In the midst of all this, the workers of No. 11 kept up operations. They worked on into the night. Even the furnaces, kept burning incessantly, groaned under the strain.

In tying up the barrels, the foremen utilized competition as a means of increasing the efficiency of the farmers who had just become accustomed to the work. In the electric light the rope, as it was hauled at roughly and twisted round one barrel, looked like a wriggling snake.

Further off a tank of pulp bubbled under compressed air. A truck loaded with barrels, all with new labels on them, dashed along at full speed towards the pier; the sound of the wheels echoed in the concrete cavern.

Chiun's ghost had hidden himself. The company, in its struggle against Yamaki had, at any cost, to fulfil all orders. Autumn was the rush time in the soy industry. The men were paid special rates for night work. For those who stayed in the company's dormitory there were special rewards.

In other factories the men lived together in special quarters. 150 men slept in one room with fifty mats. That meant three men to one mat.

The mats were full of holes, and sticky and greasy. The pillows were of wood. The food was fit only for pigs. Uematsu believed in feeding his livestock cheaply. But for the men this system had proved a blessing in disguise; being always herded together they had come instinctively to learn the meaning of solidarity. One idea, one emotion animated them all.

Uematsu understood this and in the new factory, No. 11, he did not allow the men to live together. He employed only boys, vouched for by their headmasters.

After the strikers had started attacking the boats it became dangerous to bring the men back to the village each day. This, however, threatened to deprive him of scabs. So he began to give " prizes " to those who would stay in the dormitory. All mention of Chiun's ghost was forbidden.

From the top of the strainer the bag, swollen up with bean pulp, stuck out bulkily. The vats in the room where the final process was carried out stood in a row like a fleet of warships. The man on guard, who was an ex-policeman, passed behind the vats like a shadow.

" It looks mighty dangerous for to-morrow or the next day. I tell you it looks as if the blighters are going to resort to violence." He grabbed the foreman by the shoulder and whispered in his ear : " Tell all ours to be ready."

" D'ye think the sons of bitches could do anything ? "

" You don't think there's any chance of them cutting the telephone wires ? "

The scabs, obedient to the masters, toiled sixteen hours a day. . . . "We'll have to work and save up now, as we won't get the chance of working sixteen hours a day when the strike's over." Their fingers had become all blistered and bleeding from handling the bags. From standing so long their legs became like logs of wood. During the day it was not so bad, but from twilight until knocking-off time seemed longer than the whole day. They longed for the 10.30 bell. The sleep they could get in the dormitory was insufficient to rest their fatigued muscles. Standing up, sewing the bags, they would drop off to sleep. The eyes of the young boys who dashed the pulp into the bags became blurred and they would miss their aim. All around was slushy with the pulp.

If they had not toiled away feverishly like this! If they had not worked more than the regular eight hours! Who would have worked the extra? The oppressed workers. The strikers would have won. The company would have been forced to climb down.

Thinking of themselves, they had turned their backs on the strikers. They went to all lengths cringing before the bosses, and found themselves working sixteen or seventeen hours a day. If the workers begin to concede an inch they are done for and become just like oxen with great heavy weights hung through their nostrils, which weigh them down. For ever they must go with bowed heads.

The clock in the office struck ten. Its last note was still tingling in the ear-drum when from the

locked gate on the north side a shot rang out. They all started, and then stood rigid as boards.

Following on that, in the far darkness, sparks shot up. A second report and then a third; then a prolonged rumble as the pile of old barrels came tumbling down.

"The strikers!"

Sacks and straw bags and pails came flying through the air. They abandoned their work and pushed their way towards the exit of the fermenting chamber on the other side. In a flash they knew that the desperate strikers had come to settle account with their betrayers. From the barrelling shops, from the pulp shops, the workers, their faces all smeared brown with beans, streamed towards the south gate. Uematsu's barrel mountain collapsed. Empty barrels flew around the heads of the squirming mob.

"Don't rush, don't rush!"

The great crowd reached the exit of the fermenting chamber. But it was barred by the guard. A swift current of men was stemmed there and divided to left and right. Outside the door waited a group of burly-looking men, with guns in their hands.

From under the matting the ex-policeman guard brought out clubs and bamboo spears and knives which had been got ready secretly. He intended arming everyone with one.

When the workers saw them they felt a chill, as if someone had brandished a naked sword before them.

. . . . . .

Yamaguchi climbed over the high wall, taking leaflets with him to distribute among the scabs.

He tied a stone on to the end of a rope ladder and threw it over the wall, and then climbed up it. Stooping down on the top of the wall, he investigated to make sure it was not spread with live wires.

Below him other ladders were thrown up powerfully and other figures were seen wriggling up in the darkness. More than had been arranged at the meeting of leaders had come. At different places the stones simply struck the concrete wall with a sharp sound and then bounced back again to the throwers' feet, only to be thrown up once more. At this rate we shall soon be discovered, thought Yamaguchi, but he could not call down to tell them to be quieter. If he did, they'd be discovered still sooner.

A fierce excitement was visible in the actions of those below him. They were resolved to do or die. If they remained docile any longer, they'd simply be slaughtered by Uematsu. Uematsu's many allies were like a pack of wolves; if one of their number howled all the others would come racing to his aid. The workers were hopelessly trapped. Yamaguchi knew that from long experience. They had no allies but themselves. But they did not want to die like sheep at the slaughter-house. They wanted to have at least one crack at the heads of the wolves.

Yamaguchi hung on to the edge of the wall, and then as lightly as he could jumped down on the other side. When he landed, the whole weight

of his body came with a shock into his head. Soon after him an old man landed a little to his side and rolled over. The ground was spread with cinders, and as he lay all rolled up in a ball on top of them you would have thought it was a cicada's cast-off skin. Yamaguchi himself, at the instant of jumping, felt as though he was being rolled up into a ball.

"Are you all right?" He put out a hand to the old man, who straightened his back. It was Niemon.

"Maybe to-night's the last we'll be together,' whispered this man who had the old mother and father he could not get rid of. "We must be prepared!"

When he heard how determined even the father of that girl was, Yamaguchi felt his muscles contract. Were they going to let themselves be pushed back to the old miserable state of affairs when their fathers had to steal food if they were to feed their old parents and their young children? Or were they going to smash all that?

To-night, to-night of all nights, they must acquit themselves well! It didn't matter if he himself had to die.

The scabs, like a wave that has receded, collected their strength, and then rose up in a second fierce wave, pressing in on the strikers. They threw themselves madly at this oncoming wave. Machida was at the head, shaking a knotty club. The two forces clashed just at the open space in front of the barrelling-shop. Yamaguchi and Niemon, almost crushed between the two crowds, were capsized in

the swirling current. Poles and pails and clubs were active. What remained of the wall of barrels came down on the heads of the struggling mass of men. Amid the cursing and screaming and bellowing, the mob clawed at one another; hands or faces or clothes, anywhere and everywhere without distinction. Empty barrels bounced noisily off one struggling head on to another. It was no time for Yamaguchi to be distributing leaflets. Even though he managed to do it, there was no time for the people to pick them up and read them. He tried to put a check on the men, but it was no time for checking. His head was almost wrenched off with the force of a blow on the face. The bulky, square bundle of leaflets concealed around his body got in his way. Again and again he snatched some of them out and threw them at the heads of the jostling crowd. The coarse, rustling papers scattered above the heads and then fluttered everywhere.

Suddenly he was almost knocked over sideways.

"Son of a bitch!"

He stood firm and looked to see what had pushed him. By the dim electric light he saw a thug brandishing, unsheathed, a great Japanese sword, coming towards him. Everyone drew back. A path opened. Like lightning Machida rushed in from the side and threw himself on the thug.

"Look out!" Yamaguchi yelled from the rear, but Machida was deaf to everything. He was soon flattened between the shoulders of the mob and knocked right over. From all directions the

force of the mob focussed on the two of them. Barrels, pails, stones from both sides whistled through the air and landed on them. Above the steaming heads, little pails collided with big barrels and were smashed to smithereens.

Yamaguchi was caught up in the raging whirlpool which stank of sweat and pulp, and carried into the barrelling-shop. They were being pressed by the scabs. Between the vats fights were going on. The lamp hanging from the ceiling and its glass shade were smashed by a blow from a long bamboo pole.

It was pitch dark.

At that moment Yamaguchi got a great whiff of strong, raw soy and was struck by something which came at him wildly, sideways.

The bung is out! he realized in a flash. . . . The soy shot right out at him from the lower part of the vat, as from a pump, and completely drenched him. The thick, sticky liquid dripped from all his body. In no time all around him had become a seething flood of soy. His eyes smarted with the salt and when, without thinking, he wiped them with his hand, it, too, must have been covered with soy, for they stung worse than ever. As he stood there blinking, against the light above the strainer next door he saw the forms of Handa and Himuro, bringing up supporters.

. . . . . .

All ahead of Machida seemed bathed in active radiance. He was practically unaware of what he was doing. Only not to be behind the others, not

to be a coward! That single thought filled his mind. The bottom of his kimono, sticky with sweat and soy, clung around his legs. He tucked it up. In the corridor a dim ten-candle power light, covered with cobwebs, was hanging from the sloping roof. Just there someone sprang out on him, crying, "Help, here's one!" but he soon extricated himself and ran.

In front of the fermenting chamber a gang of thugs awaited something.

Then there was a ferocious shouting and the report of a gun. His friends kept pressing in from the corridor and from the open space in front of the barrelling-shop.

In the darkness at the right Machida made out the white face of Handa, holding up a mat folded in two as a shield, and bending over slightly and saying something.

"Take care, it's dangerous!" He caught these words as he got close to him.

"What? D'ye think we can be hanging back now?" thought Machida, as he straightened himself up in defiance and went forward towards the fermenting chamber. A series of shots followed. The bullets sounded as if they had struck a barrel and gone right through. Handa and the others followed behind Machida. In front of the chamber, wrapped in the thick darkness and the smoke, a crowd of people seethed. Machida, raising sudenly the long pole he had taken from someone, rushed at them. But just in front of where a big twenty-gallon barrel lay, almost as if he had tripped over a stone, his body crumpled up and he swayed and

fell. It seemed to Handa that he fell like some nerveless thing, a log or something. The ones behind could hear his groans and they saw that he did not seem to have any strength to pick himself up again. The bullet had pierced the heart.

Handa stooped down and gathered him in his arms.

"What is it?" he asked, but there was no answer. "What is it? Tell me!"

Then he realized that Machida's arms and legs were twitching. His eyes were dim and his neck had no strength; it hung down limp.

"What is it? Tell me!"

From amidst the crowd that came running up, Yamaguchi, smelling of soy and looking like a drowned rat, yelled out something.

"They got him!" Handa answered.

Yamaguchi, coming out from between the vats, started to bend down to Machida's face, but when he saw the mob of thugs scattering hurriedly, he gave them chase. But before he had gone even a few steps he too gave a groan and collapsed beside the barrel.

Handa reached out a hand, all sticky with blood, towards Yamaguchi. He remembered how both Yamaguchi and Machida had been in love with Niemon's daughter.

"Why, everything about her's pretty. I like a girl who smells of the workers!"

Suddenly he remembered those words.

V

It was life and death with them. They were all determined, no matter what the consequences, to smash Uematsu.

They strained themselves to the limits of their endurance.

But the strength of Uematsu's side was greater far than theirs. "Tin-tailed" figures* and a company of iron-shod putteed men* appeared and ruthlessly crushed the strikers.

VI

Two years passed.

The ceaseless noisy hammering of the coopers' mallets ascended to the heavens with the dense smoke. The engine of the launch and the rumbling of the trucks added to the din.

The black sooty roofs of the shops had become still blacker. Every day they went on puffing out the steam from the boiling beans, fearful of the loss even a day's rest would cause. The stench of boiling soy was everywhere. The farmers' dwellings had been pushed back to the foot of the hills and to the slopes graded like steps. Handa had come out of prison and returned to this village of his, living in one of those shacks. The smoke, blown by the wind, came over towards it.

Uematsu's square head seemed to have got two or three inches fatter. He must have been more

*Police with sabres, and soldiers. Circumlocutions of the author to avoid the censor.

than sixty. But his spirit was unchanged. He still kept up his habit of inspecting the factory.

A priest, whose speciality was sermons, had been attached to the factory. Once a month there was a concert and a movie show. Those who attended were given free refreshments. They also received a towel each with the Uematsu trade-mark stamped on it.

Many grains of sand piled one on top of the other will make a mountain as big as Fuji, and sen by sen saved up will make a million yen—such was the burden of the songs chanted by the singer.

A movie, " The Money-making Tree," sounded interesting, but it, too, proved a hoax.

On the other hand, in the factories the work became killing. The scabs were saved from being turned off; they were saved from having to leave the village through starvation; they were saved from prison, but in the factories they were subjected to the speed-up. Production of pulp was increased from a little over 600 gallons a day to nearly 800 gallons; 2000 old barrels were washed a day in place of 1500. And at the same time the standard of living went back to the old days.

In order to get fuel the women and children, their noses all blocked with dust and ash, had to pick up coke from the cinder pits.

The increased wages were abolished when Handa, Niemon, Himuro and the others were taken off to the police station. After a while a distinction between " skilled " and " unskilled " was made. Unless a man had been employed for five years or

more he was not called "skilled." This meant that the number of workers in the skilled class were less than a quarter of the total. The "unskilled" men, who had been farmers and fishermen, had their wages cut down to the old 70 per cent. Hell, how they'd been taken in!

For the first time, like a sudden thump on the back, they realized it.

"We've been made bloody fools of! We've been taken in nicely by the boss's fine words!"

They stamped their feet in rage.

"If we're going to get our wages cut 20 per cent. or 30 per cent. like this, we'd have been better at that time to have thrown in our lot with the strikers! We were damned silly!"

Handa, wearing an expression of sadness and loneliness, looked down from his cottage on the slope on the village as one surveying a ruin. There was no job for him. Of the men who formerly had worked with him, hardly one remained. Communication with them had ceased, too. He did not even know where they were or what they were doing. He had no food, but stilll he was reluctant to leave the village. He wanted to stay on living there for ever.

Beneath his eyes giant factories were growing up. Beside them No. 11 seemed dwarfed and old and blackened.

At the shore new land had been reclaimed. For that purpose one-half of the hill on the eastern side had been cut sheer away. The cliff-like remaining half and the red soil of the reclaimed

land changed the whole aspect of the village, so that it seemed like a newly opened-up district.

A group of women and children, their yellow kimonos grimed with dirt, flocked round where the cinders were thrown out, rummaging and poking and putting something in their baskets. They were the coke-gatherers. When a cart came bringing a load of cinders, immediately, from all directions, like sparrows, they would collect. There they would chirrup and cry and poach on one another's finds. This went on every day. Just when you thought they had scattered, back again would come the cart, and again from somewhere the sparrows had collected.

When the " ruffians " were sentenced, Uematsu, intending to appear magnanimous, had worn an expression of sorrow. He said that he hoped they would be treated as leniently as possible. . . . But once the " ruffians " were safely out of the village he gave a sigh of relief, and began to feel himself again. Now once more he was free to do as he pleased ; everyone who might defy him had been removed.

One morning, as he was inspecting the factory, he discovered on the reclaimed land that the men had been raking the coal out of the furnaces before it was completely burned, and purposely making it into coke.

The muscles of his face contracted. His eyes hardened. With the cherry-wood stick he carried in his right hand he turned over the cinders and poked among them. He took it that the men were

trying to deceive him and he felt it a crushing blow to his pride.

"Here, there, who said you could gather that?" With a deep, powerful voice, he roared at the women who were loitering there.

"All of us, we all gather it," answered one woman in confusion.

"Who told you you could?"

"Everyone does it, so I thought the boss has given permission," said another.

"You liars! You've been scheming with your old man so's as to make it all coke like this. That's what you've been up to, eh?"

"No."

"You liars! You try to fool me, but you can't fool these eyes. Plotting together, and cheating me over the coal, aren't ye?"

The women gathered together in one spot and began taking council. There was no fear in their expressions; nothing of surprise; only rancorous defiance. Some of them angrily emptied the coke they had gathered out of their baskets. "He says we're trying to cheat him. . . . It seems to me it's him that's cheating us!" came one voice from among the women.

That was the beginning of a new unrest.

They would have put up with not being allowed to use the coke for fuel, but to be accused of scheming together, husbands and wives, this they could not stand. Wasn't it just equivalent to calling them thieves?

They pledged themselves to make the boss pay for that.

"It looks like another strike. . . Isn't there some way, some good way, of settling them!" wondered Uematsu, amazed that such an agitation should spring so unexpectedly from so trivial a cause. He felt a chill in his bones and a weight pressing down in him until his arms began to tremble.

"Isn't there some way, some good way? . . No matter how often you hit them, they never learn a lesson, the rotten swine!"

By degrees the trembling spread from the top part of his body, right down to his knees.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE CITIZENS

by

TAKIJI KOBAYASHI

FOR THE SAKE OF THE CITIZENS

I

THE fact that at a time like this Arisuke felt an irresistible urge to rejoice and be merry is not in the least strange. Such things are known to happen on occasion to men of the most rigid morals—to which class Arisuke unreservedly belonged. When, for instance, these people have achieved some "supremely glorious" exploit, they feel, more than lesser mortals ever do, a naive desire to kick over the traces. So it happened, rightly or wrongly, that Arisuke went with two or three mates to have just one glass.

"Damn it all, a man wants on an occasion lke this . . ." Truly strange sentiments to flow. from his lips. As a member of the Young Men's Association he had been working for the 4,000,000 citizens of Tokyo, which for the past four days had been a "legless" city. And now to-day, this day of days, the street-car strike had been settled. He felt as if a ton of bricks had been lifted off his back. "No one can say I didn't do my bit any more." The faces of all the citizens who had mumbled words of thanks to him and his mates floated vividly through his mind—the city's hero.

At every street corner the busy jingle of the newsboys' bells brought the network of moving

feet to a standstill. Every evening paper was full of the strike. Arisuke almost wept for sheer joy.

"Come on, let's have another. A man's got to do something."

He grabbed his friends by the shoulders and dragged them off to a back alley in Shinjuku. Pushing apart the curtains across the doorway of the *sake* shop with his shoulder, he swaggered in. As he got drunk (even a virtuous member of the Young Men's Association can get drunk), he stood up and waved his arms and dangled his legs. Then, facing the bewildered customers, he recounted how he had served in His Majesty's Imperial Army, and a workman who was eating mince pies and drinking *sake* clapped his hands.

"You're a hero, a real hero. There's not many young fellows like you about nowadays. We're proud of you."

When he flopped down into his seat, he felt a sudden dizzinesss. Tables and plates and bottles, and faces and arms and walls, all jumbled together, came rushing at him and hit him between the eyes. In some corner of his brain he regretted that there was no one to carry him shoulder-high, and then he lost consciousness. The next thing he knew was that one of his mates was tapping him on the shoulder and shouting at him: "Tamanoi.* We're going to Tamanoi. Call a taxi. Do you think we're going to creep straight home without having a bit of fun on a joyful occasion like this?"

* Tamanoi and Kameido are the great "licenced" districts of Tokyo.

II

There are many varieties of strikes, but in essentials they do not differ. When a general strike of longshoremen and harbour workers took place in Hokkaido, it meant that the city of Otaru was completely cut off from all supplies. Thereupon the Young Men's Association came out and transported necessities "for the sake of the citizens." And in Korea, in Genzan, during the transport workers' strike the same thing happened. If a strike occurred in an ammunition factory when war clouds were on the horizon, "for the sake of the country" (*whose* country we know all too well) the strikers would be silenced for good and all. The great street-car strike in Tokyo was no exception. Quite apart from the causes leading up to the dispute on both sides, when 4,000,000 citizens were stranded, you could not just dismiss it by saying, "If they want to fight, let them have it out," and so the whole city started writhing and struggling like an old man in the throes of a seizure.

When a car drew up in front of Shinjuku Station, a crowd like an army of ants would surround it in no time. Office workers, who had to be at their offices by ten minutes to nine, kept pulling out their watches and scowling in exasperation as they mingled with the crowds: "This is outrageous. They're free to strike, but I wish they'd do it so as not to inconvenience others."

The sight of those damned yen-taxis gliding past was even more offensive that usual to these hard-up

clerks, as they watched them out of the corners of their eyes. Pressed all together into the Overhead, and then emptied out at the station, with nowhere to go, they just mooched about hopelessly. Those with any understanding began to realize for the first time that the work of motormen or conductors was of some importance; until now no one had bothered to realize such a simple fact. Even if they had, they were so wrapped up in their affairs that the mere realization alone would not have achieved much.

In Hinjo district, workmen rushed the cars as if they were storming a citadel. Then, dangling all over the car, like a lot of nails hanging from a magnet, they were borne away. But when five or six other workers, walking along with sharp and steady strides, saw that magnetic car, they thumbed their noses at it and shouted:

"You swine. Have y'got no shame, workers like us to go riding on a scab street-car. Get out and walk, you bastards."

For two days this went on. Then the third day came, and the situation ceased to be a joke for anyone. It was then the Young Men's Association, with red badges on the arm of their uniforms, started to man the cars. Not only Arisuke, but one and all wore a proud but strained look, like men who have been picked to make an attack into the enemy's territory. All the passengers by their manner showed they appreciated their work.

The chief of the City Electric Bureau even wept tears before those crawling worms of the Young Men's Association. His unexpected behaviour

amazed, excited and stirred Arisuke and his mates to the depths of their souls. They pledged themselves to work for the 4,000,000 citizens regardless of consequences. With a little exaggeration you might say that for such inexperienced men it meant risking their lives. Arisuke himself, at Miyakezaka, made a mistake in putting on the brakes, and damaged the back of the car ahead. A friend, who had been allotted to a motor-bus, finally managed to smash it to pieces. There was even a picture of it in the papers the next day.

However, he met with two unpleasant experiences. One happened when the car he was driving was slowing up before the next stop. A group of three tough-looking fellows, walking close alongside, suddenly fixed him with a scowl.

"You scab. You'll remember this."

Scab? He did not know what it meant then, but later on, when he came to learn, he felt the blood leave his cheeks.

The other incident happened when he had knocked off work and was going to take the Overhead from Shimbashi Station. A group of bus conductresses—strikers—marching in a row, all of a sudden scattered a shower of leaflets, and then ran for their lives. After them went two plain-clothes men. One of them grabbed a girl by the shoulder with one hand, and struck her full in the face with all his strength with the other. He followed this up with a kick in the back. Five or six yards ahead she collapsed and fell on her back. The two detectives planted themselves on top of her. Arisuke gasped and turned his head away.

The leaflet was urging the railway workers to come out in sympathy—weren't they silly girls?

The next day, however, he was once more the earnest Young Man. He was convinced that someone was "behind the strikers." He well knew that at present there was some deadly hidden force sweeping all over Japan.

III

He seemed to remember seeing a gleam of light on the opposite bank as his taxi crossed Asakusa Bridge. Then he remembered being dragged down a funny narrow lane for some reason or other. The next thing was the strong scent coming from a woman's body, and her eyes and cheeks and lips close to his. He felt the smooth short hair of a girl who was lying in bed beside him. This was Tamanoi, but as yet he did not know the wretched fate that lay in wait for him there. Naturally he could not be in bed facing that short-haired girl—whoever she was—without beginning to tell her proudly of the strike. But when she heard she drew away from him and started up.

"Then, if our girls were to strike, would you bring your little sister here to fill our place? It's the same thing."

"Don't be silly."

All the same, those were disconcerting words. And the short-haired girl uttered many others, more disconcerting still.

She told him how the city authorities, having prearranged with the Right-Wing leaders that they

were to drop out half-way through, had planned to weed out the Left-Wing elements who were always ready to flare up over anything. She related how a 60,000 yen bribe had been given to the Right-Wingers ; how one well-known renegade leader had been photographed staggering out of the —— geisha-house dead drunk ; how in the taxi he had counted a big wad of bills and blustered out boldly, " We hold the key to the strike," and how in order to cover up all these goings-on, and put people off the scent, the Electric Bureau had sent out an " appeal " to the citizens. All this was proved by the fact that after the settlement more than a hundred lost their jobs, and those who were taken back at last were much worse off than before, while the renegades had neatly pocketed 60,000 yen.

" You certainly helped to do a fine piece of work, didn't you now ? "

As I have said, Arisuke was a steady, high-principled young fellow. When such people begin to doubt the value of the work they have put their whole heart and soul into, the result is often serious. Arisuke had become ashen pale all of a sudden.

To come upon such a girl in Tamanoi or in Kameido is nothing very out of the ordinary. After this she went on to explain all these things to him in fuller detail, and at dawn the serious thing happened to him. I repeat, once again, that he was a man of the most rigid morals, bound always to follow the straight and narrow way he thought was right.

In addition to that, he was drunk.

Well, to tell you the serious thing : in the toilet of the brothel, Arisuke, member of the Young Men's Association, committed suicide by hanging himself.

Only one word need be added : there are plenty more Arisukes.

THE MONUMENT

by

SANJI KISHI

THE MONUMENT

[*What is written here applies to the whole of Japan, and not merely to a certain district or village.*—AUTHOR.]

OSAWA is a mountain village in the province of Shiga. In the winter it is half-buried in deep snow-drifts. It contains five hundred houses, and about two thousand inhabitants.

In this village there are a hundred and seventy homesteads of "despised peasantry."* They settled here more than forty years ago, on the high valley to the west of the village, and formed a closely-knit society of their own. The place where they live is called "Yotani," or "the hermit's valley," and is held in low repute by the whole village.

But suddenly radio-active springs gushed out in Yotani.

About a hundred and fifty of the houses in Yotani were let to tenants.

Igari Ihei was the hereditary elder of the village and at the same time a big landowner. A hundred and fifty peasants rented land from Igari. Igari grew fat and round on the rent they paid. He

* There are over three million craftsmen in Japan, engaged in trades that are considered disgraceful, such as tanning. They are contemptuously named "Suihei," the despised, and are even poorer and more completely outlawed than the rest of the Japanese proletariat.

moved to Kyoto, so that no one should call him the man from the "hermits' valley," and built a big house in the foreign style at Shimo-Kamo, and sent his daughter to a boarding-school for the daughters of gentry.

Of course the radio-active springs gushed out on the land of Igari.

Igari sent "professors" especially from Kyoto to examine them. After this the newspapers raised a great noise about the new mineral springs, which in radio-activity occupied the fourth, or maybe it was the fifth or sixth place in the world. And in less than a year the whole story had become a matter of life and death for the people of Yotani.

Igari Ihei had sold all his land in Yotani to other people. And these other people lost no time in forming a limited company for the exploitation of the Yotani springs. And a hundred and fifty tenants suddenly received notice from the new company to "vacate the land in connection with the transfer of the ownership into other hands."

Naturally this aroused a storm of indignation. Three hundred persons plunged down the mountain-side in the thick snow-drifts to the Tokaido high-road to Kyoto, and crossed the bridge Kara, till they arrived at Otsu. From there they took the train to Kyoto, to Igari.

Igari admitted that he had made a mistake in selling the land without giving the tenants notice, and promised to give them a hundred thousand yen, at the same time asking their pardon.

A hundred thousand yen!

The univited guests were overwhelmed at the idea of such a sum.

True, they had held the land from one generation to another, but the money paid them for quitting would amount to a sum such as they had never even dreamed of. Each would have something like six hundred and sixty yen!

This was considered to settle the matter. . . . But it was not long before they realized that they had been fooled. Once they had left the land they did not know what to do. It was impossible for them to live in Yotani.

"If you are in difficulties, why not try working in Igari's factory in Kyoto? I'll arrange it all for you myself."

And so Tauboi Zangoro, the former bailiff of Igari, sent about fifty families to Kyoto. They all began to work in Igari's aniline plant, in the suffocating fumes of dyes and chemicals.

Only a hundred families remained in the village of Osawa.

The excavators and workers of the new company invaded Yotani and began mercilessly to blow up the land that the peasants had looked after for decades as tenderly as if it had been their own bodies. This they did in the very eyes of the remaining peasants.

The fields were turned into roads and building lots. A clearing in the forest was made and a building in the foreign style put up. This was the hotel for the springs.

A delicatessen store, a department store and twelve small restaurants were built in Motomura,

or the " main village," as the central part of Osawa was called.

All these enterprises flourished.

The company began to buy up, at double price too, the straw huts of the remaining peasantry, which were not even fit for fuel, and the land under them.

The few peasant farmers who were working on their own land acted as agents in these transactions, as well as our friend Tsuboi. Having sold their houses and land, the peasants went to Kyoto and the neighbouring villages. Now there were only eighty homesteads left.

These tenants had long ago spent the six hundred and sixty yen compensation they had received.

In the meantime Motomura had become a regular little town and seven splendid hotels had been built in Yotani.

Buses ran between Otsu and Motomura and the company made an automobile road between Motomura and Yotani.

" So long as the Suihei still have huts in the ' hermits' valley ' it will be difficult to get visitors to the springs."

That's what they said in Motomura.

" Since we agree to pay proper compensation for you to quit, it is to our mutual interest to settle things," the company told the remaining families. " Only think, if you get good money for quitting you could go somewhere else and go in for peddling and the like."

Such a proposal was sheer mockery. It must be refused. A struggle must be waged.

Such was the decision come to by six peasant farmers and forty-one tenants.

Forty-seven homesteads from Yotani ("The Hermit's Valley") sought out the local branch of the Suihei ("Despised Peasants") in Otsu, and set up a branch in the village of Osawa.

The peasants who did not join the organization because they were dazzled by the big price of one thousand yen offered them by the company to quit (the average price prevailing at that time being two hundred yen), rapidly came to terms with the company and bade farewell to their friends and left the village.

The company offered the remaining peasants a small plot of land each to build on in the hamlet of Shimaji, three hundred yen each for leaving Yotani and more land at rent for thirty years in Shimaji.

This offer roused great argument. Thirty-six persons wanted to accept it, and eleven were against it, and these eleven were the very poorest of all the tenants.

"Your lives are different from ours, that's why you're so obstinate. We have to keep big families, old parents and children. How are we to live here? Think it over!" said Todoroki, his president of the Suihei branch, with tears in his eyes.

"I have a family of nine. I even wanted to sell my daughter to the Otsu brothel, to keep things going for a while. I told Kattyan of Motomura I would, but she said fourteen years is too young. How are we to live? If it goes on like this we shall die of hunger." Grandfather Kisida sniffed.

All were silent.

All heads were bowed.

Miesima, who was against the majority, looked around and said quietly: "Good. I am bound to admit that what you say is just. We have been struggling for three years. But I mean to go on. You are right in saying my life is different from yours. There are only three of us—myself, my wife, and my mother. The argument is over. All those who have accepted the company's offer will go to Shimaji. Those who agree with me will remain."

"We will stay," answered Kurose and Ozawa, both together. Others also in the same group raised their heads and said in once voice, "We will stay."

Miesima turned to Todoroki: "Hand over the banner of our union."

The banner brought by Todoroki was handed over to Miesima, to the eleven. A sob was heard.

II

So it was that eleven families were left in Yotani.

Very often they had to ward off surprise attacks from the company. When they were abused in insulting language the fathers of families joined together and attacked the company, but they were always defeated.

The Suihei district committee in Shiga mobilized three hundred of its members in the provinces of Yazu, Koga, Gamau and Aichi, and sent them to the village of Osawa. They seized the offices

of the company in Yotani and demanded the immediate discharge of employees who had beaten up the peasants, and compensation for eleven who had been wounded, together with the publication of an official apology in the press. If the company refused, the Suihei members threatened to destroy all the health-resort buildings.

The company's officials and employees ran away.

The next evening fifty police arrived from Otsu, Kusanu and Moriyama, after the demonstrators had already left Yotani, and nothing was to be seen in the darkness but the white ruins of the office.

The police arrested all the eleven members of the local branch, and took them to Kusani, corded together.

Then the Shiga district committee of the Suihei organized a mass demonstration in Kusanu. The Kyoto committee sent a special section to the home of Igari Ihei, who had already managed to become a shareholder in the company.

Three of the eleven—Miesima, Kurose and Ozawa—were sentenced " under clause 216 of the criminal code " to ten months' hard labour, after they had already spent two months in prison.

A year later, when the three turned up in Yotani, they found a garage and a new restaurant there. The sounds of the Samisen * floated to their ears. They sensed the spirit of a new town.

The eleven peasant homesteads crouching on the other side of the valley seemed to have been passed over by time.

* A three-stringed musical instrument.

III

Miesima and Ozawa scraped together the small sum required for travelling expenses and set off with their banner to the national conference of the Suihei.

The popular Socialist college-teacher, Doshi sha Hamamato Sendzo, came to the conference and made a speech of welcome.

When they got back the delegates made a detailed report to their comrades.

Next summer, the summer of 1921, Miesima noticed on his way to work a man of middle height clad in a light kimono. He recognized him as Hamamato Sendzo, who had spoken at the conference.

"Hamamato!" he exclaimed, removing his hokabura,* "You are Hamamato. I am a member of the Suihei in this village."

Hamamato stopped.

"Really! Where are you from?" he said.

"From over there."

Miesima pointed towards the huts huddled together in the valley.

"I was at the conference last year and recognized your face."

"I'm staying at the Hotel Tekisuikaku. Come and see me."

Miesima bowed and thanked him. Hamamato strode on with big steps. After he had gone a little way he stopped and called out:

"What's your name?"

*Small towel wound round the head and face while travelling.

"Miesima Sigekiti."

Hamamato bowed and went on. Miesima followed him with his eyes.

But although Hamamato invited Miesima, Miesima had no time to go. He had become a day-labourer, accepting the worst-paid work that came his way, and often walking as much as twenty kilometers to work.

It rained for a week after the day of the meeting with Hamamato.

One night when Miesima was lying on his mat, shivering with cold, a man in a thin white kimono suddenly appeared at the door of the hut.

"Where does Miesima live?"

Miesima, recognizing Hamamato's voice, leapt up from his mat and threw on his kimono in the dark.

"Here I am. We have no electricity, that's why it's dark. Let's go to Ozawa."

Miesima and Hamamato set off for Ozawa's house. He was the only one of the eleven who had electricity.*

While Hamamato and Miesima were talking in Ozawa's house, their host went out to tell the other members of the local organization of Hamamato's arrival, and soon seven of them were gathered in a circle around the dim electric bulb.

Hamamato, who seemed unaccustomed to sitting, began to speak standing up.

"The Suihei movement will very soon find itself in a blind alley."

* The lack of electric lighting in Japan, where electricity is so widespread, is proof of the poverty-stricken condition of these people.

"Why?"

"In the first place because it is not going far enough in the struggle. A certain equality will be gained. To this extent the movement is right. But the condition of the peasants will not be improved in the slightest as a result of the Suihei movement. In three or four years you will have solved all the problems raised by the Suihei and there will be nothing more to do. No doubt all of you realize that the Suihei has gone no further that the solution of its original aims. That is why a change in the whole direction of the movement is now necessary."

Tense and weary, all turned their sun-burnt faces towards Hamamato.

"You don't seem to have quite understood me. All right, then, let's have questions and answers. Who wants to ask something?"

Hamamato swept his glance over all present.

"They call us the despised ones," replied Ozawa in dropping accents.

"Is that all? Who else wants to speak?"

"Despised and poverty-stricken," said someone else, it might have been Isin.

"Poverty-stricken? That's true. But how—poverty-stricken?"

Hamamato again scrutinized their faces.

"You still don't understand? Then let me ask you something. Are you all tenants?"

"No. We have no land at all," replied Miesima, thinking of old grievances.

"Good. People like you are called the agricultural proletariat, or, if you like, you are agri-

cultural labourers. This class is at the very bottom of the social scale. There are other poor peasants as well as you, however. There are peasants renting a tiny plot of land, and almost starving on it. These two classes compose eighty per cent. of the agricultural population of our land. And so the poor peasantry and agricultural workers cultivate rice"—here Hamamato suddenly raised his voice—"and the landowners, who don't do a stroke of work, get half the crop for nothing. The landowners don't work themselves. Until we drive them out of the countryside, because they're absolutely useless people, there will be no way of improving our own conditions. You, the agricultural proletariat, without even rented land, must be the first to seize the landlords' lands.

"Next, those peasants cultivating tiny plots of land must see that they get more from the proprietors' land. And then they must demand lower rent. If you work beyond your strength and give up half your crops gratis, you are condemning yourself to starvation. There can be no victory without a struggle. You must join an organization that will struggle for you, you must join the Peasants' Union. The very poorest peasantry and agricultural labourers in the country, by setting up the Japanese Peasants' Union and drawing up a joint programme, have spread the united front throughout Japan. If these demands are not fulfilled, the members of the Union must put up a fight against the countermeasures of the landlords, such as 'taking away the land,' 'forbidding work on rented land,' and the

like. The only way to the emancipation of the poorest peasantry lies in the creation of peasant unions, for the carrying out of this struggle!"

The faces of all had become firm and austere. Wide-eyed glances were directed at Hamamato, from whose lips fell scathing words.

"Further . . . the landowners in the countryside are not the only tyrants. They are hand-in-glove with the capitalists in the town. To the capitalists in the town belong all the plants and factories, with their huge output and millions of workers. They take all the profits themselves. So you see the relations between the landlord and the poor peasant in the country are just the same as the relations between the capitalist and the workers in the towns.

"And the workers have to struggle with the capitalists for higher wages, and other improvements in working conditions, through their trade unions and by means of strikes. The labour movement in Tokyo and Osaka just now is blazing up. There are two or three strikes a day at Osaka, and it is usually the workers who win them. But the peasant movement lags far behind the workers'. By developing the peasant movement, and linking it up with the workers' movement, we shall form a united front of the masses in town and country, for resisting our common oppressors, the landowners and the capitalists!"

Hamamato suddenly clutched at his chest, with shining eyes. He broke off his speech abruptly, took out his handkerchief and pressed it to his lips. He coughed, and blood appeared on the handkerchief. Ozawa ran in a fright to get some water.

He hurriedly scooped up a cup of water, but when he turned round again Hamamato was prostrate on the mat, with Miesima, Komaka and Kurose surrounding him and chafing his back.

IV

The next day, in the rain, Ozawa, Miesima and Kurose went off, for the first time in two years, to visit Todoroki in Samajee. Their whole conception of the world had changed since the evening before. There was no longer that feeling of strain which they had felt before parting with Todoroki.

"So you've come to talk about the Peasants' Union? If the Union begins to function properly, you will be our saviours, the whole eleven of you."

"Not us—Hamamato. Last night he had a hæmorrhage and he's in a hotel now."

When they began to talk about Hamamato's illness all four of them, as if by common consent, put down their cups of *sake*.*

"No, thanks. Let's stop that."

Todoroki pushed away his cup.

"You're right. I'll stop too"—and Miesima, following his example, also pushed away his cup.

Todoroki threw a straw cloak over his naked body and tied the strings of his straw hat under his chin, and ran out in the rain to call the rest. By noon about twenty persons were gathered together. Night fell, but no one went away.

It was very late when the three from Yotani, and

* Spirits distilled from rice.

six representatives from Simaojzi returned to Yotani. The Osawa Peasant Union already existed.

Hamamato lay on his bed with a cold compress on his head in the Tekisuikaku Hotel.

Nine men, followed by the dissatisfied glances of the hotel servants, crowded up the stairs to Hamamato's room. The waitresses under the stairway were alarmed to see these strange personages in a respectable hotel, and wondered what they had come for.

They left behind them in the entrance a heap of wet straw cloaks, from which an unpleasant smell arose.

"Long live the Osawa Peasant Union!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Loud cries suddenly resounded through the whole hotel. The waitresses ran off in a fright. The servants from the restaurant came crowding up the stairs with anxious faces.

Hamamato, clad in nothing but his night-kimono, was seated on a padded quilt, surrounded by a crowd of people. A happy smile played over his weary, green-tinged face.

"Comrades! Just a minute. I want to teach you a fighting peasant song. I'll sing it, and you'll learn if off by heart, won't you?"

Moistening his lips and casting a laughing glance around, he began to sing:

"If we didn't pay our taxes
We'd be thrown into the road.
Thirty per cent. this year,
Fifty per cent next year,

And so on till they take the whole crop.
What girl would think of marrying a man
Who knows nothing about the Peasants'
Union?"

At first they were all stupefied with astonishment, and then there was a storm of clapping.

"What's the matter? What d'you want?" said Hamamato, looking angrily at the hotel servants standing in the corridor.

The unexpected meeting between Miesima and Hamamato served as an impetus to the creation, one wild rainy night, in the depths of the district of Shiga, in a forgotten mountain hamlet, of the Peasants' Union, in 1921, just when the feverish excitement in the town was subsiding, just when strikes were breaking out like fires every day, just when the Japanese trade union movement was passing from the spontaneous, elemental stage to one of organized planning.

V

Seven years passed. And in these seven years Peasant Unions sprang up all over Japan. The Osawa Peasant Union in the district of Shiga became the centre of the movement and about thirty organizations were formed in the district, arising directly out of the struggle. They all belonged to the Japanese Left-Wing Peasant Union. A district council of the Peasant Unions was formed, and the unions grew at a tremendous rate.

The First Year of General Elections

The significance of the general elections in 1928 consisted by no means in the fact that they were "the first general elections in our land" (*vide* the jubilations of the bourgeois press). What then was their significance? During the winter of the preceding year the Japanese proletarian movement was in a state of transition, a Communist Party had at last emerged, shaking off narrow "sectarian" elements and working within the legal "worker-peasant" party, "Ronoto." Broad propaganda was embarked upon, using the elections and all legal opportunities.

The Osawa Peasant Union had three times taken up the struggle against the Yotani health-resort company during those seven years. Over twenty of them had been thrown into prison as a result. The Osawa Peasant Union had become the centre of the peasant movement in the district, the motive-power of the whole organization in the Shiga province. Miesima, Ozawa and Kurose had become whole-time organizers.

The day of the elections approached. Miesima, as the secretary of the local Ronoto organization, exerted all his energies to get the central committee to accept the candidacy of Hamamato Sendzo for the electorate of Shiga. Almost all through the elections Hamamato himself was confined to his bed.

The energetic work of the Communist Party made itself felt throughout the electorate of Osawa. Communist Party leaflets were sure to be handed round in halls where election speeches were being

made. If an election meeting was to be held in a village, the next day an " activities group " was sure to turn up the evening before, often fighting its way through a blizzard that seemed impenetrable by any living creature, and begin distributing leaflets to each house, pasting them up on doors and telegraph posts.

The members of the Osawa Peasant Union, as the central figures of this conspiratorial activity, drew down upon their heads the wrath and repressive measures of the authorities. Very often there were groups of arrested freezing all day in the local police station. Just before the elections, in February, the reprisals and police measures were heightened. A speaker hardly had time to utter the opening phrase of his speech before he was arrested and hauled off on a rope from one police station to another, miles and miles in the snow and storm.

Both the president and agitator of the Peasants' Union were arrested a day or two before the elections. The police actually tried to lay their hands on the candidate himself, on Hamamato, but the " activity group " interfered.

The police arrived late for an election meeting at a tiny mountain hamlet, half-buried in snow-drifts. The speaker from Tokyo hastened to profit by this and opened the meeting of a hundred persons with the words :

" Comrade peasants ! Do you know thirteen slogans ? I'll explain them to you to-day, comrades ! They are the slogans of the Communist Party. These slogans go straight to the point.

How shall I put it to you? There is no one else to stand up for the interests of the poor peasantry but our worker-peasant party. And that's because it is backed up by the Communist Party, the party which is really fighting for the interests of the workers and peasants. Listen! We are against the government of proprietors and capitalists——"

Banging on the table with his fist he spoke about the Party which had issued these slogans. But, first of all, he explained the slogan which demands "confiscation of the big properties and the transfer of the land to the poor peasantry."

This village had the advantage of much fighting experience. The audience rose to its feet and drowned the speaker's words in applause. The audacious speaker ended up with the words, flung into the packed hall:

"Long live the Communist Party of Japan!"

"Hurrah!" shouted his hearers.

This was probably the first time that a crowd cheered the Communist Party on the eve of elections.

But news of this speech got about. The young speaker was seized at Otsu, and put in the police cells, where he remained till the middle of March.

Hamamato Sendzi was returned, much to the alarm of the bourgeoisie.

The elections were over, but not police repressions. The district police administration increased police guards and arrested peasants wholesale all over the province. Houses were broken into and old men, women, and even children were corded up and dragged off to prison. There was not a

single family that included members of the union in Osawa which had not suffered arrests. An aged paralytic, all of whose relatives had been taken away, committed suicide. There were three other suicides, all under the influence of terror. Some threw themselves into the well.

Such was the state of afiairs just before the fifteenth of March.

A group of peasants from Yotani and Simajzi, just released, was again seized on March 15th, in their sleep, thrown into an automobile, taken to Moriyama, Kusanu and Otsu and kept there some two months. Eleven from Yotani—including Miesima, Ozava and Kurose—were sent up for trial.

The Peasant Union was continually harried by the police. Any prominent member of a local union was thrown into prison directly after being sent up for trial. Its leaders arrested, the fighting front fell to pieces throughout the province.

Spring had not come yet.

In the beginning of April the Yotani Health-Resort Company put a huge advertisement in all the papers.

The seven hotels were full of guests by the beginning of the summer. Exalted old gentlemen with polished skulls emerged from their doors in the evenings, accompanied by two or three young women apiece. Geishas with Marumage coiffures clung to the arms of the fat men. Young girls, looking like tortoises in European dress, walked hand-in-hand beside their worthy mammas, going for excursions into the hills. When the guests met

each other they exchanged amiabilities before passing on.

"Isn't the water splendid?"

"Wonderful! So lovely and cold!"

Automobiles threaded in and out of the crowd. The hillside and valley were clothed in bright green, and this green was deeply resented by the women and old men left behind in Yotani.

"What next?" they exclaimed. "Our village used not to be a place for idlers and wasters to amuse themselves in. Where are our Miesimas and Kuroses and Ozawas?"

Old man Ogawa was sixty-three years of age. His back was crooked from age, but he was convinced that there would never be any improvement in the life of the peasantry without the Peasant Union. One night, leaning on his stick, he left his hut quietly and dragged himself to the house of Todoroki at Simati.

"Well! Do the police still visit you?"

"They do sometimes, but we only have little children at home nowadays, so they have to go away again."

Todoroki's wife, astonished to see the old man, helped him into the house.

"I've come to Simati to have a talk with the young ones. They have taken away our best men, at their best age, but that doesn't mean we must lose all hope."

"Have you come about the union, father?"

"Yes, I have. What would Hamamato think of us? He brought the union to our village ten years ago. I was fifty-three then, and I went to

hear him speak. But I didn't understand it all. Then we got a Peasant Union in Osawa. It's been broken up now, but are we going to sit down under it?"

"It's no good, they're all in prison and we can do nothing. No one's left here but boys. And even these have been taken away and have been in in the police cells these three days."

Old Ogawa well knew, thanks to the experience of March 15th, why the government was so much afraid of them: it was because all the best members of the Peasant Union worked in the Communist Party. The government was terribly afraid that the Communist Party would rise against the landowners again.

The words, "Thirty per cent. this year, fifty per cent. next year, and so on till they get the whole crop," rang in the old man's head.

VI

Sixteen-year-old Tetsu, Siro, Yasuki and other lads, left without fathers, often dreamed of setting up the union again. But the police found out about their plans every time and the pioneers of old Simati found themselves time and again in the cells that autumn and winter.

Another year passed. Another spring came. Still greater numbers of visitors came to Yotani for the waters. A group of movie-actors came to take pictures. Rich people came in their own automobiles. The governor of the county himself came, and geishas were called specially from Otsu,

tricked out with branches of artificial cherry-blossom.

The beginning of March. Terrible news reached Yotani through the newspaper—Hamamato Sendzo had been killed in Tokyo.

Old and young in Yotani and Simati fell silent. For half a day they looked at each other's faces and said nothing

The murderer was a member of the reactionary "Kakusuivan." In the whirlpool of events following on March 15th, Hamamato was the only representative of the workers and poor peasantry left in parliament. The "Sosi," the name given in Japan to persons who will commit any crime for money, had killed Hamamato because he was the deputy of these classes.

It seemed to the old men and women as if the murderer's dagger had pierced their own breasts. And then their grief gave way to rage.

Twenty-three young people in Samati, thirty-eight old men, forty-nine women, twenty-five children—135 persons altogether—met at the stroke of the alarm bell and spontaneously, without any instructions, went to the houses of Ozawa and Toramatsu in Yotani. In Ozawa's were only his wife, two little girls and his old mother. The whole population of Yotani was in the streets. Old Ogawa was there, too. Everybody met in front of Ozawa's house and stayed there without moving.

"Ten years ago our teacher, Hamamato, told us in this house about the union. We have met together to avenge the death of our teachers,

Hamamato, and we must revive our union!" cried Siro, climbing up a pine tree near Ozawa's house.

Siro was eighteen.

A policeman came from Motomura on a bicycle, but what's one policeman for over a hundred people? He could no nothing but stand and look on.

"Close up the ranks and no one can drive us away; he is the tool of those who oppress us and killed Hamamato in Tokyo. We do not know when they will kill us. I am an old man of sixty, and if they kill me the young ones will have to revive the union with their own hands!" shouted old Ogawa, standing under the tree and trembling with rage.

"Long live the Peasant Union of Osawa!" shouted Tetsu, climbing up besides Siro.

He unrolled a piece of coarse, red stuff which had been wound around his body. It was the union's banner.

The soiled red flag, made seven years ago, waved in his hand. It was the soiled banner of their fathers and brothers. It was the banner which had been hidden so well that all the threats of the police were unavailing to find it.

"Hurrah!"

Seeing the flag, all raised their hands.

The policeman leant against his bicycle and followed everything with his eyes.

Tetsu shouted: "We've got to win! We want to fight! We'll give the land to those who work it, in spite of all prohibition, in spite of the con-

fiscation of our rented land. There is nothing in these demands that cannot be fulfilled."

The banner of the union, on its bamboo pole, played long with wind on the summit of the pine tree.

VII

Thus it was that the Osawa Peasants' Union was unexpectedly revived on that day by boys, old men and women. But none of them, neither old nor young, knew how and whom to fight.

One night the committee of the union, which consisted of the boys and five old men (including old Ogawa) met secretly in the house of Ozawa in Yotani, the place which was hidden best from the eyes of the police. There they held their inexperienced discussions.

"The revival of the provincial council of the Peasant Unions lies on our shoulders," said Tetsu.

Old Ogawa had an idea:

"Let's put up a tomb—no, a monument—in honour of the murdered Hamamato, next to Osawa's house. They say that Hamamato's funeral procession became a mass demonstration and that the police broke it up mercilessly. If we put up a monument, those scoundrels are sure to fall upon us, too. And they're sure to break down our monument. But, never mind that, let us with our own hands make a wonderful monument here. Are our hands worth nothing?"

Everybody liked the idea.

The plans were soon drawn up. It was decided

after discussion that every homestead should contribute one or two stones and engrave their names upon them. When the stones were ready the foundations would be laid and the monument erected. The inscription on it was to be, "Monument in Honour of Hamamato Sendzo, organizer of the Peasant Union in Osawa."

Nobody knew how it happened, but the police soon found out about it. One day a posse of police suddenly arrived in Simati, led by the head of the local police station, and disposed their forces in advance about the houses. They worked very hard, looking everywhere for the polished stones and taking them away in a lorry. They even took away the memorial stone from Todoroki's yard.

But this did not cause any special perturbation. The plan was again discussed in the strictest secrecy by the committee. Again the members of the union began to collect stones secretly, hiding them in the most unlikely places, and taking them out at night to polish.

The autumn came, and with it arrests of the committee members. Tetsu and Siro were kept in police cells ten and twelve days, and the lorry came again and took away all the stones.

Siro and Tetsu waited for the wave of reaction to subside and worked out a third plan.

The committee sent its members secretly to visit all the houses. The store of stones in the neighbourhood had become appreciably less, so the work would be that much harder.

The committee thought of a place to hide the stone.

It was the year 1930. In January all agricultural work was at a standstill in the snow-covered homesteads of Simati. But work on " the stones " went apace. The committee members went to Yotani through snow and storm to see how the work was getting on.

This time the keystone of the whole monument was hidden in old Ogawa's house. Uncle Kurose, who was fifty-nine that year, engraved an inscription on the stone with a tool obtained somewhere or other. In the middle of January the leaders of the union, seeing that preparations were over, secretly carried three bags of cement, purchased with a little money scraped together with utmost difficulty, to Ozawa's house.

Their efforts were childlike. They burned with their whole souls for the common cause, but their activities were nothing but the continuation of those begun by their imprisoned leaders.

VIII

Sixteenth of January. The snow was accompanied by a sharp wind, but all the men and women of Simati had been up since long before dawn. They wore their winter slippers of straw, and straw hats on their heads. Walking separately, each carried on his back the precious stones with their carved signs, wrapped in mats. The boys went in front with waving banners. They were followed by over a hundred peasants, bearing stones on their backs. Some of the front ones sang the childish peasant song, but the women and

the old men carried their stones in silence, keeping time with the boys.

The snow never stopped. As the procession passed Motomura, the dawn broke.

From Motomura they ascended the hillside to Yotani. All those carrying stones slowed their footsteps.

As they approached the house of Ozawa in Yotani, shrinking from cold, wind and snow, old Ogawa and other comrades from Yotani met them, cleaning the snow and digging into about half a metre of earth.

When they had hollowed out the earth enough, they threw in smaller stones to strengthen the foundations and placed on them the stones they had brought with them, which they then covered with cement. The boys directed the work.

The snow never stopped.

When the cement had all been poured over, all present removed their hats and bent their heads. The monument was ready.

"In honour of the Father of the Peasant Union in Osawa—HAMAMATO SENDZO," such was the inscription engraved by the inexperienced craftsmen.

The monument stood firm, rearing its mass against the never-ceasing snow.

"Long live the Peasant Union of Osawa!"

"Long live the All-Japan Peasant Union!"

"Long live the Communist Youth Section!"

They shouted the slogans one after another, the snow beating into their faces.

"Long live the Japanese Communist Party!"

" Long live the Communist Party of Workers and Peasants ! "

At these cries tears came to the eyes of the women. They remembered the murdered Hamamato, their husbands, their brothers and their sons in prison.

The monument became all white under the blanket of snow. Throughout the next few days peasants from Simati and Yotani armed with spades and picks and sticks streamed to the house of Ozawa and guarded their snow-covered monument.

Winter came to an end. The snow melted. Spring approached. The sun melted the snow. The words, " In Honour of the Father of the Peasant Union in Osawa," gleamed in the sunshine from the top of the monument.

The guard increased to a hundred. Under their straw winter cloaks they hid weapons.

LINESMEN

by

TEPPEI KATAOKA

LINESMEN

AERIAL wires, underground wires, submarine wires ; encircling our planet like a huge spider's web.

Telephones. Telegraphs.

Countless wires stretched taut and strong above our heads, under our feet.

Linking up the world's capitalists. Capitalists in their spider-parlours, organizing themselves over these wires.

Into a treacherous league for mutual aid in sweating and racking the workers. . . .

I

A gale. Evening in the suburbs. Telephone pole on telephone pole looming up black.

And the wind moaning through the wires.

Near the post office stood a special big pole. The test pole. Near the arms was a little platform. Tokimoto, a linesman, clambered up to it to find out where the line was blocked. Fixing his set on to the wire, he put the receiver to his ear. Where was the trouble? Up or down?

He tested first the up-direction.

" Hello, hello," he called, and from the city side he overheard a faint voice.

" A finger, I say."

The wires must have crossed.

"Finger, a little finger or an index finger . . . he says he can let you have one."

Hell, that's a curious sort of conversation to hold; that's a rum thing to be selling.

Tokimoto's curiosity was aroused, he held his breath to listen.

"Then how much can you buy it for, one finger?" This time a different voice, quite distinct.

"I think about . . ." the faint voice again, "make a fine show . . . cut . . . with a knife . . . a lecture . . ." were the only disconnected snatches of talk he could catch.

Then again came the distinct voice:

"Anything up to 100 can go down as expenses to the Cultural Club. . . . No, no, not over the phone. You'd better come to the compound."

"All right. . . . I'll bring the man with me. . . ."

Tokimoto could hear no more. What the dickens was the connection between the finger and the Cultural Club? Then he remembered he had work to do. He realized that the hand holding the receiver was cold.

The persistent moaning of the wires assailed his ears.

The Cultural Club and the fingers . . . he couldn't forget them. Which Cultural Club? Their Cultural Club? The one for Communication Department workers, of course, couldn't have any connection with fingers. Could it be the Cultural Club attached to the I.T.M.B. (Imperial Tobacco Monopoly Bureau)? Quite possible, there might

well be some connection with fingers . . . skilled. If the Tobacco Bureau workers had skilled fingers that meant efficiency.

Tokimoto remembered that in three or four days' time he had to attend a refresher course at their own Cultural Club. He knew that these Cultural Clubs were a lot of bunk, but all the employees of the Communications Department and of other important government departments too, were obliged to join them, damn it all. But he had work to do now. . . .

The trouble didn't seem to be the up direction. He fixed his set on to the down-wire.

"Hey, is it up or down?" shouted a crowd of his mates gathered round the foot of the pole.

"Down," he answered. It was blowing a big gale. There'd be more trouble to follow. This is tough weather for us, boys; as he looked down on their heads he wanted to pour out his woes to them. Standing up straight, his back pressed against the pole, he looked over the darkening town. Against the faint grey sky stood out the roofs of the houses, and punctuating the latter was an unending procession of telephone poles.

That was life for you. To keep all those poles and wires in order we were sweated unmercifully. If we didn't like it, how else could we earn a living?

Wind. Dusk.

Tokimoto was standing on the platform—at his job. Nothing else seemed real. The dream-like conversation—about buying a finger—was completely forgotten.

He hoped to God it wouldn't be a snowstorm.

II

That night Soroku Tamano, another linesman, was on duty. He was sleeping in the linesmen's quarters in the post office.

He became aware of some disturbing sound. But he was tired out after his day's work.

"Let me sleep a bit longer. Have a heart. Don't disturb my slumbers sweet . . ."

He lay there drowsy. He was terribly sleepy, he thought to himself, and he would keep on sleeping no matter who tried to wake him.

But it was no use thinking like that; if he didn't get up he'd be fired. He rubbed his eyes. It was the telephone ringing. "Blast it," he mumbled, and hopped out of bed.

"Hello, hello," an irritated voice snapped back. "This is Tokyo Central. The No. 4 line, the No. 6 line and the No. 7 are all down. The No. 5 is uncertain. All wires on No. 2 are blocked. Get a move on. D'ye understand?"

"I understand; I'll call an emergency rally." He hung up the receiver with a bang and hitched up his dirty sagging breeches.

"Twenty to three." With a yawn he glanced up at the clock on the wall. "It's the middle of the bloody night."

The sooty window rattled in the gale. Snow pattered against the glass.

"A snowstorm. What do we want a blasted snowstorm for? It's no wonder all the lines are out of order," he grumbled as he put on his muddy rubber boots. "And so late, too, blast them."

Outside the wind tore at his coat and the snow beat against his face. It was a bad storm. There was nothing to do, however, but plod on through it. The head electrician lived about half a mile away. He arrived at the house at last and banged on the gate.

"A message from Tokyo Central."

It took a lot of knocking, but at last he appeared, this Communications Department electrician who drew a Grade 5 salary of eighty yen * a month. He was thinking that his wife as she stood there, having dragged herself out of bed to see him off, didn't look very prepossessing, but once outside his expression changed. "It means an emergency rally. Hurry up and call them all up," sourly he ordered Soroku. Already his pet toothbrush moustache was powdered white with snow.

III

Is it because the great mass of the people would be inconvenienced with the telephones and telegraphs out of order that there is all this fuss, officials shouting and workers being forced out into the snowstorm? If every single one of them was blocked for a whole day what loss would it be to the workers? But, for all that, it was proletarian linesmen who had to lose their sleep to go rushing round all over the place in the storm. If they dawdled, they'd their day's wages docked.

From the centre of the network of wires which

* Yen = 100 sen. A yen is equivalent to about two shillings or half a dollar; a sen to half a cent or a farthing.

joined up every corner of the land the bourgeois were organizing themselves. Not only making use of them for their ordinary business and speculating, but also to concoct their plots and their coups to crush their enemy—the struggling proletariat.

"500 tons coal State price Reply urgent 20,000 bushels rice arriving Will sell 3000 Tokyo stock N Y K down 20 points Secure me Kanegafuchi Spinning at lowest price Can you sell 300 at 2 Reply urgent Indications that Communist remnants entered your district Muster 15 detectives at XXX Station Search thoroughly XX *Maru* arriving Port to-morrow Communist aboard disguised as business man."

Then there are the telephones linking up with every police box, every country policeman's house, every police station, all the political police offices, every gendarmerie.

The spy walking in the streets. He has his eagle eye fixed for any member of the proletariat who is wanted. In a passing taxi is a suspicious-looking figure; it tallies with the description; straightway the spy flies to the nearest police box and calls up headquarters. Then in every other box and every station the bells go ting-a-ling-ling.

"Man in black inverness with brown felt hat and horn-rimmed glasses. Check up with picture of the Communist —— on your files and arrest."

Within the short space of three minutes all over Tokyo a drag-net is cast. So efficient is the police telephone system for the bourgeois class.

IV

Soroku Tamano kept on running through the snowy night. He went from one end of the little town to the other, knocking up his mates.

"Emergency muster. All the lines are out of order."

He'd struck it bad to have to go routing them out in weather like this. Like him, they all were sleepy. "What the hell does a snowstorm want to come for?" came grumbling voices from inside the houses.

"It's no use blaming me," Soroku would grumble. "They all seem to look on me as some sort of tormentor. It's a damned rotten job I've got, and I don't like it. Boys, don't hate me, hate someone else. It's not my fault." He felt like blubbing. Pulling a funny face he went round from house to house.

In less than an hour eight linesmen, including himself, ten skilled men and seven casuals had collected at the post office.

"Are you all here? All right, then we'll get to it," said the young electrician in charge.

"I'll ask two linesmen, Kimura and Yamagiwa, to stick it out on the platform of the test pole till the morning. Get there as quick as you can."

Some time after the two had gone out the telephone started to ring. It was a report from them. The electrician put the receiver to his ear.

"Tokyo No. 6 line, the lower wire. Yokohama No. 12 line, the upper wire. No. 1, what about M 1? I see. All right, then——"

He went back to where the rest of the men stood awaiting orders, and divided them up into groups to go out and attend to the trouble. He remained there in constant communication with the men on the test pole, waiting for the results of the repair work. Until all the lines were repaired he had to stay there, but at least it was indoors. A charcoal fire burned cheerfully.

V

Soroku, in charge of two skilled men and three cauuals, was assigned the lower part of the M 1 Tokyo No. 6 telephone line. From the test pole, the wire going towards Tokyo was called the upper and the one in the opposite direction the lower. They knew it was the lower part that was damaged from the report of the men up the pole.

Shining their gas lamp along the road they trudged through the outskirts of the town, out north along the highway. Twenty-five miles ahead lay the next post office. There, too, there'd be an emergency muster, for sure, and a squad might be sent out in their direction. In that case the two squads would meet. But, if not, Soroku's squad might have to walk the whole twenty-five miles.

The storm showed no signs of abating. It was 3.30 a.m., still some time to dawn. You couldn't keep your eyes open in that gale. Snow flashes danced in the light of the gas lamp.

"It's cold. Damned cold."

You couldn't work in overcoats, so under their

ordinary coats they wore old jerseys. Some didn't even have that. Before they knew it the snow soaked in through their coats, through their shirts until they were wet to the skin.

"It's cold. Damned cold."

They forced themselves to pass casual remarks from time to time, as if it was a jolly lark. Otherwise they'd feel too wretched altogether. It was pitch dark, but they couldn't walk carefully; they had to shine the light on the wires above and then stagger along with their necks craned up to discover where the break was. It might be anywhere between here and the next twenty miles.

Their outfit consisted of a ladder, a bamboo pole, a portable set, and copper binding wire to join the wire on to the porcelain insulator. On the end of the pole was a nail bent like a hook. They hitched this on to the wire and it scraped off the snow as they walked.

In weather like this there were all kinds of accidents. Crossed wires; earth leakage; snapped wires. When two wires got into contact through the wind—that was crossed wires. When the pole got blown down, you had not only crossed wires but a break as well. When the snow collected too heavily on the wires, the current leaked to the ground and that was earth leakage.

. . . . .

Soroku and his gang had been walking for two hours. The poles seemed to stretch for ever along the highroad. It was dawn. The wind had died down and the snow was subsiding. White fields,

white trees, white hills—the ordinary scenery of a country road.

"I could do with a bite," yawned Kayama, one of the navvies.

"What about some noodles," suggested Soroku. They had entered a little village that looked like an old post-town. They could get noodles at least here, he thought.

"Don't be silly. D'ye think anything's open at this hour of the morning?" answered the skilled worker, Torida.

Under the fire look-out was a stone statue of the children's god, Jizo. Round the corner was a little bridge with grass growing on it.

The snow had stopped completely.

There was a noodles-shop and an eating-house. Squeezed in between a doubtful-looking "cafe" and a cake shop was a farmer's thatched cottage. The door was still bolted and the fire seemed to have been just lighted.

In the eastern sky appeared a blue patch.

They were all tired out with walking. Since they'd been called up they'd worked on without anything to eat. Their bodies were almost frozen where the snow had worked its way in, but now a stickly sweat covered them.

How much further would they have to go?

Endlessly those wires, those cursed wires, would go on stretching to the gates of hell.

How much further was he going to walk them?

On they went, with heavy eyelids and running noses.

The front door of a little restaurant by the road-

side opened, and a girl in a nightdress poked out her hand. The powder had come off her face in patches and she wore a stupid expression.

"Hello, sweetie," one of the men shouted. "Did you have a good time last night?"

The others all cackled, but the girl just stared at their sweaty grimed figures. Sinking back into listlessness again, they tried no more sallies.

Leaving the village behind them they were again on a monotonous road lined with paddy fields. The ladder and the pole had become the worst burden to them. Their feet were not very tired; it was in the upper part of their bodies that they felt it. How much further, O Lord?

"I hope we find the trouble soon!"

"So do I. It's as bad as hunting for yer girl."

"For your enemy, more like."

"Now the snow's all gone, maybe it's mended itself. Don't you reckon all the snow ahead will soon be melted?" said another, although he knew such hopes were vain.

"And so you mean to say we may as well turn back?"

"No such luck." They all gave a joyless laugh as they glanced in Soroku's direction.

"It's no good talking like that. Suppose when we got there they found it wasn't all right, there'd be hell to pay." Soroku gave the warning rather unwillingly, with his head down.

"There's nothing I'd enjoy more than a good row and then to be fired. Who wants to stick at a job like this all his life?"

As one of the skilled workers said this, Soroku

raised his face and glanced at him. His name was Machida, and he was tall with a thin yellowish face which he seldom shaved. He was well known for his grumbling.

"Don't you like this job?" asked Soroku.

"Hell, is there anything to like about it?"

"But you've taken all the trouble of learning the work, haven't you?"

"Are you suggesting that I try and raise myself like you've done, eh?"

"Don't be funny," countered Soroku.

When an ordinary navvy passed into the skilled class he automatically became a candidate for the still higher class of linesmen. Did Machida mean it didn't count anything to become a linesman? He must be kidding. Wasn't the standard of living of the skilled worker far above that of the casual navvy? And at this stage for Machida to be saying he didn't like the job—what else could he do, anyhow? There was nothing for him except to become a free labourer and get far less wages and be sweated far worse one-half of his time and out of a job the other.

Linesman Soroku Tamano had himself been picked out from the ranks of the skilled workers. Three years ago. His first wage was 1.10 a day. The second year it rose to 1.14. That meant a rise of four sen a day. Four sen a day rise was an honour. Last year it was only 2 sen. So now he was getting 1.16 a day. Some men who'd been working as linesmen for ten or twenty years were getting as much as 2.20 or 2.30 a day. They'd turned their backs on the ordinary workers.

The morning sun shone on the snowy fields. Their road started to ascend. It was a pass. Both sides were thickly wooded. The sun's rays were more gentle and there was the sound of flapping wings somewhere. As they emerged from the wood the road suddenly became very steep.

Then at the summit it swerved round to the right. One of the navvies, who had reached the top, was just going round the bend when he gave a shout.

"We're in for it."

"Why?" asked the panting Soroku from below.

"This chap's going to be a devil."

Soroku hastened to the spot from where the voice came and there he saw a big pole lying prone across the snow.

"That's the chap that's given us all this trouble." The wires had snapped.

They all stood there stock still, eyeing it with disgust. It would be a big job to set it up again and mend the wires. Their bellies were empty. Their bodies were exhausted.

"Hey, there, let's make a start," shouted Soroku, with a forced display of spirit.

VI

At the bottom of the other side of the pass was a pond. As each got near it he flopped down on the snow or else stretched himself out on a stack of timber that was there.

"Just how much pay do you get?" asked Machida, getting a light from Soroku.

"Me? 1.14 a day."

"And some travelling allowance as well?"

"With that it comes to about 2.30 a day. So I'm mighty thankful for days like this."

"You mean because going like this, on and on with nothing to eat or drink, you can save all that, eh?"

"Now you're being funny again," said Soroku, laughing.

"But don't you reckon that when they drive you like this, you deserve at least 2.30 extra? I've heard that those damned engineers, who don't do a stroke, get travelling allowances of 10 or 20 yen a day. The more I think of it the more I get fed up of this whole damned world."

"You're right," said Soroku, lowering his voice. "All of us fellows are treated rotten, and of course we want to do something about it, and some of the fellows talk about forming some sort of a union. But I think you've got to turn it over a lot before deciding—because if you go and get fired for it where will you find another job? In Tokyo the unemployed are already at one another's throats for jobs."

"But if it wasn't for us, I'd like to know who'd mend the breakdowns?"

"But for all that we only get a rise of two sen or three sen or, in rare cases, four sen a day each year. They sure make fools of us." As Soroku spoke he remembered something else. "The other day at the Cultural Club some guy was spouting away about that linesmen were of great national importance and that they had some grand

something or other. Just trying to butter us up, the bastards."

"Flattery's cheap, anyway,"

"That's their game. When an electrician does outdoor work, he gets another special allowance proportionate to the distance he travels; so many sen a mile. How about us? Whether we travel twenty miles or forty miles, we don't get a sen more. If we linesmen are so important to the state, why do we only get a rise of two sen a day each year? Why don't they give us that allowance for distance?"

They heard a faint snoring. Two men on the timber stack were lying fast asleep.

"Here, there," shouted Soroku at these two sleeping figures, his discontent having no other outlet. "Here, get up, you'll catch cold. Let's be starting."

His watch said 11.50. A white glare came from the snow. They had been walking for eight hours on end; their start in the snowstorm last night seemed as far off as a dream.

"Let's go."

"Go? How much further?"

VII

The Communications Departments Cultural Club had organized a refresher course in a wing of one of the famous temples in the Shiba district of Tokyo. Fifty linesmen, thirty skilled workers and twenty electricians, engineers and foremen had been got

together. Linesman Tokimoto was among the number.

The course lasted for three days. During that period the members slept in the temple. All day they were drilled or set to cleaning. In the evenings they listened to lectures.

Such was the "culture" given to these conscripted government employees.

"In the event of war the linesman's responsibility is very great," the lecturer would say. "In war-time all manner of telegrams, code ones and other vital ones are passing all the time over the wires. On receipt of messages, forces are moved, stratagems planned, orders carried out. They hold sway over the destiny of our nation. You will therefore understand that you who toil so hard to keep the wires in proper order, you men who doctor the telegraph and telephone, so to speak, carry the fate of the nation on your shoulders. Once you have awakened to this mission of yours you will never become poisoned by imported, foreign ideas which have been spreading lately, and you will never let yourselves be led into doing anything rash."

War is coming, the lecturers warned them. In such a vital service it was essential that the workers be drilled into obedience. To hide the imminence of war by mouthing pacifist phrases would be fatal. Here they made no bones about their preparations for war. They were terrified lest when war came the linesmen lined up with the working-class. So terrified were they lest the proletariat should take possession of that vast

network, that vast spider's web, the telephone and telegraph systems.

Here the capitalist class exerted all the strength of its will to emasculate the proletariat.

The last night of the course arrived. There was a lecture. The chairman introduced the speaker.

" This gentleman is a worker like you. This evening he has been persuaded to make a confession before all of you. I have no doubt that a worker's own story, told by himself, will contain much to edify us all and I hope that you will give the gentleman your closest attention."

Clapping. The man arose. A thin harsh-faced man dressed in a suit of ready-made foreign clothes. A low hound, thought Tokimoto.

" Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen," in a practised voice quite out of keeping with his somewhat vulgar appearance, he began to speak. " Without concealing anything, though I am ashamed, I confess to you here that until last year I was an active member of the Japanese Communist Party."

The audience, who until them had discounted him because of his appearance, at the words, " Japanese Communist Party " suddenly became tense, as if a blow had been struck. Here was a fellow worth listening to, a member of—but then, if so, why all this modesty about " being ashamed," and then, in the second place, why did he announce that he was a member ?

They gave a cautious glance at the faces of the engineers, but these were quite composed, without any trace of surprise.

" Gentlemen, I tell you I worked for the Com-

munist Party, never sparing my strength, even risking my life.."

Wait, that sounds a bit fishy, thought Tokimoto, why does he say "for the Communist Party," why doesn't he say for the working class? The speaker raised his voice a pitch higher.

"But the leaders of the Communist Party, while we were fighting grimly, what were they doing? They were in the Red Light district and in geisha houses squandering the money they'd got from Russia on debauchery." His tone was one of outraged indignation. With a start, Tokimoto realized that it was all a put-up game. The fellow was clearly just a puppet of the ruling class. Tokimoto strained his ears to catch what he'd come out with next.

"Therefore I became thoroughly fed up with Communism. The principles seem sound enough, but those who try to follow them out in the end only become the dupes of the leaders. Gentlemen, I confess my mistakes and repent of them. If you follow in my footsteps, you'll get the same bad deal from those leaders. And now I am going to give you testimony to let you see with your own eyes how deeply I regret my past. I am not disloyal. I swear before you all that I am an obedient subject of His Majesty, the Emperor. Here is proof of it, here." He fished out something from his pocket. A knife. Then he laid his left hand on the table, with the knife flourished in the air, ready to be lowered, he paused some moments. He glanced over at the engineers' seats. They were sitting back is if witnessing a show. The lecturer

stretched out the fingers of the hand on the table. Steadily he lowered the knife until it was pressing on his little finger. "Um!" he shouted. Blood spurted out. The spectators rose from their seats as one man.

The finger had rolled over on the table. The lecturer swooned face downwards on the blood-stained table.

Tokimoto blanched and made his way outside. The conversation that had leaked to his ears on that platform of the test pole, four or five days ago —now how vividly had that deal in fingers been enacted before his eyes.

He could not keep his body from trembling with the excitement and indignation.

THE MISLEADER GOES ABROAD

by

SANJI KISHI

THE MISLEADER GOES ABROAD

(A rough sketch for a motion picture story)

I

THE black silhouette of a large frame fills up the whole screen. It has on a top hat and holds a gavel in its left hand. Judging by the silk hat, we may suppose it wears a swallow-tail, with maybe a gold watch-chain dangling from the waistcoat.

"My name is Akaji Akai, the president of the Imperial Japanese Federation of Labour," it announces, flourishing the gavel in the air.

"Some people call me the Babe Ruth of traitors. Why can't people say straight out what they mean? To begin at the beginning—as to why twenty years ago I put all my weight into the labour movement—it was through His Excellency, Viscount Shibugaki, from whom I have received untold favours. The Viscount is, as befits one who built up our banking system and laid the economic foundations of our nation, a great man with extraordinary foresight with regard to the trend of the times."

The figure assumes the pose of an orator.

"This gentleman, twenty years ago, what does he say to me, then a promising young fellow? 'Akai, my lad,' he says, 'with the Russian Japanese war our country enters a new phase. I expect to

see our national industries race ahead from now. But this thriving of industry, as we see in Europe and America, gives birth to antagonism between capitalists and workers. This antagonism must be eliminated; therefore we capitalists must from now on take the initiative, and direct this growing labour movement, and lead it into such channels that the workers do not become poisoned with radical ideas, nor become hostile to the capitalist class. That is a great public duty, and it's waiting for you. You must make that your object, and set to it with your whole heart . . .'"

The figure at this point thumps on the table.

"I followed the lead of Viscount Shibugaki and for the sake of this land of our Emperor, for the sake of the capitalist class, I organized the labour movement. Never did I work for the workers, but for our Empire and for my own personal success and advancement I have worn myself to the bone. . . . Had I become infected with Communism, and sought the good of the workers, then would I be neglecting my mission, then would I be guilty of treachery, and I could not protest were I called a misleader. But what are the facts? Never during all these twenty years have I done a single thing that could possibly be interpreted as betraying the capitalist class."

The figure adopts an heroic pose.

"As a reward for these services the International Labour Bureau has been pleased to forward me this lucky hammer. Now my cherished ambition is to be a Cabinet Minister."

At this point a second silhouette, as thin as

a rake, appears, and bowing and scraping before the first, says something to it.

"Oh, is that so? Certainly, certainly, I'll go there immediately," and the first figure puts its hammer away somewhere.

"Well, gentlemen, I am extremely busy. The gentleman who came just now is a Doctor of Law, and Professor at the Imperial University, Dr. Yorizo Hijukake. He came with the request that I give an address on the labour movement to the students of the Economic Department, but, to confess the truth, I don't care for these students. You can't fool them as easily as you can the workers. However, I'll have to think of something to say."

[*Exit.*

II

About 1,000 students are crammed into a big lecture hall. Akaji Akai, with his great hog's body, is escorted into the hall by Dr. Hijukake.

After being introduced by the doctor, Akai takes the platform. "Ahem, Ahem. To-day I wish to address you on the subject of 'The Class Struggle, or Harmony between Labour and Capital.'"

With this, by way of preface, he sticks out his great paunch and, fingering his gold watch-chain, beams on his audience.

"Let us first consider the world class struggle. In Germany they call it Klassenkampf. This word was coined by Marx, and the argument is that there is no other method than a struggle between the two classes to solve the problem of Capital and Labour. And in that struggle you are urged to

sacrifice everything. Communism, which seems at first sight to protect the interests of the workers, really only sacrifices them, and its principles urge you to concentrate wholly and solely on the class struggle."

"Shallow, shallow."

"Who says 'shallow'? The heckler who says that is himself shallow. But, on the other hand, what is the harmony between Capital and Labour? It is made up of two elements which bring about the growth of industry, that is to say, it works to bring about a rapprochement between workers and capitalists, and it takes as its chief aim the increasing welfare of both."

"I have a question." One student stands up and starts to speak. "In regard to the recent 30 per cent. wage-cut for 3000 workers belonging to your union in the Kanto Muslin Company, there is a rumour that you received 200,000 yen from the company to make the strike end, as it did, in disaster for the workers. I'd like to ask, is that true or not? If it is true, then isn't it at variance with what you said just now?"

"Now, please be quiet. Questions will be taken all together at the end. Sit down, please. Any of the Left-Wing element among you who attempt to interrupt my lecture will be chucked out, so I give you fair warning."

Akai glares at the questioner and does not go on until he has seen him safely seated again.

"As an analogy we have this," and from his right pocket he produces a cream puff. "This is a cream puff we had in the reception room. It

illustrates well the principle of harmony between capital and labour. It is chockful of cream; it's good to taste, and it's satisfying."

The students guffaw.

Akai proceeds to take a banana skin from his left pocket.

"The class struggle is just like this, a banana skin, useless. You can't eat it; it contains no nourishment; it's good for nothing."

He throws it on the floor. By this time the students are beginning to leave. Five or six of them, rising, shout at him, "We can't stick any rot about cream puff or banana skin!"

The hall is filled with roars of laughter. One student shouts out, "Give us something more scientific!"

Akai flares up. "I'll give you more than you bargain for. You prodigals! Sponging on your parents! You don't know anything about society, real society, except lodging-houses and cafes, and then as soon as someone starts to address you, you chip in with 'scientific' or something. I'm no scholar; I'm a man of action."

"You're a labour fakir," shouts someone.

"Fool! If you're so keen on something scientific, and won't bother to listen to me, you can read a little book here that'll just suit you, crammed full of learning. I'll leave it here and you can read it afterwards. This one book will tell you everything under the sun."

He takes a little book from his pocket, slams it down on the table and starts to make an angry exit. But as he steps down from the platform, his heel

slips on the banana skin he has just thrown away and his big fat porky body goes down with a flop.

The students all close in on him. In the middle the lean Dr. Hijukake is wildly trying to control them and pull up Akai by the arm at the same time. But he can't move him. Akai at last gets up by himself and beats a hasty retreat through the door. The doctor follows.

One wag has somehow managed to rescue the fateful banana skin and, holding it up between his fingers, ascends the platform and begins to address the students surging round him.

" Gentlemen, the class struggle is a banana skin. Useless, you can't eat it, it contains no nourishment, it's good for nothing. But, gentlemen, this one thing, this skin, this class struggle has shown its great potentiality : it can trip up fakirs ! "

" Hear, hear," the students clap and shout. But the student who has just spoken picks up the red book left by Akai, looks at it, and with a dumbfounded expression holds it up for them all to see. On the cover are printed the following words :

" REVISED RAILWAY TIME TABLE. Price 50 sen."

III

Akaji Akai arrives at the city of Hakata in the Fukuoka district. At the station entrance the district governor and the chief of police, in full regalia, have turned out to receive him. Besides them there is a fairly large gathering, made up of the local members of parliament, business men and

society ladies, while in the background stand some forty or fifty police. About a dozen workers, come to welcome their leader, only to be shoved back by the police for their pains.

"Now stand back there, you, stand back!"

Akai, radiant and charming, shakes hands with everybody, beginning with the governor and chief of police and ending with the lesser lights. Then, accompanied by the first two, he rides in the official automobile and amidst scenes of rejoicing arrives at the district office.

A dark-skinned man comes and bows before the impressive figure of Akai, now settled comfortably in the governor's secretariat. The governor introduces him.

"This is the head of the political police of this district, Kurozo Kuroi."

"I'm glad to meet you."

"Mr. Akai has come to study the conditions of the miners in this district. I hope you will help him."

"I shall you my best, your lordship."

He makes a grave bow.

IV

Three figures enter the pit-head and go as far as the entrance to the shaft. The first and the last wear straw sandals. These are detectives attached to the mining area. Akai, in the middle, is betrayed by his girth. As if descending a well the detective in front catches hold of the ladder and begins to go down. Next, slowly and fearfully, Akai follows.

When he has gone down two or three rungs, he cranes up and shouts to the second detective, "Look here, is this ladder safe?"

"Yes, sir, it's perfectly safe. Please hurry up."

Akai lumbers down, but, somehow or other, about half-way his great body gets stuck and he can't move an inch either way. As the first detective, who carries the lamp, has already reached the bottom, it is quite dark and the second detective unwittingly kicks Akai on the head.

"Ow! You've kicked me."

"Oh, are you there?"

"I can't go any further."

"Why?"

"Because of my corpulence. I'm stuck in this hole."

"Lor, that's a nice how-d'ye-do. Hey there, Slick, the Professor's got stuck. Climb up and give a haul at his legs."

Akai groans and wriggles.

"Can't you move at all, Professor?" asks the voice above.

"Not an inch. What shall I do?"

"I'll give a little pull," says Detective Slick, who has climbed up again, as he pulls at Akai's feet. But his efforts are fruitless, so he shouts up at his companion, "Hey there, Slim, give him a push."

"That ain't no use. I can only push with my boot and I couldn't go jamming that down on the Professor's cranium."

"But what else in the hell can we do if he won't

budge ? I'll pull him by the legs while you tramp on his head."

This suggestion upsets Akai.

" Here, there, cut out the rough stuff." And he wriggles more desperately than ever.

" Rough stuff be damned. If you're going to stay on dangling there, the thousands of miners working down below wont't be able to get to the surface and will be starved to death. But what's worrying me more than them is, how I'm going to get out myself ? "

" Ow. Don't pull my legs like that. It's dangerous. And now you're tramping on my head with your great clodhoppers."

" I can't help that. It's your own fault for having such a great fat carcase that gets stuck in holes. You're a blasted nuisance, that's what you are."

" What ! Do you dare to insult my person ? All right. Just wait until I get out and I'll report you straight to your superior and you'll be dismissed."

" Oh you, you damned old impostor. You're growing fat on the workers, getting yourself made an M.P. and taking bribes from everybody. Buying land and putting up houses, and I guess you've got a nice little pile of stocks and shares hoarded up somewhere. I know all about you, you bloody rogue ! "

" That hurts, that hurts, I tell you. Stop kicking my head like that."

" A little bit of booting won't do any harm to your head. It's got nothing inside, anyhow."

"Your rudeness is insufferable. I am Akaji Akai, who people have marked as the coming Premier in the Labour Government. Me, a national figure chosen as the workers' representative to go to Geneva. You dare tramp on my head!"

"Oh, now he's started blubbing. That's enough of that. Either move up or move down, will ye?" and the bottom detective stretches up his arm and grabs Akai.

"Ow, wow, wow, wow! What are you doing, you——?" His body begins to move. Down, down they slither, faster and faster; this time Akai pressing on the head of the detective below, and at last they reach the bottom with a bump.

V

Having arrived there the two come to grips.

"Now, look here, you're supposed to be one of us, aren't you? Then what the hell do you mean?"

"I'm sorry, sir, I only wanted to rescue you, Professor. You'd have died if you'd stayed jammed in there much longer. It was the most painful duty that has ever fallen to me to lay hands on——"

"Professor, I meant no harm, believe me. I only tramped on your head in order to save your life," interrupts the second detective, who has arrived by now.

"I don't want to hear any more. It has become perilous for me to continue any further down into the depths of the mine with dangerous, unreliable

fellows like you for guides. It only needs the miners to get on to me now and shove me into that black abyss for me to be a dead man. No, thank you, I'm going back to where I came from."

With this he begins climbing up the ladder again.

"Oh, Professor."

"Oh, Professor, don't get so angry," cry the two detectives as they follow him up the ladder.

VI

Akaji Akai, having returned to Tokyo, is standing on the platform at the Industrial Club, resplendent in swallow-tail and gold chain, delivering an eloquent address before a meeting of the Association for the Harmony between Capital and Labour, held to discuss the labour problem.

The audience includes Viscount Shibugaki, members of the House of Peers, directors, business men, priests, doctors and professors, one and all members of the bourgeois class.

"—— guided by two detectives I descended I can't tell you how many hundreds of feet into the mine and then literally crawled along in the pitch blackness until I approached the workings. There I found men and women miners stripped to the skin, holding their lamps in one hand and silently digging away at the coal. I was moved to the depths of my heart."

He paused to take a glass of water.

The audience listen to his words with great interest.

VII

An hour after the lecture a banquet is given by the association, with the lecturer as the guest of honour.

One member of the House of Peers arises and, amidst applause, begins to speak.

"Ahem. The purpose of our gathering here this evening on this auspicious occasion is two-fold. First, we wish to bid farewell to our good friend, Mr. Akai, who soon will set out on a long journey to Geneva, where he is to attend the Labour Conference. At this present juncture, when we can find no other way out of this period of panic except rationalization, and when it becomes necessary for us to bring firm pressure to bear even on our workers, Mr. Akai has come forward to help us. Our second purpose is to listen to an extremely instructive address from Mr. Akai himself on the labour question, which we may take as a kind of farewell message. A first-hand account of how, of his own desire, he descended into the black coal mine and observed minutely the conditions and hardships of the miners is of compelling interest. His courage in doing so speaks of the extraordinary enthusiasm with which he attempts to solve the labour problem. I hope that Mr. Akai will display a like enthusiasm at Geneva."

This is greeted by gentle hand-clapping. Then Akai arises. Swelling out his great badger's belly, he smiles.

"Never before has such a great honour fallen to my unworthy self as to have all you illustrious

gentlemen assemble to bid me farewell on the eve of my departure to Geneva, where I go as the employees' representative.

"Twenty years ago I joined the labour movement, not so much with a view to my personal advancement as in the hope of being able to make at least some little contribution to our country, to our country's industries. But in the early days of the movement there were some capitalists who failed to appreciate my true motives, and I met with all kinds of rebuffs. Then, thinking of my country's industrial future, I would at times turn my face to heaven and fight back my tears.

"When I reach Geneva I am determined to fight all attempts to handicap the development of our national industries, and to emphasize the peculiar position those industries hold.

"I have friends at Geneva. We will arrange things. With a little tact we can settle a victory for the workers. At the same time the question of the Eight-Hour Day, or the Minimum Wage or the Right of Collective Bargaining—all can be arranged so as to give you no cause for alarm. You must trust me.

"Now I would like to propose a toast."

He raises his glass and all stand up and give ringing cheers.

"Viscount Shibugaki, Banzai!"

"The Imperial Industrial Club, Banzai!"

"Mr. Akaji Akai, Banzai!"

VIII

The wharf at Yokohama.

The scene is the departure of a big European liner. Akai, dressed up as usual and accompanied by his suite, comes to the railing of the first-class deck and, wreathed in smiles, grabs the coloured streamers that are thrown up from the wharf. His left arm embraces two bouquets of flowers.

Boom. Boom. Boom.

A steward beating a gong runs past Akai and, glancing at his fat behind, gives a snigger.

As the gong sounds the people seeing off friends begin to leave the ship.

On the wharf are dotted small groups of workers belonging to the Japan Federation of Labour, with their leaders. They are all waving little Rising Sun flags, bidding farewell to their President. Near by swarm dozens of policemen.

At the far end a couple of sailors are leaning against the railing of the second-class deck, talking.

"Hell, can you beat that? Take a look at all these guys wavin' their little flags and sayin' bye-bye to their President. It's enough to give you the belly-ache when you think they're all workers like us."

"I'll say it is. They're a lot of saps, aren't they? If they just knew how their precious representative and his party live when they're on this ship they'd soon get fed up with him."

"It just shows you how backward the labour movement is in Japan."

"Yes, but things are moving. I reckon the time's coming mighty soon when their eyes will be opened."

"I wouldn't be surprised if you're not right. F'rinstance——"

He puts his mouth close to the other's ear and whispers something. The other's eyes widen with surprise. "Honest?" he asks.

"Honest." The two stop talking as some passengers pass behind them.

Above their heads flies an aeroplane, firing a salute.

"What, d'ye mean to tell me the impostor's even got an aeroplane to see him off?"

The two look up.

IX

"Phew, phew," a short deep whistle blows.

"Banzai!"

"Banzai for our leader!"

"Banzai for the Imperial Federation of Labour!"

All the workers on shore wave their flags.

The steamer, towed by a little tug, starts gradually to move away from the stone pier. Coloured streamers flutter in the breeze.

Akaji Akai, still leaning over the railings, surveys the surging crowd of workers and the police cordon. When the whistle blows for the third time he takes off his silk hat and waves it aloft.

"Banzai for the Japanese Empire!"

The liner, now a tiny speck, can be seen leaving a trail of smoke behind it. Night is approaching, bringing with it a lonely, deserted feeling.

The scene begins to fade into darkness and then, like a phantom, the following words appear:

THUS THE MISLEADER WENT TO GENEVA.
GENEVA, THE HOME OF
THE MISLEADERS OF ALL NATIONS.

These in turn disappear, to be followed by a huge waving in the breeze.

In the centre of the flag can be seen a sickle and hammer intertwined.

The flag gradually rends, and behind it a moving throng of people, numerous as the stars, small as peas, are revealed. From here and there among them arise white puffs of smoke.

At this, from somewhere, must come the strains of the "International."

Then, as the crowd fades out, two black brawny hands stretch right across the screen and meet in in a firm handclasp.

There is music to celebrate this union and then appear the words, "THE END."

THE EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

by

NAOSHI TOKUNAGA

THE EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

I

RUMBLE, rumble, rumble!

A truck which had taken copy to the rotary presses came bounding on its own momentum along the passageway of the K. Printing Works. The paved track was slippery and the truck was empty.

The boy in charge of the truck noticed a group of girl workers about twenty yards ahead and suddenly brightened up.

"Let's have a shot at teasing the girls."

Rumble, rumble, rumble!

The girls, who had left off sorting out used type, were skipping with a rope, singing the while. They had left their galley lying beside the track and were completely absorbed in the game. As the rope was turned faster and faster, the puffing girls bobbed lightly up and down.

"Oow! Look out!"

The truck came charging at them. The front girl, who was turning one end of the rope with her back to the truck, suddenly realized the situation and gave one piercing shriek. Holding on to the rope, she ran for dear life. The bodies and legs and red petticoats of the others got entangled.

"A—a—ah!"

Two girls tripped over the rails in their haste and fell.

"Oh, you bad boy!"

But, just as he had gauged it, the truck pulled up withing a hair's breadth of them.

The girls picked themselves up and began stammering something, but the boy cut them short.

"You oughta look out, you fools," he thundered, but there was a twinkle in his eyes; the girls, who resented being put in the wrong, flushed with anger.

"What a dirty trick to play, you red-nosed——"

To be called "red-nose" was a sore point with the boy, and the girl who said it knew this very well. She had her hair done in Japanese style, and wore the red badge of a member of the works council.

"Just look there, you've made it all bleed." One plump dumpling hauled herself up and, pulling up her apron and kimono, stuck out her leg and displayed her scraped knee to the boy.

"This fellow, he's always playing some trick like this."

"You red-nosed country lout!"

The girls, brave because of their numbers, surrounded the boy.

"You dog-gone——"

One big, round-eyed girl stole round to the back and gave the boy a clout on the head with the end of the rope.

"Ow! Ow! That hurts!" He let out a loud yell and rubbed his head with his rough hands, but, realizing that he had gone a bit too far in his teasing, started grinning at them sheepishly.

"Say you're sorry."

"Go on, say it."

Hands shot out triumphantly and shook him by the shoulder. Again he let out a wild yell.

"Get away, get away! It's because people like you play round when you should be working that they go starting efficiency committees. Get away, I tell you."

There was a burst of merriment from the girls.

"Efficiency committee, ha, ha, ha!"

Taking a chance while they were laughing, the boy dashed away merrily with the truck. The next minute one girl excitedly pulled the sleeve of the one who wore the council badge. "Look, Kimi-chan, the boss is watching us from upstairs."

Sure enough, from a window directly above them, the bald-headed old boss, his face puffed up with anger like a melon after a shower, was glaring down at them.

"How would you like to begin some work?"

"Yes, we are——" and every girl knelt down at her work again.

The dumpling with the scraped knee turned to Kimi-chan and said: "It doesn't hurt to do a little go-slow when the dirty old boss treats us so rotten, and sends us out here to do the same old job every day. Listen Kimi-chan——"

"But, Kimi-chan, if the efficiency committee is really formed, we won't be able to take it easy like this, will we?" One girl with their hair waved in Western style bent over and asked.

But Kimi-chan was non-committal in her answer; she was thinking of her boy friend.

"There's no need to be so frightened. If the worst comes——"

"If the worst comes, we'll fight and get the union to back us up," said the dumpling, taking the words from her mouth. "You have nothing to lose but your chains!"

Kimi-chan tossed her head and began to sing and all the other girls joined in.

This was one of their ways of demonstrating against the boss.

. . . . . .

Along both sides of the passageway, on the door of every shop, dozens of red and yellow posters were posted.

"Support the only Proletarian Party." "Contribute to the Fund for a Rotary Press for the Workers' Daily," etc., etc.

The doors leading into the printing shops offered a really imposing spectacle. At the end of the passage, near the solid-looking rotary press shop, was one extra large poster with the slogan: "Prepare for the Attack of Capital."

. . . . . .

NOTICE

On ——th, in Shop No. 1 of the Foundry, there will be a meeting to form an Efficiency Committee. Members of the Works Council of every department will assemble there on that date after work.

GENERAL MANAGER.

Five or six operatives were hanging round the

notice-board outside the rotary press shop. There was still some time before their shift began.

"We workers——" One dark-skinned young fellow, wearing a sports shirt smeared with various coloured inks, jumped up on to a big roll of paper. Waving his arms excitedly, he began to speak. His name was Tora-Ko and he was practising making a speech.

But the other men sat around or stretched out unsympathetically on top of rolls, without even deigning to look round at him.

"We workers——"

He was a member of the works council and therefore was expected to say something at the efficiency committee meeting. The night before, at a meeting called by the union to discuss what measures they would take in regard to the efficiency committee, he had listened to the speech of Nagai, the head of the union executive.

"Well, what about us?" Some of the men, with their backs still turned, started to heckle him.

"We workers demand the right of managing the factory." These words came out with a rush, as, in the manner of his idolized revolutionary fighter, Shingo Magara, he brought his right arm down to his side with a bang, but he could not find the words to say next.

"But—but——"

The big words would not out. Compared with the men working in the foundry, the vocabulary of the men of his department was very small. He had understood the gist of what Nagai was saying quite well—that in their present condition,

even if they gained control of the factory, it would be no use to them; the working class was far inferior in administrative ability; therefore they must fight through the works council or the efficiency committee. All this he understood, but to express it!

"But, even if——"

Tora-Ko, his hand raised in the air, stood here dumb and confused.

"That's the stuff; go it, delegate!" One old man squatting there gave him a little encouragement.

"Even if they gave us the factory, it's no use to us!" Tora-Ko closed his eyes and with a mighty effort spat out the words.

"Hold on a bit, youngster—who's likely to give it to us?" chipped in one man lying stretched near his feet. Tora-Ko was very put out, but the others gave big guffaws of laughter.

"Tora-Ko, just a minute!" A diminutive little fellow in overalls appeared. At first glance he looked like a small boy ready for any mischief, but if you looked closer you would see he might be about thirty.

"Come down here a minute."

Tora-Ko lost his temper, but the others pulled him down by the sleeve. The little man was the factory organizer for their union.

"I want to talk to you," he said, and, going off with him outside the shops, he stood on his tip-toes and whispered into Tora-Ko's ear. When he had finished Tora-Ko asked, "What do you mean by a picketing squad?"

"Against those Right-Wing crowd I mentioned just now."

The organizer looked round carefully on all sides and then added, "Fellows like Toyama . . . to keep an eye on their movements . . ."

"Toyama?"

"Yes, I'm telling you. In the past he was one of our best leaders, but lately he's gone to the devil." His voice became more excited as he went on. "Now is a mighty dangerous time, d'you get me? We must not get into our head the idea that it's enough to belong to the union. The company feels the financial depression and is like a mad dog. They're counting on two or three of the Right Wingers at this efficiency committee meeting, and if things go as they plan they're hoping to make a split among us. So you see, at a dangerous time like this Toyama *may* turn against us." Tora-Ko listened in silence.

"So you're to let Nagai at headquarters know within five hours how many of that element there are in your department. D'you understand? The efficiency committee is going to break down for certain."

"And then we get ready for a strike?"

"Yes! The company's plan of an efficiency committee was made when they knew we were already determined on a strike."

Revolutionary songs, mixed with the whirring sound of the machines, floated to them.

Tora-Ko answered in a roar:

"All right! Let them try it!"

II

The bell to start work rang through the clear air of the late autumn morning.

Two thousand workers, all in high spirits, streamed in through the north and south gates. In these works you would not find any trace of guards standing round the gates.

Instead, almost every morning, someone from the union was giving out red or yellow leaflets.

"Here, don't you want to have a look at this leaflet?"

On being challenged, one man who was hurrying by, stopped and turned round.

"Here you are."

The leaflet made clear the union's attitude to the efficiency committee.

"We must not lower efficiency and thus give the company an excuse to begin counter attacks. Within certain limits, we must support the company's proposal to establish an efficiency committee. But we must watch carefully what lies behind the proposal."

The men slipped the leaflets into their pockets, and the girls stuffed them into their long kimono sleeves, as they crowded into the factory. The men all wore rather spruce-looking overalls, and a certain colour had come back into the girls' cheeks. They had gained something since the great strike of 1924.

They were all fully alive to their strength. Brought up for two years in the cradle of the Left-Wing unionism, as members of the S. Labour Union

which embraced 10,000 workers in the printing trades, they had been like a victorious army.

"Comrades, come rally!" Singing lustily, they pressed up to the time record. Their voices rose on a great wave as one after another they pushed their time-books into the big time-clock.

"And the last fight let us face." The belts of the engines started flapping and all twelve shops were instantly drowned in noise. In the lulls resounded the spirited voices of the workers.

. . . . .

In the president's room six officials were assembled; the heads of each department (accounts, business, works, and general affairs), the managing director and the vice-president.

Behind the great green armchair, reserved for the president, hung a "Graph of Production" like a holy Buddhist picture before an altar.

From the beginning of the year the red line representing production descended swiftly like a bird that has been shot, while the blue line of wages soared upwards like an aeroplane.

Of the six men the lean vice-president and the thick-set, florid, puffy-cheeked managing director stood out in vivid contrast. And this contrast was not only an external one, but bore a striking affinity to the actual situations of the two men at that time.

At noon the president was to arrive, and then the final plan would be decided on. That was the definite time limit allowed to Vice-President Arishima. His only salvation was to exert all his

influence on two or three of the Right-Wing element who would wholeheartedly support the efficiency committee.

"How would it be to call Toyama?" the managing director asked, turning to Arishima, who was resting his head on his hands, plunged deep in thought. "While we were making a profit the president was not likely to complain whether it was co-operation between capital and labour, or Communism or any god-damned thing, but now——" His spiteful eyes shot their gaze right at the vice-president's side face as he mumbled under his breath, "I'm sorry for *him*——"

Arishima was fingering one of the leaflets distributed that morning from the union, but it, too, offered faint hope. With sudden resolution he pressed the bell.

"Tell Toyama of Shop No. 2 of the foundry to come to the reception room downstairs."

The vice-president had completely lost all his self-confidence. His earthly paradise of co-operation between capital and labour, despite his desperate efforts, was crumbling. The prohibition of night work, the enactment of a minimum wage, the establishment of a factory council—all these, in so far as lay in his power, had been used as a manure, but the flowers of his paradise, contrary to his hopes, proved to have thorns and the plants shot up spears.

The way in front was dark; it would be impossible for him to occupy that chair after to-day. Now his last hope, the successful launching of the efficiency committee, was very faint unless the union veered over to the Right.

"Toyama is here."

With a jerk he raised his head. Toyama! He felt a faint gleam of light. That was the man; if only he would speak up—if he and the Right Wingers could be got to work together, surely the efficiency committee would be a success.

He rose and went downstairs. . . . Toyama had been neglecting union work lately; it was said that he was not on very good terms with the Left-Wing crowd, he mused.

Sitting on the hard chair of the reception room was a man of twenty-six or twenty-seven, in overalls, with a beard and a muddy complexion.

"How do you do, Mr. Toyama?" The vice-president forced a smile and sat down beside him. "I wonder if we'll launch the efficiency committee successfully, what do you think?"

"I'm afraid I don't know," answered Toyama brusquely. He had the high cheek-bones and stiff beard of a Kushu man, but seemed to have lost all his vitality. At one time, as a leader of the 1924 strike, he had carried weight with all the workers; to-day his influence was gone. Younger men were taking his place.

"I don't suppose there's any chance of getting you to use your influence to make it a success?"

There was a note of entreaty in the vice-president's voice as he scanned the other's face. If this man were to wave the flag of revolt against the Left-Wing! To say the least, he was hopeful.

"I think you must appreciate that I have supported your demands, haven't I, now? And I may

presume that you realize the position I now find myself in?"

A girl brought in tea. Toyama was sitting there limply, as if thoroughly worn out.

"No one will listen to me any more." He was obviously fed up with everything and everybody. "But anyhow, in the first place, take the constitution of the committee—isn't it a fact that the workers haven't the faintest idea what it is to be?"

The vice-president was silent. Just as Toyama was ignorant of the union's real intentions, so the vice-president had no idea what tactics the company would resort to in the event of the original draft being scrapped. That was known only to the president and the managing-director.

The two men realized that they were both drifting away from the main streams of the coming struggle. There was about as much hope of a coalition between them as between the two halves of a broken oyster shell.

Arrest, fighting, poverty, imprisonment, flight, sickness—Toyama was weary of them all. He wanted to live in peace, working away at the trade he had mastered in his apprentice days. . . . He passed out into the corridor, a nervous wreck, pressing his aching head.

As he passed down the corridor several young fellows turned round and looked at him. He pretended not to notice them. He was going to pass by when one of them knocked against him.

"What d'ye think you're doing, Tomi-Ko?" Toyama turned and shouted at the smart-looking young fellow.

"Hey, Toyama, who've you been talking to?"

Another whose face he did not know, but who looked like a student and might be one of the union secretaries, edged over towards him.

"What?" Toyama glared at him angrily. "What business of yours is it who I've been talking to? Who are you, anyhow?"

It looked as if it would develop into a row. Out of the shops on both sides a crowd, ignorant of what it was all about, came streaming. "What's happened?" "Who wants a fight?"

"You're one of Nagai's hounds, are you? You son of a bitch."

III

With the efficiency committee within sight, a clean-up was started. About twenty of the Right-Wing element were raided in the upstairs of a noodle restaurant near the works and beaten up by the picketing squad.

The pickets, like a gale, swept through all the neighbourhood of the factory and every corner of the workers' tenements. The atmosphere there, even after nightfall, was menacing.

. . . . .

"When I ask you not to——" The girl clung on to the man's arm and would not let go.

"You fool!" The man tried to get free from her, but she proved unexpectedly strong. "Do they say they're going to beat me up? . . .

They've got a damned nerve, the picketing squad or whatever they are. Let go, I tell you."

The man wrenched away one of the girl's hands, but in doing so he slipped.

"Don't get so angry. Listen while I finish telling you. Why have you got so quick-tempered lately?"

They sat down on a bench. All was dark. They were in a little shrine on an open space at the back of the works. The girl was Kimi-chan and the man was her lover, Toyama.

"I suppose, then, if I was to go away from you for a bit, they'd say I'd taken to my heels and run . . . the damned fools."

"There's no need for you to get excited so quickly." Kimi-chan never lost her presence of mind.

"You fool, can anyone help getting excited over a thing like this? You damned fool." He tried again to rise, but she held him back.

"Don't talk so loud, dear. You'll have all the people coming to see what's the matter," said Kimi-chan. "I wouldn't be surprised if they don't guess that you're here and come after you, and then I'll be hit too."

"You?" His tone was full of sarcasm.

"Yes, me."

But still he did not believe her sincerity.

"Don't be silly! You? You're the trusted comrade of all those youngsters, aren't you? Don't make me laugh!"

Toyama vented his despair on her, and then at his own words felt a fierce loneliness.

"Oh, you're not fair." Kimi-chan seemed very much hurt, and would say no more. He's got so that he won't even trust his lover, she thought.

"Listen, dear——" after a little silence she said tenderly. "Listen dear, you're worn out."

"Me?"

"Yes, you're just worn out, and that's what makes you so quick-tempered," she said quietly, without looking at him.

"There's nothing worn out about me. Only the way those fellows go on makes me mad!"

"You're just worn out, being so poor and having to fight all the time on top of your work in the foundry."

They kept on contradicting each other, but little by little the man's excitement died down.

"I'm not worn out, I tell you, but they're all so infantile, and all so damned cocksure. What do they think they are doing, forming a picketing squad, and for no reason at all? Shadowing me, damn them!"

Toyama spat.

"That's true, looked at from your own point of view you've done nothing to deserve being shadowed, or beaten up, the pickets have no right to do that, but——"

"But what?"

"But, looked at from the standpoint of the movement as a whole, you can't say you're right. You must admit, as things are now, your present attitude is very suspicious."

He listened in silence.

"Everyone—even Nagai—gives you full credit

for your record as a leader since the 1924 strike, and as a fighter born and bred in the shops, and as a founder of the S. Union. For that very reason to-day, when you have given up every office, clashed with the union leaders over theory, and still go on as if nothing had happened, you can't call it unreasonable if comrades become suspicious."

"And so they reckon they're going to beat me up?"

"Don't take me up over every little thing, dear. But do you think in carrying out a general line of action they can go into everything? Even me, if they found me here with you like this now, they'd hit me too; of course they would whatever you think."

"In that case, why don't you hurry up and go away?"

"Oh, you're too——" she cast a hurt glance at him, but kept her self-control. "*I* trust you. I know you're not the sort that turns renegade—but——"

"But?"

"But you are still powerful. If you were to trump up a case in favour of the Right-Wing, and lead their forces, times being what they are, the union would be split in two."

"You overrate me. I haven't any strength left," he muttered with a bitter smile.

"You have, you have, dear. You're only very tired. Frankly, you want a rest. I know it. No matter what the others say, I understand you exactly. But——" Kimi-chan did not finish.

"More 'buts'? I suppose you're going to say

that people in the movement can't have any rests? Ha, ha——" His laugh was mirthless.

Kimi-chan lowered her head.

At last, Toyama, half yawning, started to speak. "'To go forward, or else to perish,' eh? That stuff——"

A chilly wind swept over the slightly raised shrine grounds. Kimi-chan felt at the end of her resources; she did not know how to convince him.

Suddenly he got up. "Righto, I'll meet Nagai."

"Oh, that's fine!" Happiness rang in her voice. "Throw off your moodiness—and remember, Nagai used to be one of your oldest friends."

Kimi-chan was rising to go with him, but in a voice still full of anger he detained her.

"I'm going by myself."

IV

Toyama entered the union headquarters.

Several young members were in the hall arguing. When they saw him, they rose to their feet suspiciously.

"Is Nagai in?" he asked the young men. Their faces seemed to ask him what he was doing there.

"He's upstairs," one answered coldly.

Without a word, Toyama tramped up the stairs. The second room along the corridor was the leaders'. He banged on the door roughly.

"Who is it?"

"It's Toyama. I want to see Nagai."

"Oh, Toyama?"

The door opened a little and a tall figure became visible. He wore a black kimono ; it was Nagai.

" I want to see you ; I've got something to talk to you about."

Nagai quietly tried to read the other's expression : " All right," he nodded and, coming out of the room, led the way into the next one. On the floor was a mimeograph, and printing paper was scattered all around.

The two men sat down facing each other on top of the scattered papers. Neither could make up his mind to speak. For the past six months they had been at daggers drawn. It must have been for seven or eight years that they were close friends, but then something had come between them.

The uncomfortable silence continued. The paper shutters behind them jolted as someone attempted to enter.

" You can't come in," Nagai raised his head and shouted. His pale, nervous face made him look older than Toyama. His consideration in not letting a third person in, even when the atmosphere was so strained, touched Toyama, but did not melt his stubbornness.

" What's this picketing squad ? " he asked in a hoarse voice, but the other was dumb.

" You'd planned to beat me up, had you ? " His voice was bursting with anger now, but still there was not even a flicker of a response on the other's pale face.

" Do you mean to say you'd set them on to your old mate ? " he asked, edging up towards Nagai.

Then Nagai, with elation in his voice, spoke.

"Yes, I would. As long as you're not in our camp, you're our enemy!"

"Say that again!" Toyama, clenching his fist, edged right up.

"I say, straight out, that as long as you keep your Right-Wing leanings you're no friend of mine."

Almost before he had finished speaking Toyama's fist had grazed Nagai's face. A thin trickle of blood from his nose flowed down his twitching lips, but Toyama was disappointed; Nagai was not to be roused. With a hand trembling slightly, he quietly reached out and picked up one of the sheets of paper lying near and wiped his bleeding nose with it. Toyama suddenly became abject. He was ashamed of the noise of his own agitated breathing. He started to get up.

"Wait," Nagai stopped him. "You're just like a moth trying to kill yourself, aren't you?" Nagai was incredibly calm; there was even a smile on his face.

"You're now struggling on the verge of going to pieces, aren't you, Toyama?" The straight-flung words hit home, but Toyama remained obstinate.

"You used to be one of our best leaders. Who was it, I'd like to know, who led me, the happy-go-lucky unmanageable chap that I was, to where I am to-day?"

This dragging up the past was unpleasant for Toyama.

"Sit down, sit down when I tell you." Unwillingly Toyama sat down again.

" Listen, Arishima was forced to resign at the directors' meeting to-day."

" Really ? " Toyama was startled.

" At last capital has stripped off its mask and revealed its true self. There's no room now even for the existence of a tiny bit of liberalism like his. It's coming, it's coming for sure ! " Colour began to creep into his sallow cheeks. " You're tired ; you're just like some dizzy moth. But now we can't afford to let you or anyone else rest. Can we drag you into the fight, or must we smash you ? It's one or the other."

Toyama gradually bowed his head.

" Come on, shake hands. And for the efficiency committee meeting to-morrow, come back to your old energetic self. Won't you, comrade ? "

Nagai looked for his hand. " Come on, give us your hand." Toyama looked away as he gave it. " Thanks ! That's splendid, now I've shaken hands with you we've got nothing to fear any more."

Toyama was afraid that tears of weakness would come to his eyes if he looked the other in the face. Nagai also turned away, saying in a forced brisk voice, " The enemy is only one, and the only death for us is fighting him."

V

When the sound of the bell had died away the belts slowed down and stopped. A red board with a notice, " No overtime to-day," was hung in every shop, and the workers cheerfully got ready for home

and then crowded to the door. By the time they got in front of shop No. 1 of the foundry they were like a flood, but at last they all formed into one line and began to encircle the low one-storied building.

In another hour the long-awaited meeting about the efficiency committee was to be held. The procession gradually became wrought up, until the sound of revolutionary songs drowned their footsteps.

"Here, stop that, you're not allowed to surround this place," shouted the guards from a safe distance, but the workers did not stop until they had seen their representatives right inside the meeting-place.

As the procession went round, the representatives of the different shops disengaged themselves from it, and quickly filled up the chairs in the big room.

The works council was made up of forty-eight representatives from the employees and the same number from the company, including the heads of each shop and the chief clerk, and there was, in addition, a chairman with no vote.

Toyama was among the first to come and forced his way through until he captured a seat, second from the end in the front row. Then almost on the tick of seven, the set hour, Nagai's lank form appeared at the back. The procession outside stopped, the singing died down and all became quiet. Minami, who had come as a representative of the Kanto Distict Council of Labour Unions, was standing in the procession, straining his eyes to see into the hall.

"What?" Toyama noticed with a shock the absence of two faces besides the vice-president's,

in the seats at the extreme right reserved for the office staff. Arishima's two satellites, the superintendent and the chief accountant.

Nagai, too, noticed it. . . . The miserable extinction of liberalism. . . . Both sides had cleaned up their camps and were in readiness.

When the bell to start had stopped, the door on the right of the shop opened quietly and the president's fat face appeared. Escorted by three or four officials, he entered the room, a great hulking pompous figure.

"Takashimaya!" from one corner of the employees' representatives' seats a voice yelled out the name of a popular actor, and the sally was greeted with a stamping of feet and roars of laughter.

"Silence, please!" snapped the thick-set managing director from the central platform. Then two printed sheets were handed round to everyone. They were the proposals—at last laid bare—and the balance sheet for the first half of the current year, together with a table of statistics of the average production per man in each department.

"I now declare the meeting open." The deep, gruff voice of the managing director seemed to carry far into the darkness outside.

The workers' representatives hurriedly scanned the papers and their eyes rested with amazement on article nine, dealing with the number of members that were to constitute the efficiency committee—the heads and assistant heads of each shop, twenty-four; employees' representatives, twenty-four; and then, in addition, twelve members from the office. Clearly the company had an absolute majority.

Wasn't this a totally different arrangement from what had been announced before?

"If you gentlemen will examine the table of statistics and the balance sheet, you will understand that the company is in a very difficult predicament. The nation's currency, which at the time of the great earthquake was greatly inflated, is now being deflated, and this has an enormous influence on this company. If you compare the balance sheet for the second half of 1923 with that of the first half of this present year, 1926, this will become obvious to you——"

The director recited eloquently the two rows of figures, but from the ranks of the workers came a voice, "Don't talk rot!" and they poked one another and grinned. . . . Wasn't the boss's missus, and his son—a mere school-kid—and even his new-born baby, all large shareholders? You could juggle figures anyhow to make things look all right.

But, at any rate, in the second half of 1923 the figure of net profit was 179,000 odd yen; taking the amount carried forward, they then paid a dividend of 10 per cent.; whereas in the first half of 1926, including what was brought forward from the last half year, they barely managed to pay 3 per cent., and that, according to the director, was only by breaking into their capital.

"And because of that, you reckon you're going to dig up the old piecework system and pit us workers against one another like a lot of fighting cocks, do you?" a voice cried, and Kimi-chan, who was sitting near the front with five or six other

girls, muttered so that those around could hear, "He's just making a fool of us."

"Moreover, in the second half of this year it will be quite impossible to make up for this."

The officials, feeling their responsibility, looked very solemn before the president, but the employees maintained their firmness. They were enjoying better conditions now compared with the old days. It was because the piecework system had been abolished that the colour had to some degree come back into their cheeks and made them look human once more.

The terms of the company's proposal were : (1) The abolition of the Works Council. (2) Reintroduction of a piecework system. (3) Reintroduction of night-work, etc., etc.

"What the hell's this ? Back to where we were before the 1924 strike ! "

"You're right. It's a challenge ! "

The sharp, piercing eyes of the president roamed continuously over the benches of the employees, where countless other eyes, sharp as needle points, stabbed back at him.

"As the balance sheet shows, production has suddenly dived right down. It is because you gentlemen have been more concerned with the efficiency of your union than with the efficiency of your work."

Raising his voice, the director waxed sarcastic. From the central seats, occupied by the heads of the different shops, came clapping. At the same time in the workers' block there was a buzzing as from a hive of bees.

"Dry up, your old bald head!"

"A lot of claptrap!"

"Come on outside!"

He stood there bewildered. "Mr. Chairman!" "Mr. Chairman!" The workers started their favourite trick for obstructing a speaker. They succeeded in shutting him up completely.

One man with a closely-cropped, bullet-shaped head stood up. He was Kondo, a representative of No. 1 printing shop.

"The managing director has shoved the responsibility for the company's recent setbacks on to us workers, but is the unit price for printing and type-founding the same as 1923?"

Very neatly he had forced the director into the defensive.

"No, since then it has fallen almost 30 per cent."

Kondo was on to him at once. "Then the company's business depression can't have anything to do with our efficiency, can it?"

"But your wages have not been cut at all. To put the matter plainly, will you increase your efficiency until it balances your wages, or will you have your wages cut?"

The workers' representatives opened their eyes. . . . The old devil, he's getting worse and worse.

"Cut our wages? But the price of necessities hasn't gone down at all," shouted Kondo, red in the face.

"That is hardly the company's fault," came the complacent answer. It was admittedly a neat thrust. . . . But now the crowd was getting obstreperous.

"You old fool!'

While Kondo was standing there shouting, from the rear came a score of voices calling, "Mr. Chairman."

"Why does the works council have to be abolished?" It was Toyama who had spoken. The director started to answer without standing up, but Toyama continued before he had time. "We don't believe the lies of the director. Luckily, the president is here, so we can hear directly from his lips——"

"That's right, make the president speak!"

"Tell us why, president!"

Voices came from the darkness outside. Although the guards had attempted to drive the workers away from around the building, they stood firm.

"The reason is, Mr. Toyama," the president arose, came down from the platform and, facing Toyama, glared at him, "that it would clash with the efficiency committee." Having delivered this retort, he turned and prepared to move away, displaying as he did the nice creases down his striped trousers.

"Then why isn't the voting strength distributed the same as in the council?"

The president's attitude changed completely. Stopping, and turning just his head round, he tried to appear calm, but his voice was excited and instead of answering he cried "This company doesn't belong to you. And I'm not going to let you make it the nest of that S. Union."

"What?" Toyama blazed out. The pandemonium among the workers rose once more.

" Shut up ! "

" You old tyrant."

In a thundering voice Toyama yelled, " Then we oppose the efficiency committee ! "

The president did not turn round. The workers stamped and yelled. From outside there came a storm of jeers.

" Down with the efficiency committee ! "

" Fight against bringing back night-work ! "

" Down with the piecework system ! "

In the midst of all the bellowing and tumult, Nagai's eyes were shining, but he did not lose his calm. . . . It's come, but from the front. But what's giving the president so much courage ? . . . He stood up and obtained the floor.

" I have a motion ! "

He proposed that a sub-committee consisting of seven representatives of the employees and seven from the company's side should meet immediately to thresh out the whole question. Never for an instant did he take his eyes off the president's face . . . The old scoundrel, I wonder what he'll say to that ! . . .

The motion was carried by a big majority.

VI

Amid scenes of confusion and turmoil the members chosen as a sub-committee filed up to the council chamber on the second floor of the office. The employees' representatives were Nagai, Toyama, Takagi, Kondo, and three others.

Just outside the door they stood making their

plans. "Do you get that? We've got to keep cool. If we're going to ferret out what they're up to, we've got to force ourselves to be calm . . ."

"Look, what are they?" Kondo caught sight of something and gave Nagai a prod in the back. "Look, cops went in that room just now; I'll swear I saw their sabres."

They all looked round, but the door to which he pointed, leading into the president's room, had shut tightly.

"There's nothing to be afraid of." Nagai opened the door on the other side and strode in first. The company's men, seven including the heads of each department and the managing director, were already lined up with their backs to the president's room. The workers lined along the window side opposite. Then the president and a young "gentlemen" they did not recognize sat down a little apart from the rest.

"Who is that gentleman? If he has no business here I ask that he be requested to leave," said Toyama roughly, from his seat. The man without any hesitation got up and spoke for himself.

"My name is Suzutani, I am vice-president of the Federated Printers' Association. I ask to be allowed to watch the proceedings."

There was a general movement of surprise. . . . Oho, so this was the fellow who'd been going round trying to make an agreement among the bosses of the twelve big companies!

Toyama spoke again: "Then we shall call a representative of our union to watch too." Where-

upon the said gentleman with a sickly grin said, "I think that's all right, that's quite constitutional."

Minami lumbered in. He looked a real peasant, rough and fierce, as he drew Nagai aside and whispered to him, "Suzutani's here, isn't he? Now it's all clear. Don't hesitate any more!"

The twelve companies' agreement! The plan for an alliance between the bosses of the twelve biggest printing works in Tokyo. . . . Wage-cuts for the workers, proposals for price-fixing, the abolition of special rates for night work, etc., etc. . . . During the last six months, while the workers were working for ten or fifteen hours a day, behind their backs the gentlemen of these twelve big companies had progressed with the agreement until now it was almost ready for signing.

"I see——" Nagai nodded his head, as across his mind flashed the question, like words across the screen, "What gave the president such courage?"

By this time the mass of the workers had advanced on the office. Again their cries floated through the window, "Down with night-work!" "Down with the piecework system!" Then, without warning, there arose a wild chorus of yells, followed by what seemed to be a great pushing and jostling.

"What's that?" Minami first, and then two or three others standing nearest the window turned and looked out. Below them a big fight had started, centring around fifty or sixty police who were trying to arrest someone.

"They've got no right!" Young Kondo, changing colour, made to rush out.

"Wait, it's no good being in a hurry." The powerful Minami grabbed Sugiyama by the arms as in a low voice he uttered this restraint, "Don't get excited. Our time's later."

Nagai, pressing back the indignation and impatience he felt rising up in him, began to speak in a very calm voice, "I want to make clear our views to you, the managing director. We support the plans of an efficiency committee, brought forward by the company, but with the following provisos: First, that the allotment of voting power be the same as in the present works council, and second, that all such questions as the abolition of the works council, and the reintroduction of the piecework system be held over until the formation of the efficiency committee, and then be decided at one of its meetings. That is all."

The managing director looked over at the president, to see how he was taking it. But unexpectedly it was the gentleman next the president who, with gentlemanly deliberation, began shaking his head. The workers kept their puzzled eyes on the immaculately tailored figure.

"It amounts to the same thing in the end," said the director at last.

"How does it? We're in favour of the object of the committee," said Toyama, resting one hand on the table, and sticking out his jaw.

"No compromises!" came a voice from outside. "Down with piecework!" The shouting workers had pressed back in another wave and started another battling.

"Mr. President," called Nagai, standing up,

" you are trying to fix all the blame for the company's failure on to us. The proposal of the company is equivalent to a declaration of war against us. For instance, the reintroduction of the piecework system would soon bring in its trail the question of a surplus of workers. . . . Mr. President, I, as a representative of 2000 of your employees, ask you this : are you thinking of trying a lock-out ? "

Nagai's voice, with a slight quiver in it towards the end, echoed through the whole room. Two or three of the department heads left their seats flurriedly and clustered round the president as if to shield him. But words did not flow in a hurry from his lips. The director, half out of his seat, tried to speak. Just as he did so the aforementioned gentlemen deliberately got up and addressed the two of them in an intimidating voice.

" I regret to say that as the original plan of the company seems likely to be scrapped, there is nothing for me to do but to announce to my association that this company intends to stand out from the twelve companies' agreement, for the present."

The president seemed much shaken as he stood up. Then, with a face livid and contorted, he snarled at the workers' representatives, " This company belongs to me. D'you get that ? And nothing in the proposals is going to be withdrawn. D'you understand ? "

Toyama and Kondo, losing all self-control, pushed forward in front of the president and shook their fists at him. " All right, it's a strike ! "

The managing director banged on the table and announced, "From to-morrow, all work is suspended!"

Minami pushed up to Suzutani. "All right, I'm going to announce this to the two-hundred thousand members of our All-Japan Council."

Chairs were kicked over and, as the workers were flinging themselves into the next room, Nagai, who was in the vanguard, swayed and almost fell backwards. "Ah!" everyone cried. A great hand had clutched Nagai by the throat and was dragging him down.

"Oh! He—help! It's—thugs!" The stifled words came from Nagai's throat; with a leap and a bound Minami flung all his weight at that great arm, "You bastard!"

Toyama, stripping off his coat, rushed to the window, and straining his lungs yelled, "It's a strike!"

From the mass of workers below, surging and seething like a thick liquid, arose answering battle-cries.

"It's a strike!!!" he shouted once more and, whirling round, leapt right into the thick of the struggle where his comrades were battling with the thugs.

LIEUTENANT KUSAMA

by

SEIKICHI FUJIMORI

LIEUTENANT KUSAMA

On the first of September Lieutenant Kusama left his regiment in the country and came up to Tokyo. He was to have entered the Toyama Military Academy, which began on the fifth of the month, but on the first there was a great earthquake. The students were informed that the academy would remain closed until further notice.

Just when he was wondering what on earth to do, he met an Auto-Corps officer whom he knew. "You've been called out," the officer told him. He was attached to the Military Commander of Tokyo after considerable delay, and was given charge of eighteen commandeered automobiles. He worked hard from eight every morning till six at night. His chief job was transporting rice and flour. In the stores, besides rice and flour, great piles of bread and fruit were going to rot, and this at a time when thousands were starving. The reason given for this was that no official instructions for their transportation and distribution had been given. Impatient at such waste and inconsistency, Lieutenant Kusama asked permission to distribute them among the needy. Permission was refused on the ground that enormous complications connected with the settling of accounts would arise and the preservation of the official routine was more vital

even than the relief of destitution. The lieutenant was disgusted, but without their consent he was helpless.

Within a short time, however, they turned round completely and ordered him to transport the perishable food. The reason lay in necessity. The supplies began to get so rotten as to be uneatable. The committee's " conscientiousness " might be regarded as liable to shade over into " negligence." Suddenly they were in a furore, begging him to take the other things away as quickly as possible, as well as the rice and flour. That meant, of course, to take more than the licensed load, but once a thing began to touch their position, all regulations were brushed aside.

For a second time the honest lieutenant was disgusted, but had to submit. Even then, in spite of the labours of himself and his men, the refugees who received the half-rotten or completely rotten supplies, far from being pleased, were resentful, critical and angry. That was only natural, since the food was more likely to poison them than to nourish the starving refugees.

. . . . . .

Once, while out walking, he sat down on a bench and some ex-service men came up and sat down beside him. It was just after seven in the evening and they started talking about all sorts of things, as they cooled themselves. The chief topic was the Koreans. Each one was going one better with rumours about Korean atrocities.

The Koreans had poisoned some well ; they had thrown bombs into some building where refugees

were gathered; and a Korean had been caught carrying a load of bombs; another had murdered some Japanese, but had been caught red-handed and surrounded by a crowd of Japanese, who killed him by inches. . . .

The honest lieutenant's sense of justice was aroused by this ignorant, exaggerated talk. To his knowledge all these "plots" and "atrocities" were absolutely without foundation. On the contrary, persecution and slaughtering of Koreans by the Japanese were a horrible fact.

"I don't know what's coming over the Japanese people . . ." began the lieutenant. He went on to explain away and combat the misunderstandings and delusions of the ex-service men. He explained that the story about Koreans poisoning wells had its basis in the fact that certain Japanese put into the wells bleaching-powder to keep the water clean; the Koreans supposed to be carrying bombs were really carrying canned stuff; buildings had gone up in flames, not because Koreans had thrown bombs into them, but because sparks had fallen on inflammable materials. It was the Japanese who had done all the killing; authentic reports of their atrocities had come to headquarters.

As the lieutenant rose to go he heard behind him a voice calling, "Here, you." He turned and saw two guards; behind them pressed a cloud of ex-service men.

"What do you mean, shouting at a superior officer?" he thundered back at them. The two guards recoiled a little, but the black cloud at the back did not heed him.

"That guy's a Korean, a Korean dressed up like one of our officers."

"Sure he is. And he was trying to fool us. If he wasn't a Korean, what would he side with them like that for?"

"You can tell by his face he's a Korean."

Seeing the bloodthirsty mob, waving sticks and yelling, the lieutenant gave a start. If he got into their hands there was no knowing what might happen. For a moment he regretted the lecture he had read them. The mob, watching his every movement, pressed in closer and closer.

At that moment good luck came to his aid. A company of soldiers happened just then to pass by. When he saw them he rushed over and asked one of the officers to identify him. The latter readily agreed to this request from a colleague, and vouched for him before the crowd, and in addition gave him four privates as an escort. The lieutenant thanked him and, glancing contemptuously at the mob, started to climb the slope at Dozaka, accompanied by his escort.

When he thought they had gone far enough to be out of danger, he told the men to go back.

No sooner had he started down the slope at Hakusan, however, than a new mob of seventy or eighty people, just as if it had been waiting until he was alone, suddenly congregated and surrounded him. He felt sick of the whole business, and at the same time afraid. Noticing a police box close by, he went over and asked the policeman for protection, but this guardian of the public would not listen to him. He said that, even if he wanted to,

there was nothing he could do. But as the lieutenant was insistent, he agreed at last to go and find two escorts. Guarded by them, the lieutenant set off to claim protection at a guard-house in the neighbourhood.

The sergeant-major in charge was thoroughly scared, because as the mob increased in numbers and daring every minute. They were already hurling showers of stones at the guard-house, which was really only a private house, and with their battle-cries making it tremble as if another earthquake had come. Terrified of getting himself embroiled, the sergeant-major speedily despatched the lieutenant, accompanied by a guard of six men, to the police station.

At the police station, when they learned his rank, they were very regretful and straightway hauled out one of the mob who seemed to be ringleader and brought him before the lieutenant. The lieutenant turned to him and asked what he meant by trying to assault him. The ringleader answered proudly that he was the nephew of a general, and accused Kusama of being a bogus lieutenant. Finally, the proofs of his identity which Kusama produced proved too strong, and the man left the police station somewhat crestfallen. The mob, too, robbed of its sensation, melted away.

Under the protection of two guards, the lieutenant reached home at four o'clock in the morning, just as the forms of trees and houses were coming back to life in the faint light of dawn.

This experience taught our lieutenant many things. First and foremost, he was surprised at the

ignorance and gullibility of the Japanese people. Secondly, he realized that it was only his rank had saved his life; but later on, while he was commanding the Auto Corps, a new knowledge came and upset all these ideas. Did it come through witnessing the corruption of the Distribution Committee or the destitution of the population? No, what enlightened him more than all these things was the so-called Higher Politics of the Higher Command.

Close observation of the inner working of the Higher Command led him to see that it was bound hand and foot to the moneyed classes. The army existed not to defend the people of Japan from outside invasion, but to further the predatory imperialism of those whose well-being is rooted in the poverty and destitution of the Japanese people as a whole.

When the deep realization of this truth came to him the lieutenant no longer had any desire to serve in the army. The army, too, for its part had further no use for him.

That accounts for his conversion to Socialism.

COCOONS

by

FUSAO HAYASHI

COCOONS

WHENEVER I see cocoons I am reminded of Yasuo Sakai. Of late I have become so completely a city-dweller that it is only by the patterns of autumn grasses on fabrics in the shop-windows that I know the autumn has come. No longer can I wander along country lanes where migrant crows drop seeds as they fly, the baskets of live cocoons swaying on the carts as if they would topple off at any minute.

. . . . . .

Sakai and I were bosom pals in the middle school. We shared a room and with our two little desks, side by side, were as inseparable as Siamese twins.

At the back of the school rose hills covered with low pines ; whenever summer drew near wild-flowers blossomed round the roots of these trees.

" Funny little guys ; beauties, aren't they ? " I remember him remarking solemnly one day as we watched a little snake, all its scales shining in the sunlight, disappear noiselessly under a bush.

There was a tinge of bitterness in his words. He himself was always called " the dirty guy " by the bullies of the class, as he was always in rags. Were he a spineless chap, that nickname alone would have been enough to humiliate him. Their scorn, however, probably contained a strain of

jealousy since he was unusually intelligent, and was generally at the top of the class. He combined the extremes of cleverness and poverty. In this we were strongly contrasted, for I was remarkable neither for brains nor poverty. I was his only friend and whenever he got behind with his school fees I would offer part of my allowance as a matter of course.

Yes, in that class-room at the foot of those hills, with our desks side by side, we were as inseparable as twins.

From the hills you could see the sea. We two boys would often climb up and, lying down facing that blue paint-dish of sea under the sky, try vainly to throw stones into it, or hallo down at it the duet "River of Love" in voices strangely out of tune.

One day, under a wild briar bush, we found a snake eating a grass-green frog. Out of the open jaws of the snake only the little suckers on the end of the frog's hind legs stuck out, waving as if sending out S.O.S. signals. I noticed Sakai's eyebrows twitch, and then he let fly with his dusty boot and kicked the snake fiercely right in the belly. Then, squashing it with his heel, he watched it intently as a thin trickle of crimson blood came out of the yellow distended mouth.

"The devil," he snarled.

The frog had been rescued and it lay motionless on the grass with the snake's slimy saliva still clinging to it.

"The rotten devil," he repeated.

. . . . . .

I remember another incident.

One of the abuses of middle school life was that the older boys invariably bullied the younger ones. One practice they delighted in was to get their miserable victim in some lonely field and, on some trumped-up charge, lay into him savagely with their fists. As were were wandering over the hills one day we had the bad luck to be caught by a gang of bullies.

One of them—his father owned a silk mill in our town—a rough, stupid fellow, called Okawa, came rushing at us.

"Look here, Sakai, you've been getting too cheeky lately."

Sakai gazed into this face for some time and then blurted out impulsively, "How do you make that out?"

The big boy suddenly gave him a punch in the chest.

"I'll teach you to answer back a senior. That's cheeky."

Sakai rolled over on the grass, but soon picked himself up and made a mad rush at his assailant's chest. But he was much smaller and, anyhow, it was three to one. The next minute he was on the ground again and was beaten like a dog. When he rose a second time I saw the glint of steel. It was his new penknife he held in his right hand.

The colour left Okawa's lips. Sakai's face, too, seemed to go a shade paler. Swiftly as a rat Okawa scurried, but Sakai ran him down near the place he had once squashed the snake. The patch

stopped there. Okawa stood waiting with the strength of one at bay.

"Stab me if you dare." Peeling off his coat, Okawa threw it on the grass and in the manner of all bluffers he bared his breast and extended both arms.

"You think I won't stab you?" Sakai's voice sounded strangely calm and collected. The gleam of cold steel rent the air.

"Oh!" All my blood went cold within me and this cry sprang from me as I saw how Okawa fell prone on the grass.

His fellow bullies ran to him to pick him up and carry him away. Sakai, limp and apathetic, followed them with his eyes, but once their figures had disappeared behind the bushes, he collapsed and lay motionless on the grass.

When I regained my presence of mind I hurried anxiously over to him. His face was buried in the summer grass and his shoulders were heaving.

Why?—I could not understand the reason.

Talking about not understanding reasons, there was another thing about Sakai that I could never fathom. In his desk he always kept a single white silkworm cocoon. Once I asked him why he kept it, but he refused to answer, so out of spite I cut it up into little bits with my scissors. For a whole day after that he did not speak to me. A week later a similar cocoon was in his drawer again.

Later these two riddles were solved together.

. . . . . .

I think it was on the second or third day after this incident. Sakai suddenly asked me to go with him to the town, and took me to a small silk mill that stood near the water-front. He seemed to be no stranger there, for with just a nod to the door-keeper he hurried into the mill. I followed after him.

Inside the mill, murky with steam and dark like the inside of a kitchen on a rainy day, the old-fashioned spindles turned noisily. The foul smell of dead grubs and the heavy humid air almost suffocated you. Before each girl stood two pots full of boiling water, one big and one small; in the small pot white cocoons kept bobbing up and down. One or two boiled cocoons would be transferred by the girl's hand into the bigger pot and, as they danced round in the hot water, they gradually became thinner. At the same time an almost invisible thread passed from them, above the girls' heads, and was wound round the droning spindles behind. With the revolutions of the belt the reels of silk became fatter and the cocoons thinner. When one cocoon had been completely unwound, the little black grub would appear floating dead on the surface. I watched it all with unaccustomed eyes.

"Wait just a minute." Sakai hurriedly disappeared behind the machines, coming back after a time with an elderly woman wearing a mill-girl's uniform.

"This is my mother."

"Eh?" I was completely taken back and bowed my head in confusion.

"Now, mother, thank him."

Sakai's mother was about fifty and had smooth brows, unlike the woman of to-day. Bowing her head, in which white hairs had begun to show, she kept thanking me for my kindnesses to Sakai, and implored me to remain his friend. This made me very bashful. I blushed scarlet, and could do nothing but keep bowing too, unable to look up into that face, so full of brooding and humility.

One the way home Sakai related his early history. Of how, during his fourth year at the primary school, his mother and he had been left alone through his father's death and reduced from comfortable circumstances to poverty; of how she had started working in this mill to help him enter the middle school. He had stuck out against going, but the teachers urged it on him, saying it was a pity to leave off at that point, and his mother, her eyes full of tears, tried to persuade him, saying there was no one but him to restore the fortunes of the Sakais, so he finally yielded; but when he saw his mother wearing out her aged body in that unhealthy mill in order to pay his school fees, he could not feel much like school; with her whole month's wages they just managed to pay the minimum fees; but if he left school it would only sadden his mother, who was straining herself to keep on working, and would shatter her last hopes; so partly as there seemed no way out of it, and partly out of gratitude to her, he kept on at school.

"I've never told anyone these things. I've never felt it necessary. But you—you've always been so decent to me. And then sometimes I've

told my mother about you and she has said, with tears in her eyes, how much she wanted to meet you and thank you, and that's why I brought you today.

"And also," he soon continued, "there was another reason for bringing you to the mill. Perhaps you know that the owner of that mill is the father of that Okawa I knifed the other day?"

"Yes," I nodded.

"That's why I think I was in the wrong the other day. Of course, it's mean to bully younger boys, but defiance, when a personal grievance enters into it, is worse, it seems to me. If Okawa had been alone that day—that Okawa who is always jeering at me just because my mother works in his mill—I don't think I would have gone so far as to use a knife. When I realized what I had done, I howled at my own meanness."

I watched the red evening sun between the roofs of the town as it sank into the sea.

. . . . .

Two or three years passed. We both became students of the same high school. Sakai received a scholarship from the prefecture, while I, somehow or other, succeeded in passing the entrance examination.

We were lying in the grass on a hill that overlooked the school building and talking idly as the summer sun shone down pleasantly on our faces and our new gold buttons.

"I still keep my cocoon," said Sakai, as if he had suddenly called it to mind.

"Do you? Is your mother still in that mill?"

"I can't get her to leave. She says she'll keep on, no matter what happens, until I graduate. Of course in a way she has reason on her side, for as long as I stay at school there is no other way for her to live except the mill."

Sakai bit his lips as he plucked stalks of grass, and his voice became thoughtful.

"Lately I've begun to have doubts about life," he said. "For instance, take that mill: now there are about 300 girls working there. They're mostly from fifteen to twenty-four years of age, all farmers' daughters from the neighbouring villages. When they come they're young, country girls with good strong bodies, but after a year or two they begin bandaging up their throats and coughing suspiciously; their eyes become red and swollen, and their fingers whitish and rotten, and then they return home. Some of them wither and die while in the mill, and you hear sometimes of girls getting their hair caught in the machines.

"The humid air; the long hours from morning right on into the night; insufficient food—when I see those girls under such conditions, wearing out their young bodies before my very eyes, I think of the kettles and of the cocoons which the girls reel.

"Each one, boiled in the hot water, becoming thinner and thinner; its life drained from it by that single invisible thread, until finally the black grub—now a useless dead thing—is cast up on the surface of the water.

"But on the other hand—and this is what you've got to notice isn't there—exactly corre-

sponding to the reels winding and winding above the girls heads a group of men who grow continually fatter and fatter!"

Sakai paused for a minute to wipe the sweat from his brow, and then in a voice deliberately lowered, went on.

"And you know, I have a feeling—it's horrible to think about it—but still I have the feeling that something will happen to mother in that mill before I get safely through the university. My mother holds to it almost like a religion that the ruin of the Sakai family is our fault and that we must somehow restore it. Not only that, but, as a mother, she naturally feels a deep joy and an object in life is giving a proper education to her only child. I can understand that feeling quite well.

"But so long as she's in that mill, isn't she, too, just one of those miserable silkworm cocoons? An invisible silken thread is drawing, drawing at her life, too . . . "

Words seemed futile as an answer.

We were third-year high school students. It was a winter's day with graduation close at hand. Late at night, in spite of the snow, Sakai came to my lodgings.

"What's the matter?" Looking at his face, bloodless and like that of a man just come from a tomb, I felt intuitively that something serious was wrong.

"My mother is dead. . . . Too late, too late."

Almost snatching from him the telegram he had received, I recalled his prophetic words and a cold shiver ran down my spine.

My voice failed to utter a word. For a moment that face which I had seen in the silk mill, among all those droning spindles, with its smooth brows, so unlike the women of to-day, rose before me and then was gone.

"Too late. In the New Year vacation I begged her to let me leave school. I told her no son could bear to send his mother out into a mill like that, and that there was no rest for me while I knew she was surrounded by all sorts of dangers, and helpless against them. It was the first time I'd been back home for a long while and I realized with a shock the great change in her. She wept, but would not hear me."

His lips quivering, he brushed away the tears that welled up.

"But talking like this won't do any good now. I'm going home by the night train. Would you mind lending me the fare?"

I put together all the money I had and gave it to him, and walking through the snow saw him off at the station.

About a week later I got a letter from him.

"This morning we gathered up my mother's ashes. They all went nicely into an urn less than seven inches high. Sitting with it before me, I realize more deeply than ever the terrible blow I have suffered. More than ten girls from the mill came to the funeral. They were girls whom my mother had been kind to. More had asked to be allowed off just to attend the funeral, but, as you can imagine, permission was not granted. Those who came had managed to escape knowing they

would be punished for it. I was deeply moved by this.

" When in the New Year vacation I was stopped by mother from leaving school, I thought out a plan of my own. Were I to enter university, I would try to find work to do in my spare time. If I succeeded, even if I got mother to leave the mill, we would have enough for the two of us. But as things turned out, this too has ended in nothing.

" Sitting before this urn, my thoughts turn to the system which silently, with subtle force, destroyed my mother's life.

" The cocoons getting thinner, the reels fatter—the dead black body of the grub.

" My mother wanted me to get on in the world. That was her only wish. I, too, tried to comply with it and exerted all my energies towards that goal—and see what's happened.

" But I will not despair. In the crematorium in the hills, just as I was getting together her ashes by the light of a candle, suddenly an idea came to me. It seemed a new road opened up before me. There was not only one cocoon. My mother was not the only sufferer.

" In this land of ours alone, how many millions, no, tens of millions of human beings, like the cocoons in the boiling water, are having their life-blood sucked away from them?

" It may sound funny to you to say it abruptly like this. But I know the enemy I have to fight. I expect I shall have a chance of talking this out with you more in detail some time. I remember how once in our middle school days I used my

knife against one fellow who bullied me. The road I am taking now is not a mean, cowardly one like that. This work is work fit for men which I must give up my whole life to. It would please mother, too, I think.

"I'm not coming back to school. It will be some time before I'm able to meet you again, probably. I hope you'll take care of yourself and study hard.

"One other thing—in the left-hand drawer of my desk you will find a white cocoon. It's a funny sort of keepsake, but I'd like you to keep it in memory of my mother."

. . . . .

That must have been ten years ago.

Whenever I see cocoons I am reminded of Yasuo Sakai. But there are few chances for me to see them, since I have become so completely a city-dweller, knowing that the autumn has come only by the patterns of grasses on fabrics in the shop-windows.

There is no need of cocoons to remind me of Sakai now. I, too, have joined the ranks of those he calls "Comrades."

TAKIJI KOBAYASHI
MURDERED BY POLICE

TAKIJI KOBAYASHI
MURDERED BY POLICE

THE latest victim of the police terror against Communists in Japan is the foremost Japanese proletarian writer, Takiji Kobayashi. At the time of his death he was only thirty, but, starting with the sensation caused five years ago by his story *The Cannery Boat* (which is something akin to *The Jungle*), followed up by a series of militant stories, his name was a household word. Those stories include: *The Fifteenth of March*, 1928, *For the Sake of the Citizens* (these three are included in this book), *Absentee Landlords*, *Factory Cells*, *The Organizer*, *Solitary Confinement*, *The Village of Numa-iiri*, *People of the District* and the posthumous *Age of Transformation*.

He had already served several terms of imprisonment, but managed to disappear just before a police raid on his house about a year ago, and was engaged in underground work for the Communist Party when, about 1 p.m. on February 21st, 1933, he was arrested on the street and within five hours was tortured to death. On the street he struggled with the police for half an hour and almost succeeded in getting free. He was finally dragged to the police station in an exhausted condition, and then Third Degree methods were started on him, but nothing could make him divulge one word, one name. His

iron will resisted all their torture until unconsciousness and then death relieved him. The police took the dead body to a hospital and got a false death certificate saying the doctor had seen him before death and that he was suffering from heart trouble.

The relatives were then called and the body was handed over to them. His fine old mother of sixty, Oseisan, was in sympathy with his ideas and asked that he be given, not a religious funeral, but a workers' one. When she saw the body she turned on the police and said that never would she believe he had died a natural death.

Friends communicated with all the big hospitals to get a post-mortem examination, but everywhere this was refused. One hospital did consent, but when the body was brought and they saw whose it was they too refused. Obviously they were acting under orders. The police department had learned wisdom since last November, when at the post-mortem of Comrade Iwata the doctors at the Imperial University had shown up their murder.

Photographs of the body, however, were taken, clearly revealing the ghastly wounds. The branding of a red-hot poker was easily visible on the forehead. Round the neck were marks left by a thin rope. On the wrists were deep handcuff marks, while one wrist was twisted right round. All the back was abrased and from the knees up the legs were swollen and purple with internal bleeding. The police were not yet satisfied. They arrested 300 people who tried to attend the night watch beside the coffin and sent back to their donors many of the wreaths, including one sent by the bourgeois

writers' federation. But immediately comrades set about organizing a big Workers' and Peasants' funeral for him. March 15th was chosen, as it was the fifth anniversary of the first great arrest of Communists, which he had told of in one of his first stories.

On that day, in spite of the fact that almost the whole of the police were mobilized as a precaution, and that they did succeed in stopping the presentation of a dramatization of his story *The Village of Numajiri* by arresting all the actors, workers and students in all the big cities came out into the streets and demonstrated and distributed leaflets protesting against his foul murder.

To commemorate the great work Comrade Kobayashi did for the masses with his pen it has been decided to call March 15th CULTURE DAY, and to keep it every year as a day when the workers will demonstrate in his memory and for the spread of real proletarian culture.