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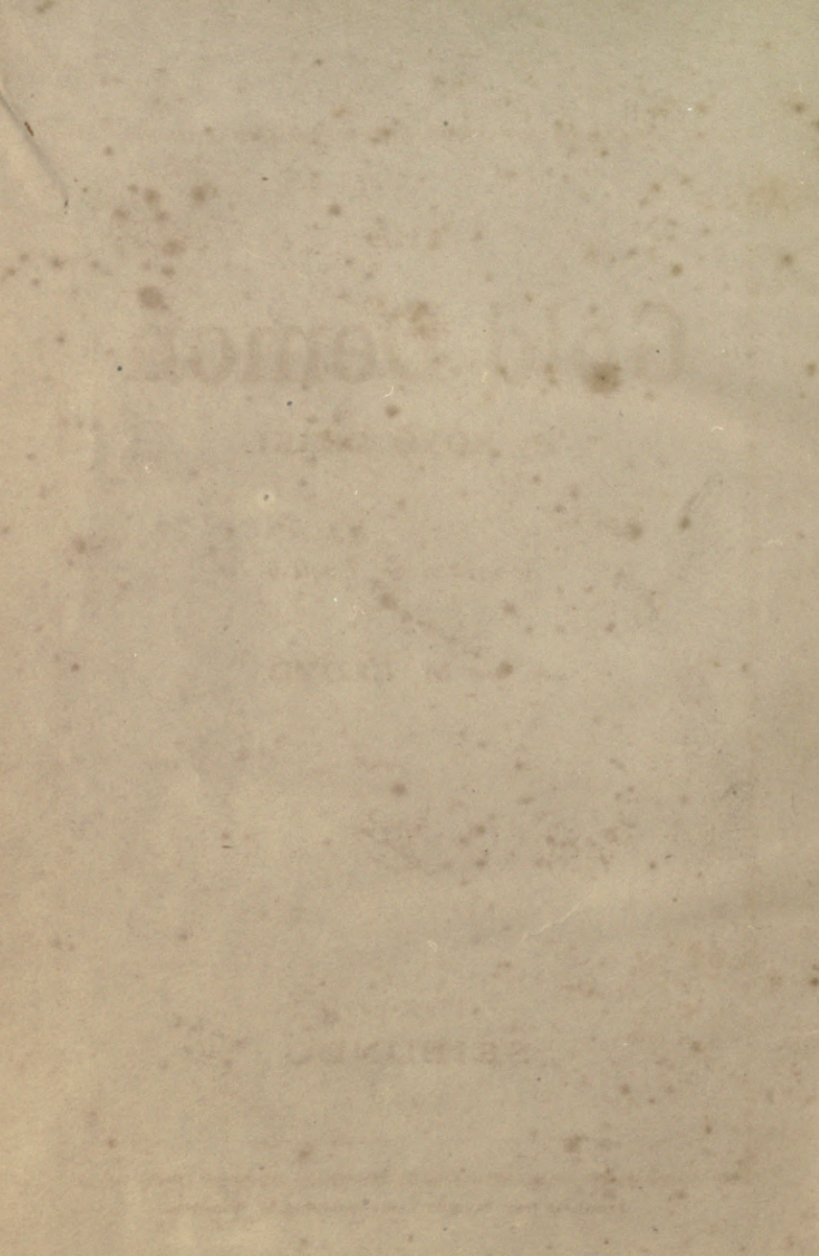
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THE
Gold Demon

By KŌYŌ OZAKI

Re-written in English

By

A. and M. LLOYD.



TOKYO
SEIBUNDO

1917

THE
Gold Demon

By KÖYŌ ŌZAKI

Translated by

A. and M. LLOYD



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(THE END).

Introduction

MR. OZAKI KOYO the author of the Novel "*Konjiki Yasha*" which is herewith presented to the English-speaking public is English dress, though not exactly in an English translation, was born on December 16, 1866, in Shiba Katamonzen Chō, in Tokyo.

He was thus a true son of Yedo. More than that he was a child of Shiba, of that quarter of the Imperial City which more than all others has been noted for the high spirit and lively ways of its inhabitants. All the world knows that Shiba lies by the seashore, and its inhabitants, very many of whom are fishmongers, or otherwise connected with the fishing industry, seem to have imbibed a strong predilection for liberty

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from the remnants of the fresh sea-breezes that find their way to them across the dreary mud-flats of Shinagawa Bay. The purity of the sea-breezes may perhaps be doubted, but the Shiba love of liberty is above all suspicion. The district contains, does it not? that bulwark of a nation's liberties, the great Keiogijuku, and if that be not sufficient I would point my reader to the fact that whereas in other, more submissive, districts of the city, the barbers have made an unholy combine for the purpose of putting up, and keeping up, the price of that necessity of human life—a morning shave—the freedom-lovers of the Shiba district have always succeeded in asserting their lawful freedom. What you have to pay ten, twelve, or even fifteen, sen for in their parts of the town, you can get a Shiba barber to do for half the price. Indeed I am told that you can be shaved in some parts of Shiba for three or four sen.

Ozaki's education was begun at a *tera-*

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koya, or a temple-school, one of those "go-as-you-please" institutes of learning which flourished in the days before Meiji, and which in many places contrived to linger on into the Meiji era itself. At this school the innate "Shiba spirit" was fostered and developed. He was a 'pickle', and a fighter, and carried with him to his death a scar on the forehead, the memorial of a stone-throwing battle of his early days.

In 1873 the *terakoya* was changed into a public school, and Ozaki remained as one of its students, faithful in spite of the changes of system and name which the Institution underwent. He remained, in fact, till somewhere in 1880, when he had learned all that there was to learn, and was turned out of the school, a finished article, as far as the powers of the school were able to go.

He was now fifteen years of age, and his father, who wished to see his son prosper in the world, began to urge him to begin the study of English, then, as now, one of the

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great high roads leading to success. He did so, but he did not like it. His text-book was Webster's Spelling Book. It is quite possible that he did not find his studies in English wildly exciting.

But if he disliked learning English, he disliked mathematics more. He tells us in a short memoir of himself, which he once composed, that his mind was by constitution as much averse to mathematics as his stomach was to *tofu*, the insipid bean-cake which enters so much into Japanese cookery.

Mathematics and English were in those days the staple articles of education—mathematics taught out of English text-books, and English taught by the *hensoku* method which discarded all sounds and appealed to the eye not the ear! It is not to be wondered at that a boy of Ozaki's temperament became restless, nor yet that he changed schools rapidly and eagerly. He went from school to school, from College

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to College, seeking intellectual sustenance, —and getting intellectual *tofu*.

Then one day, in a circulating library, one of those mean-looking stalls, containing a few dozens of torn, tattered, and well-thumbed Japanese novels in gaudy covers, which you can borrow for a few *rin*, he found a romance by *Tamenaga* the well-known novelist of Tokugawa period—and in that book he found his vocation. The literature of his own country, the thoughts, the passions, the hopes of his own compatriots, the sentiments, noble and otherwise, that had their roots in the history of his own people, —these were the things which appealed unconsciously to him.— He tells us in his notes and memoirs that he felt that, with these treasures opened to him in his own language, he felt that he could dispense, for a time at least, with the delights of the “Spelling Book”, and he now became a constant and indefatigable frequenter of the lending library in the next street.

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It is true that his father did not approve of these studies ; but stolen fruit is always the sweetest, and the difficulties that stood in the way of his favoured studies only added to the zest with which he pursued them. The novels stood on his bookshelf all day safely disguised in a false cover which bore the inscription " Chinese History " : in the evening, as soon as the hour came when serious studies might safely be laid aside, when the *futons* were spread, and the family retired to sleep, the beloved friends came forth from their hiding-place, and night was turned into day under the dim flicker of the lamp that stood by his pillow.

In this way Ozaki gained for himself a good knowledge of Japanese fiction, especially of the works of Tamenaga and Samba and the comic writings of Kyoden. Romance did not appeal to him. A few paragraphs here and there of the masterpieces of Bakin and Tanehiko sufficed to satisfy his curiosity: *Hakkenden* and *Inaka Genji* he only skim-

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med, contenting himself with gathering the story from the illustrations. What he was searching for was something actual, something realistic, and whatever literature of this kind he came across he devoured with avidity.

From reading to writing was but a step. After attending various schools, he entered the Imperial University, first the College of Law, then that of Literature, but at neither College did he bring his studies to their natural termination. He left without a degree, after three years in all at the University. But he had in the meantime entered on the field of literature. In 1888, in connection with his two friends, Ishibashi Shian and Yamada Binyo, he started a magazine named *Garakuta Bunko* which procured for him some reputation as a writer. Two years later, in 1890, he was appointed Literary Editor of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and it was for this paper, and for *Kokumin no Tomo*, that he wrote most of

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the novels for which he became so famous. In July 1902, he joined the staff of the *Niroku Shimbun*, but only as a doomed man. Three months later, in October 1902, he died of the cancer in the stomach which had troubled him for some time. His best known novels are "*Kyara Makura*," "*Sanninzuma*," "*Katarazu Iwazu*," "*Murasaki*," "*Tajo Takon*," and "*Konjiki Yasha*" or the Gold Demon.

Ozaki may claim, with Professor Tsubouchi, the honour of having been the founder of a modern school of fiction. The romantic school of Bakin lingered on right into the Meiji Period, and its latest representatives were Kanagaki Robun, and Jōno Saikiku who reigned supreme during the early years of the present era. Professor Tsubouchi took the novel of Europe as a model for imitation, and Ozaki followed in Tsubouchi's foot steps, making his novels realistic both in incident and in language, and attempting to analyse and depict for his fellow-country-

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men the psychological workings of the human mind.

In his early days, as we saw, he had turned from the study of English. In his later days he came back to it; for Japanese fiction-literature did not contain enough to satisfy his mind, and he had to turn to European fiction for intellectual food. He learned not only English but French and translated Molière's *Avare* into Japanese.

"His work," says the *Japan Times*, in an obituary notice of his death, "possesses a unique charm. He was the first among Japanese novelists to attempt to depict psychological phenomena, and apart from this innovation, the delicate art with which he succeeded in blending tragedy and comedy of a high order was reminiscent of Dickens at his best. He excelled both as tragedian and jester.

He translated Molière's "*L'Avare*," which was repeatedly reproduced by Mr. Kawakami's troupe with brilliant success. Assist-

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ed by a Russian scholar he translated Tolstoi's "Kreutzer Sonata", and every number of the *Kokumin-no-tomo*, the magazine which published it in serial form, was impatiently awaited by his readers.

He wrote an enormous quantity of original matter, which chiefly appeared in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, to which he contributed for more than ten years. But he was never a quick writer. His copy was always black with corrections, and as he wrote a very illegible hand, though connoisseurs pronounced it beautiful, his manuscript was invariably hailed with anathemas in the composing room. But like many other famous productions that have been the result of infinite pains, his work, when it appeared in print, read with a smooth and easy flow that promptly carried the reader with it and held him a willing prisoner to the end. His pathos may be studied in the impressive scenes of the "Konjiki Yasha" (The Gold Demon), "Tajo Takon," and some others.

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The veneration and affection in which he was held in literary circles, however, were in no small measure due to his earnest solicitude for the welfare of his disciples. It is to his example and encouragement that we owe the presence of such brilliant craftsmen as Kyōka, Fūyō, Sazanami, and others, the first-named of whom at least is already in the foremost rank of Japanese novelists.

When his condition was reported to be critical these beloved disciples gathered around Mr. Kōyō and asked him whether he had anything to say to them. He answered no, but urged them to cooperate loyally and strive to rise still higher in their profession. "Had I seven lives to live," said the dying man, "I would devote them all to literature." He then ordered his pupils to come under the light, as it was night, that he might see their faces one by one for the last time."

"He was also," says the Japanese Mail, in a similar notice, "a renowned composer

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of *Haikwai* (the 17-ideograph stanza) and on his death-bed he wrote the lines

Shinaba aki

Tsuyu no hinu ma zo

Omoshiroki.

The verselet is an admirable example of Japanese impressionist poetry. Freely rendered it reads, "Let me die in autumn before the dew dries;" words which recall, though they do not express, the familiar idea of the dew-drop evanescence of life in Buddhist eyes, and of the shining of night-pearls on the petals of the autumn flower, the morning glory, "The dew-drop slips into the silent sea."

The Gold Demon in its English dress has been re-written rather than translated. A few of the earlier chapters are translations, but the rest are abbreviated reproductions of the original. Ozaki's greatest charm is his language, and that charm cannot possibly be reproduced. His immense power and beauty of language enables him to take the

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Japanese reader through mazes of minute description which, under the guidance of a less skilful pen, would be tedious in the extreme. We have therefore deemed it best to curtail the descriptions, to condense the soliloquies in which his heroes rejoice,—in a word, to make the book a little more Anglo-Saxon. We hope the reader will pardon us for these liberties.

A. LLOYD.

9 Dec. 1905.

The Gold Demon.

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

A night scene in the City of Tokyo.

EVERY gate way was decorated with its New Year's pines, and every one was shut, though it was yet early in the night. The long broad street, running from East to West, looked as if it had been swept perfectly clean: there was not even a shadow on it. The noisy rattle of the solitary wheels that broke the silence of the lonesome city was probably some belated traveller too busy or too drunk to get home earlier from his round of New Year's visits. In the distance could be heard the fitful sound of the *shishi* dancers' tambourine, so melancholy that it seemed to be mourning over the approaching end of the Festive Season. It was the evening of the third of January—who can tell how many little hearts had

been broken as they listened to its sorrowful tones?

The new diaries, begun on the first of the New Year, had hitherto recorded the weather in an unbroken monotone. "1st January, fine" "2nd January, fine," "3rd January, ditto"; but now, toward evening a cold winter blast had bustled out through the city, as though angry because the sweet song of children's voices at play had ceased its burden of

"Wind, wind, cease to blow!

This is not the time to blow!"

And now he was playing havoc all by himself among the pine-tree decorations, and the dried leaves of the withered bamboos, and performing all manner of antics to demonstrate his strength. The sky had been overcast, but now the wind seemed to have awakened it, and it was twinkling with innumerable stars, like the silver shimmer on a piece of *nashi-ji* lacquer. It was a cold bright light that the twinkling stars threw over the street, indeed, they seemed to have frozen everything with their intense cold.

Let our reader place himself in thought in such a dreary scene as this. Would his thoughts suggest the contemplation of humanity, or society,

of cities or towns? It seemed that the nine heavens and the eightfold earth had but just emerged from chaos, that Nature had not yet finished her creative work, that the wind was just making its first attempt to blow, that the stars had just begun to twinkle—the scene suggested a vast wilderness, without meaning, order, or beauty—nothing but a dreary void. All day long the people had thronged the streets, singing, drinking, joking, rejoicing, smiling, chattering. The wonder was where they had gone to; why had they disappeared like the gnats at the end of summer?

A silence of hours ensued: then in the distance the clapping of a watchman's rattle struck the ear: and as soon as this sound died away, a lantern would come into sight at the end of the street, and after a few wavering motions across it, disappear from sight and leave nothing but the cold wind blowing wildly against the dreary stars.

The bath house in a side street was closing its doors: the water from the bath was discharging itself through a drainpipe which projected from the weatherboards, sending up columns of steam and filling the air with a disagreeable hot vapour which conveyed a sense of impurity to the nostrils.

Suddenly a *jinrikisha* drawn by two men came dashing round the corner so rapidly that its drawers had no time to avoid the columns of vapour, but took their fare right through the midst of it.

“Poof! What a foul smell!” exclaimed a voice from the *jinrikisha*. Its owner was smoking a cigar, the end of which he threw away, still alight, into the gutter. “It is very early,” he continued, “for them to be emptying the bath.”

“Yes, sir,” answered the coolie. “We are still “within the pines”¹⁾ and the baths are always closed earlier now.”

When the *jinrikisha* man had spoken, there was again a silence, and the wheels rattled on apace. The gentleman gathered the sleeves of his cloak tightly round him, and buried his face above the ears in the deep sealskin collar. There was a fur rug spread beneath him on the seat of the carriage, with its end hanging down over the back: and across his knees lay a handsome striped rug of *fuwa-ori* cloth. The lantern was decorated with a device of two capital T's intertwined. At the other end of the lane the

1) *Within the pines*, a phrase denoting the New Year's holidays.

wheels turned abruptly to the north, and emerged in a rather wide street which they followed for a little while. Then they turned down a blind alley to the west, across which was suspended a gate lamp bearing the name of Minowa painted on it, and rattled with an air of importance through the gateway festively decorated with stakes of pointed bamboo.

Lights could be seen through the paper window slides within the porch, but the outer lattice-gate was locked, so the men had to rattle, and knock and shout for admittance; but for some time in vain, as there was much noise of merriment within.

At length, a louder shout and a more persistent knocking attracted the attention of the inmates, and some one came out to attend to them.

It looked like the mistress of the house, a lady of some forty years of age, small, spare and of a pale complexion, with her hair done in a *marumage* chignon. She wore a dress of fine *ito-ori* silk, the colour of tea, with a *haori* of *hosho-tsumugi* stuff, decorated with the badge of her family. She hastily opened the lattice gate to receive her guest, and the gentleman was about to enter, when he noticed that the whole floor inside

the porch was covered with shoes and foot-gear so closely packed that there was no room even to push a walking stick between them. The lady instantly divined his thought, and courteously stepping down from the raised floor on which she stood, pushed the foot-gear aside to make room for the honoured guest. Presently his *geta* were singled out from the others by being put in a place of honour inside the paper shoji of the entrance room,

CHAPTER II

Mr. Minowa's House.

AT the back of the Minowa's house were two parlours, one of ten, and the other of eight mats, thrown into one by the removal of the partition-screens, and lighted with ten brass candlesticks containing each a half-pound candle which shone like a fishing boat light in the offing on a dark night. From the ceiling in either room hung a metal lamp which cast a light, as bright almost as the sun over the faces of the assembled guests. There were some thirty young people of both sexes assembled, divided into two companies and eagerly playing the favourite Japanese game of *utagaruta*, or poem-cards. The flaming candles, the heat of the charcoal brazier, and the human warmth of the assembled company, all combined to make the room peculiarly close and stuffy, and the smoke of tobacco curling up and mingling with the fumes of lamps, candles, and charcoal only increased the oppressive heat of the atmosphere. Everybody's face was flushed and red: some of the ladies had lost the powder which they had worn in abundance at the beginning of the

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evening, the locks of others had become disordered, and again others had had their dresses disarranged by the eagerness with which they joined in the game of skill and chance. Of course, the ladies showed more signs of disorder, because there was more about them to become disarranged, but the men bore signs of the fray also. One man was sitting in his shirtsleeves, quite unconscious of the rent in his shirt. Another had his girdle untied and was exposing his person in his eagerness to snatch the winning card. Yet a third had four of his fingers wounded and bound up with paper to stop the bleeding. No one seemed to be conscious of the close stuffiness of the room, so madly were they absorbed in the exciting game—it was a scene of shouting merriment and boisterous laughter, of romping, snatching, shrieking, lawlessness—it was as if hell had been let loose and all notions of order and decorum reversed.

It is said that, when a ship is overtaken by a storm, a few gallons of oil poured on the troubled waters will suffice to calm the waves and save the vessel from shipwreck. In that lawless tempest of excited players there was one who ruled like a queen over the excited company, and

acted as oil upon the waters. The men, however lawless and noisy they might be, felt the magic of her presence and voice, and were hushed into an admiration which was almost worship; the women were afraid of her, and their fear was not untinged by jealousy. It was a young girl, sitting by one of the pillars in the middle of the room: her hair was elaborately tied up with a "bonnie blue ribbon," her upper garment of a quiet gray crape,—and out of her large clear eyes, she looked with interest and dignity upon the wild scene around her. She was so beautiful and so charming that those who saw her for the first time suspected her of being a lady of the *demi monde*, especially invited to add grace to the feast by her presence and dress: the game had not proceeded very far before the whole company were talking amongst themselves about the charms of "Miya." There were many other young ladies present. Some of them were so homely that they looked like nurse-maids dressed out in suits of borrowed finery, or like the caricatured peeresses whom our farce-writers delight to represent in awkward situations: but others again were so well dressed that they would have gained full marks, or even more, in a contest of elegance

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and beauty. There was, for instance, the daughter of a well-known member of the House of Peers, as homely a girl as can well be imagined, but dressed in the height of elegance, in a "three-fold suit" of *mon-omeshi* silk crape, with a light purple *obi* of *shichin*, beautifully embroidered in gold with crossed lilies,—so dazzling was her finery that everybody puckered up their eyes and looked in admiring silence to take it all in. By the side of all this grandeur Miya's dress was like the morning star paling before the sun in his early glory; but then her complexion was fairer than any there, her face more symmetrically beautiful than any textile design. Just as no amount of ornamental dressing will make an ugly woman beautiful, so in Miya's case no simplicity of dress could spoil her charms.

Sitting by a *hibachi* in a corner of the room were two persons engaged in a quiet conversation, peeling oranges the meanwhile, and casting surreptitious glances at the beautiful damsel. At last one of them, unable to restrain his feelings, groaned out:

"Yes, indeed. She is pretty, beyond a doubt. It may be true that "the trappings make the horse," but a true beauty needs no dressing.

Beauty is personal and inherent : any dress would be becoming—or no dress."

"Yes indeed," assented the other, "I should like to see her naked!"

He was an art student.

CHAPTER III

The Large Diamond.

THE gentleman who had arrived lately in the *jinrikisha* with two men was now ushered in by the mistress of the house. With them came in also the master of the house, Mr. Minowa Ryosuke, who had taken refuge from the noise by shutting himself up in his own room, but now came out to greet the new comer. Everyone else was too eagerly engrossed in the card-contest to observe the entrance of this fresh group of persons: only the two who had been sitting by the *hibachi* in the corner turned to look at the gentleman with critical curiosity.

As they stood at the entrance to the parlour, the lamp-light shone full on them. A nervous twitch was playing round Mrs. Minowa's small thin lips, and the husband's half-bald head shone red in the glare. He was a strange contrast to his small thin wife, for he was a big fat man with a face as jolly as that of Hotei the god of Fortune, whilst his consort was extremely thin and nervous.

The visitor was a man of some twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, tall, fairly fat, with a

The Large Diamond.

smooth shiny skin, cheeks reddish, a deep forehead, a large mouth with big jaws, and a square face. His well-oiled hair, which had a gentle wave in it, was parted on the left side. His moustache was not very thick, and he wore on his nose, which was somewhat prominent, a pair of gold-rimmed *pince-nez* spectacles. His upper garment was a *haori* of fine black *shiose* silk with five crests on it, underneath was a long garment of rich material which reached down to his feet, and was girded around with a six-inch *obi* of *shichin* in which he wore a gold watch attached to a handsome and conspicuous gold chain. He was indeed a superb sight, as he looked round with an air of dignified patronage on the assembled company. There was no handsomer man, and no one better dressed than he was in the whole room.

“Who is he?” asked one of the two men by the *hibachi*, in a spiteful whisper.

“A disagreeable beast!” replied the other promptly, turning his face away as though to spit in disgust.

Just at that moment the mistress beckoned to her daughter. “A moment, Shun,” she said, and the girl turning at the voice and seeing the newcomer, left the players and joined her mother. She

was not a very pretty girl, but had something of her father's good-natured look in her face, which gave her a certain charm. Her hair was done in the aristocratic *taka shimada* style, and her delicate pink *haori* had tucks at the shoulder which seemed to denote her youth. She flushed a little as she went up to her visitor, and kneeling before him made him the customary polite salutation, to which he replied with a somewhat stiff and distant bow.

"Please come in," she said, and made as though she would lead him to join the players. He nodded, but did not seem to wish to do so.

"My dear," said her mother, with a nervous, hesitant twitch on her lips, "such a nice New Year's present has just come for you."

The girl gave another respectful bow, and this time the gentleman answered with a responsive smile.

"Please, do go in," urged the host, whilst Mrs. Minowa nudged her daughter to conduct their guest to the *hibachi* which stood near the place of honour by the alcove. She herself accompanied him thus far, the two critics, who were taking in every word and gesture of the newcomer, wondering why the host and hostess should show him

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such politeness. As he walked past them, through the groups of players to gain his seat, his left side only was turned towards them, but they caught a glimpse of something brilliant on his ring-finger, which dazzled them for a moment and attracted their curiosity. It was a large diamond set in a handsome gold ring, the biggest diamond they had ever seen, and he for his part, seemed quite anxious to let every one know that he "held in his hand the brightest star of heaven."

When O Shun got back to her place among the players she touched the girl that sat next to her and motioned something with her lips. The girl at once began to stare at the gentleman, but what riveted her attention was not the man but his ring.

"What a ring!" she exclaimed. "Is it a diamond?"

"Yes."

"It's a very big one."

"They say it cost three hundred yen," said O Shun, and the other, with a cold shiver of jealousy rising in her heart, added:

"I can quite understand that. It is a beauty."

Her heart throbbed like the drum of an ancient warrior as she suddenly recollected how often she

had begged for a ring with a pearl in it, as small as a sardine's eye,—and always in vain—and while she was gazing she became so much absorbed in her thoughts that she allowed a neighbour to snatch a card from right under her nose.

“My dear,” said O Shun, giving her a vicious slap on the thigh, “what's the matter with you?”

“Oh nothing, nothing!” she replied. “It shall not occur again.”

She had now awaked from her day-dream, and tried to concentrate her mind on the game, but in vain. The diamond would come flashing across her mind as well as her eyes, and she was but a poor ally for O Shun.

Meanwhile it flashed from one and another in quick succession:—

“It's a diamond.”

“So it is! What a diamond!”

“Why, bless me! What a splendid diamond it is!”

“It must have cost a pot of money. Three hundred yen, at the very least.”

Everybody concluded that the owner of the ring must be a very rich man and one much to be envied, and the fortunate gentleman seeing himself

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the cynosure of all eyes, smoked his cigar with a nonchalant air, with his right hand hidden in the wide sleeve of his garment, and his left resting conspicuously against the alcove pillar in the intervals between his puffs.

Of course every one wanted to know his name, and presently it went round the room (having probably leaked out from O Shun's lips) that his name was Tomiyama Tadatsugu, that he was the son of a *nouveau riche* who lived in Shitaya, who had founded the Tomiyama Bank with his own capital, and whose name, Tomiyama Jūhei, was well known also in connection with the Municipal Council.

The men were all talking about Miya, the name of Tomiyama was now to be heard on the lips of all the chattering girls, and many a gentle heart was fluttering with the hope that in the next round of cards its owner might be on the side of the rich gentleman, and so obtain a nearer view of the precious diamond—a double blessing indeed, inasmuch as proximity to the diamond also implied proximity to the fragrant and delicate odor of violet with which the gentleman was perfumed. So engrossed were the ladies in this new theme of thought and conversation, that the gentlemen

began to feel themselves neglected, and they grew sullen, jealous, and bad humoured.

Miya alone showed no sign of emotion. Her eyes were cool, and shone with a cautious brightness which seemed to vie with the lustre of the diamond though apparently unconscious of its presence, and which thereby encouraged her worshippers in the hope that with such a Queen to lead them, a sovereign of beauty whom they had always appreciated, and who had never yet deceived them, they would be able in the next contest to wrest this proud upstart,—possibly even to take his distinguishing badge from him. Thus it came to pass that Tomiyama and Miya became like the sun and moon in that firmament of youth and beauty. Who would be on Miya's side? Who would be on the side of Tomiyama?

CHAPTER IV
The Game of Cards.

THE lots were drawn, and the result was one which no one expected. Tomiyama and Miya were on the same side, with three others, and the rest of the guests were against them; for whereas there had hitherto been two sets of players and two games, all the players in the other set joined in this new set, and all combined against Tomiyama and Miya. It was as if the sun and moon were trying to shine in the heavens together, and the game was somewhat confused in consequence.

Soon after the game commenced, the players sitting in the vicinity of Tomiyama and Miya, who, as partners, were sitting together, formed themselves into a party which they called the "Socialists," with discontent as its principle and destruction as its aim. They organized themselves, that is, with the deliberate intention of forcibly interfering with the fortunes and peace of mind of a certain person of whom they did not approve. Opposite to this party was another smaller party composed of one woman whose work it was to secure internal peace, whilst four

strong men, two on either side, stood to defend her against the "Havockers" and "Tramplers"—their opponents whose almost openly avowed intention it was to break the nose of the man they called the "Diamond." The result could have been foreseen; the smaller party was ignominiously defeated, the proud gentleman was humbled, the beautiful lady was so put out of countenance that she could scarce retain her seat. The party broke up in confusion after one fierce contest, and when the confusion was over the gentleman had disappeared. Then the other men cheered, and the ladies felt that the light had gone out of their lives.

The fact was the gentleman had been so savagely torn and trampled upon by his adversaries that he had come to the conclusion that the game was scarcely a civilized one, and had retired for refuge to his host's sitting room.

His hair, till now so smooth and shiny, was like a "turk's head" broom. The cords of his *haori* hung down loose, reminding the on-looker of the celebrated picture of the ape reaching to catch the moon, for the knot was not untied, but one of the metal fasteners had come off. The host was confusedly apologetic.

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"I hope there is nothing serious the matter with you," he said. "Dear me! your hand is bleeding!"

As he said this, he laid down his pipe hastily and rose to give what aid he could.

"Good gracious! What ruffians! Would nothing satisfy them but the use of force? Why, it would need a suit of fireman's clothes to bring a man in safety through a scrimmage like that. The rude fellows! I got two knocks on the head myself."

Tomiyama took the cushion that was specially placed for him, and began with a rueful face to suck the blood from his wounded hand. It was a cushion of reddish brown crape, placed by the side of an elliptical *hibachi* of cloisonné ware standing by a gold-lacquered table. Minowa clapped his hands for a domestic, and ordered a bottle of saké and something to eat.

"You're hurt quite badly. There are no wounds elsewhere, are there?"

"I don't think I could stand any more of them."

The distracted host gave a helpless smile. "I'll get you some plaster in a minute. Don't mind their rudeness. They are only students, you know,

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and boys will be boys; but I am beyond all measure distressed to think that you should have come on my special invitation. You had better not join in the fray again. Please make yourself as comfortable as you can, here."

"I want to go in there once more, though."

"Once more? Do you really?"

Tomiyama's answer was a broad grin on his expansive jaws. The host understood his meaning and replied with a knowing smile, screwing up his eyes until they became like cuts made by eularia grass.

"Some one took your fancy? (Tomiyama only smiled. "I was sure of it. You could not help being struck."

"Why?"

"Why? Oh, everyone is agreed on that point. Is it not so?"

Tomiyama nodded pensively.

"I suppose you are right," he mused.

"You think her pretty, don't you?"

"Yes, she's passable."

"Then, Sir, let us have a cup of saké together. When a severe critic like yourself says a girl is passable, she must be pre-eminently fair. And indeed the girl is a rare beauty."

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The conversation was suddenly interrupted by the hurried entrance of Mrs. Minowa, who had been in the kitchen giving directions to the servants, and knew nothing of the fray.

"I did not know you were here," she said.

"Yes, I took refuge here from the rioters."

"Refugees like yourself are always welcome."

said the hostess with a nervous twitch of the mouth. Then she gave a sudden start and exclamation of surprise. One of the fasteners of the *haori* strings had been lost, and the remaining one was of gold.

Tomiyama stopped her carelessly.

"Please don't trouble, Mrs. Minowa. It's all right."

"No, it's not all right. Pure gold is valuable."

"Oh no! I assure you it's all right."

But Mrs. Minowa refused to listen and hurried away to look for it.

"By the way," resumed Tomiyama, when she had gone, "what is her family?"

"Nothing very much, but....."

"But what?"

"Well, there's nothing much to tell you about them."

"I thought as much. Tell me what you know."

“ Well, the father was a civilian, an official in the Department of Agriculture and Commerce, but now the family seems to be living on an income derived mainly from house rents. And he must have some money put by. His name is Shigisawa Ryūzō, he lives in the next street — an economical family, but very respectable.”

“ Their means, you say, very limited ? ”

As he said this, Tomiyama rubbed his chin and looked very wise. The diamond was flashing brightly.

“ I should think it would do quite nicely. But will they give her in marriage, do you think ? Is not she the heir of the family ? ”

“ Yes. I think she is the only daughter.”

“ That’s where the rub comes in, doesn’t it ? ”

“ I don’t just know how things stand, but I will enquire.”

A few seconds later the hostess returned with the missing fastener, which had been flattened out as straight as an ear-pick. None of the company had been able to tell how it had been done. In answer to her husband’s enquiries she told Tomiyama all she knew of Miya’s family and their circumstances, and promised that she would try to glean further particulars from her daughter when

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the guests had gone. Would not Mr. Tomiyama have another cup of saké ?

Tomiyama Tadatsugu had come that evening to the Minowa's neither for a New Year's visit, nor yet for a game of cards, but because the party assembled there gave him a good chance of looking about him.

He had returned from England a little more than a twelve-months since, and had been looking for a wife. But he had as yet failed in spite of all his trying. Nothing but a tiptop beauty would satisfy him, and he had rejected a score of suggested brides already. The new house built for him in Shiba Park was still empty, though it began to shew signs of age. And the aged caretakers talked only of the past in their gloomy chamber at the back.

CHAPTER V

The Walk Home.

IT was about midnight when the game of cards came to an end, for though since ten o'clock guests had been taking their departures by ones and twos, a small band of zealous players, about two thirds of the whole number, kept steadily playing on with undiminished eagerness. They did not know that Tomiyama had merely withdrawn into another room, but thought that the warmth of his reception had sent him home in disgust. In the meantime Tomiyama, chatting familiarly with his host, was talking of Miya as if she were already his own, and remarking that the number of those who had remained might have been reduced by two thirds had Miya but gone home earlier. For Miya was still with the players.

Miya's admirers (and they were many) were all waiting for the chance of escorting her home, as the hour was now too late for her to go alone. They did not know that she was already provided with an escort—a student in the uniform of the High School, whose evident familiarity with Miya

had attracted almost as much attention as the diamond ring. Saving this one fact there was nothing conspicuous about him: he was quiet and reticent, and seemed purposely to keep himself rather in the background. It was not until the end of the evening that he asserted his intention of seeing the young lady home himself, an assertion which took all by surprise, as he had hitherto taken too little notice of Miya to allow any one even to conjecture that he had the right to be her escort.

Miya's head was wrapped in the dove-coloured wrapper which Japanese ladies use in cold or rainy weather, whilst over her shoulders she had thrown a large blue woollen shawl of a gay pattern. The student had on a brown overcoat, and stood outside in the dark, hugging himself to keep out the cold blast, and waiting for Miya to join him.

No sooner had Miya groped her way to him than he began his remarks:—

“Miya San,” said he, “what did you think of that fellow with the diamond ring?—I thought him a most affected snob.”

“I can hardly say. I felt very sorry for him: everybody was so rude to him. And as I was sitting next to him, I came in for some of the rudeness myself.”

"One could not help being rude to him, he gave himself such airs. Indeed, I don't mind owning that I had a whack or two at him myself."

"I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself. It was outrageous, the way you all behaved."

"I don't know how you women feel about him, but we men just feel that we could spit at him whenever we look at him. I wonder how any girl can like him.".....

"I can't say I like him myself."

"With his disgusting scent, and his flashing diamond,... ..for all the world, as though he were a feudal lord.....Just the fellow to take a girl's fancy!" And the student gave a disdainful laugh.

"Well," said the girl in a deprecating tone, "I have told you that I don't like him."

"But, if you disliked him, how came you to play on his side?"

"How could I help it? We drew lots for partners."

"True, but you did not look as if you disliked the partnership."

"What rubbish you talk."

"There was something more in the diamond ring than just a mere lot."

"Perhaps so," was the girl's defiant answer, as

she drew the folds of her shawl closely round her shoulders.

"I'm cold!" said the student, coming close to her and taking hold of her by the shoulder. Miya said nothing, but walked on.

"I'm cold!" he repeated; but Miya made no reply.

"I tell you, I'm cold," he said for the third time in a peremptory tone. Miya turned towards him.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked.

"I'm cold, I tell you."

"Are you? I am very sorry for you,"

"I'm beastly cold. Give me a bit."

"A bit of what?"

"A bit of your shawl."

"I can't. It would be too awkward."

Without further ado, the man snatched the corner of the shawl out of her hands, and squeezed himself into it. Miya was giggling so that she could scarcely walk.

"Don't, dear," she expostulated between her giggles. "We can't walk in this absurd fashion. Hush! Someone's coming."

On what footing did this couple stand to each

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other, that the one should behave in so indecorous a manner, and the other allow him to take such liberties? Kwanichi Hazama had for many years lived as a ward with the Shigisawa family, and it was understood that he was to marry Miya as soon as he entered the University the following summer.

CHAPTER VI

A Retrospect.

KWANICHI Hazama had for ten years been a dependent on the kindness of Mr. Shigisawa, having had no one else to look to. His mother had died when he was an infant, and his father had followed her to the grave before the boy had finished his Middle School course; and then Kwanichi's troubles had commenced in real earnest. It had been a hard task before to procure doctoring and medicine for a sick father, to say nothing of tuition fees, which were squeezed out like blood from a poor body: from now, the lad, who had become the head of the family at the age of fifteen years, had to face the problem of providing for the funeral expenses of his parent, as well as for his own future schooling, and the family income was so small that the most rigid economy would not suffice to make both ends meet.

Kwanichi could have done nothing if it had not been for the timely assistance and care bestowed upon him by Ryūzō Shigisawa. The elder Hazama had in days gone by been Shigisawa's benefactor, and Shigisawa, mindful of benefits

received, had not only aided his friend during his last illness, but had on more than one occasion advanced money for Kwanichi's tuition. Thus the lad, in losing a poor parent, gained a generous patron, for Mr. Shigisawa felt that his indebtedness to the elder Hazama could never adequately be repaid, and his gratitude, mingled with his compassion, led him to take the son into his own house and provide him with an education worthy of the honorable family from which he was descended.

Kwanichi's father had been proud of being a *samurai*, and his ambition for his son had led him to formulate the desire of seeing the lad, as a University graduate, rise to a position higher than that of any of the four classes into which Japanese society was at one time divided.* He had frequently spoken, in melancholy tones, of his ambition both to his son Kwanichi, and his friend Ryūzō, and when his premature death prevented the accomplishment of a plan which he would in any case have found somewhat difficult of execution, Shigisawa had resolved to look upon his friend's wishes in the light of a last will and testament to be scrupulously fulfilled.

* *Samurai*, farmers, artisans, and merchants.

Kwanichi's position in the Shigisawa household, therefore, was not exactly that of a poor relation or dependent hanger on. Those who knew all the circumstances of the case considered that his lot was a more fortunate one even than that of the adopted son in his new family : for he was treated with all the consideration and affection which the Shigisawas considered to be due to him as the son of their former benefactor. Many of their friends at once jumped to the conclusion that they designed Kwanichi as the future husband of their only daughter, Miya : but such was not their original intention. It was not until they saw what a diligent and promising student he was, and how well he had acquitted himself in his examinations at the High School, that they resolved to act upon the suggestion which more than one of their friends had made to them.

It made them happy to think of the excellent husband they were providing for their daughter. Kwanichi was diligent, upright, and a man of pure life, and if these qualifications were crowned by the possession of a University degree it did not seem that there was anything more left for them to desire from their prospective son-in-law. As for Kwanichi, his satisfaction was even greater than

that felt by the Shigisawas. It is true that, according to Japanese custom, he would have to abandon his own name and family, and become a member of his wife's house,—a step which to many a young man of spirit looks almost like a humiliation,—but in his eyes the prospect of possessing Miya, whom he really loved, more than compensated for the humiliation involved in abandoning his own family, which, after all, was not a very desirable one from the standpoint of this world's goods.

Miya, too, was fond of Kwanichi, though, truth to say, her affection for him was only about one half of his love for her. Miya was a beauty, and she knew it. She also knew what her beauty was worth, and that with her personal charms she might aspire to something higher even than a University graduate. She had known of many instances of successful beauties. She saw that poor girls with pretty faces often secured wealthy husbands, that wealthy husbands often turned from their homely wives and consoled themselves with more comely concubines. A man, she argued, has his intelligence and ability to rise in the world with ; a woman's chances of preferment lie in her beauty, and her mirror told her that

many of the ladies who had risen in the world were not half so comely as herself. She felt, too, that she was not reckoning absolutely without her host. When she was about seventeen years old the German Professor of the Violin at the Musical Academy which she attended had made her a declaration of his love, accompanied by a proposal of honourable marriage, and even the Director of that Institution, a man of over forty years of age, and holding an honoured place in society, who had recently lost his first wife, had proposed to her.

When that proposal was made her little heart had beat furiously, partly indeed from bashfulness and modesty, but more on account of the prospects which the fact of such a proposal having been made opened before her. She knew that she might aspire not only to the Professor of Violin or the Director of the Musical Academy, but from the way in which the male-students in the next class-room stared at her through the fence that separated the playgrounds she knew that she might, if she wished, make her selection from a wide circle of admirers.

The Professor and the Director were, either of them, more desirable lovers than Kwanichi with

his University degree and the Shigisawa inheritance : and she concluded that she had better be prudent and wait a little before she allowed herself to be irrevocably tied to the man whom her parents had chosen and, as it were, thrust upon her. She thought that if she played her cards well she might still be married "in a carriage of gems" to a wealthy husband, who could afford to keep her in wealth and luxury.

Yet, in spite of the coldness which she assumed out of policy, she was far from disliking Kwanichi. Indeed, she was really very fond of him, in spite of all her hopes of making a better match ;—and he poor soul, was quite sure that there was nothing in Miya's heart excepting only love for himself.

CHAPTER VII.

Confidences.

THE alarm-clock in Kwanichi's study struck ten, and the room was as black as pitch. Kwanichi had gone that afternoon to a New Year's Feast at the Yaomatsu Restaurant in Mukōjima, and had not yet come back.

As the clock struck, Miya came in, a lamp in her hand, from a room at the back of the house, and having lighted the lamp, proceeded to ring the bell for the servant to bring some charcoal for the brazier, which was quite cold.

"And please," she added, as the servant came in with a small scuttle full of charcoal, "bring the iron kettle from the back parlour, and put it on this fire. The others are going to bed soon, and it will be more convenient."

The cold in the study was intense, and seized on Miya's body like a friend that had long been fasting. With a shiver, she put out her hands to the *hibachi*, and looked up at the clock which was busily ticking on Kwanichi's bookshelf. As she did so, the light of the lamp fell upon her lovely young face.

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It was still "within the pine." The New Year's decorations were still up, and the pine-trees were still standing at the gate as omens of the prosperous year that was dawning. Miya was therefore still in her gala attire, with her face powdered and her hair elegantly arranged after the fashion of Japanese beauty; her very shadow on the wall behind her seemed fragrant with her youthful charms.

Her bright eyes were fixed on the clock, her slender white hands were outstretched over the brazier, her little heart, beating eagerly under the folds of her simply elegant dress, was anxiously expecting the home-coming of the man whom that night she knew she loved. Presently, she moved away from the brazier and took her seat on Kwanichi's own cushion, a cushion her own hands had made for him. It was a pleasure for her to sit for a while in his favourite place.

Presently, the sound of a *jinrikisha* was heard approaching. It was drawn by two men, for Mukōjima is a long way off, and as it rattled up to the door, Miya started up, and went hurriedly to the little porch with its latticed gate to welcome the returning one. The maid stood behind her, carrying a lamp.

Kwanichi was flushed and excited, and not at all like his usual quiet self. He was as a rule a most abstemious man, and rarely touched a drop of saké. This evening it was quite evident that he had been dining well, and yet there was something more than mere saké in his demeanour. He was flushed with happiness quite as much as with wine, and as he threw himself down on his seat by the *hibachi* he squeezed Miya's hand with demonstrative affection.

"I don't know how the thing leaked out," he said to her. "No one but Arao was in the secret of our engagement, and Arao is such a discreet man that he is not likely to have let it out. And yet—think how I was taken aback when a score of congratulatory cups were offered me by my friends, who would take no refusal, but insisted on drinking to the happiness of my engagement."

Miya, softly, smiling, was listening with a keen interest.

"I told them that their congratulations were premature, but it was no use. They answered that if I would not accept their cups as tokens of congratulation, they must offer them as tokens of the envy they felt of me, for being so lucky as to live under the same roof with a girl like yourself,

whether engaged to you or not. They then went on to tell me that, if I were a *man*, I should do all that lay in my power to get you as my wife. If I allowed any other man to rob me of you, they said, it would be a disgrace, not only to myself, but to the whole High School, and that all my class mates would feel themselves involved in the disgrace. And then they laughed and offered their cups as a libation to the god of marriage, who would punish me if I failed in my duty."

After a pause of awkward and constrained silence, Kwanichi continued.

"It would be a terrible thing to bring disgrace on the High School. I look to you for your kind assistance."

"I wish you would not talk to me like that," replied the girl, "you know there is no need."

"But I don't want people to twit me with not being a man, as they will do, if our informal engagement should come to nothing now, after people have begun to talk about it."

"I thought everything was settled. Why trouble yourself about it?"

"I can't help feeling anxious at times. I have noticed a great change lately in your parents' manner towards me."

Confidences.

"Nonsense! That's just a silly fancy of yours."

"I am not so sure. After all, what does it matter, so long as I have you on my side?"

"You may be quite easy on that score."

"May I?"

"May you? How unkind you are to doubt me!"

Kwanichi could restrain himself no longer. He seized the girl in his arms, pressed his burning cheeks against hers, and poured forth his love in that universal language which is common to every nation and which needs no word to express it. In a few moments Miya tore herself from his embrace and left the room. The pair had been for a brief second in Paradise, and as the girl slipped out and closed the *shōji* behind her she knew that come what might her heart was wholly Kwanichi's.

CHAPTER VIII

The Beginning of Trouble.

ONE day Mrs. Minowa came to call on the Shigisawas. Her daughter O Shun had been at school with Miya, but the two families had never visited with each other, even in those days; and since their school days had come to an end, the girls had seen very little of one another. It came therefore in the nature of a shock when Mrs. Minowa, apparently without rhyme or reason, made an unexpected call on the Shigisawas, and neither Miya nor her mother seemed able to conjecture why she came.

It was a long visit that Mrs. Minowa paid, and when she went away after explaining the business that had brought her, the Shigisawas were still more astonished. It was a fortunate thing that Kwanichi had been out that afternoon, and knew nothing about the visit. Assuredly, he would have been angry had he known the nature of the visit, and Miya felt that she dared not tell him. So two days past, and three, and still Kwanichi was left in the dark, while Miya became restless and *distracte*, and lost both sleep and appetite,

and her parents were constantly having long and anxious discussions by themselves about some matter that was evidently troubling them.

Kwanichi had no means of discovering the secret of the visit which had taken place during his absence, nor did he know anything about the private conclaves of the elder Shigisawas; but he could not help noticing the change that had come over Miya, and her sad smile and listless behaviour made him feel worried and anxious about her.

There was a room in a quiet part of the house. It could not exactly be called "Miya's room" but it contained her bureaux and all the little personal effects that a girl of any nationality is fond of treasuring. It contained also a *Kotatsu* in which a fire could be lighted, so that it was a favourite place of resort in winter for all the women folk of the family. It was to this room that Miya retired with her sewing or her Koto, and the willow-twigs artistically arranged in the flat bronze flower-stand had been evidently placed there by her hands. The light came into the room from a large window overlooking the garden, and Miya had spread a large piece of stout paper on the floor

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to keep her work clean. She had unpicked a silk garment, and was engaged in mending the lining, but the needle had dropped from her hand and she was leaning on the frame of the *Kotatsu* in a despondent mood.

During the last few days the poor girl had frequently retired to this room to think, and her parents, who knew what was robbing her of sleep and appetite, suffered her to retire thither undisturbed, whenever she was so minded.

But on this particular day, Kwanichi had come home earlier than was his wont. It was the first day of Term, and the students had been dismissed after a short opening ceremony. He found no body downstairs, but he heard one cough coming from Miya's room, and stole upstairs to see her. The *shoji* were just a little apart, and through the opening he could watch Miya unobserved. She was evidently under the influence of some strong emotion, sighing and groaning and looking around her with eyes full of pain, as though her agony were too great for words. At last she laid her head upon the frame of the *Kotatsu* and sobbed, while Kwanichi for a few moments gazed silently upon her, supporting himself against the pillar of the room. For he, too, was trembling with

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sympathetic emotion as he witnessed Miya's evident distress.

Presently, a lacquer comb, such as nearly every Japanese woman wears, fell out of Miya's head and fell with a rattle against the frame of the *Kotatsu*. The sound caused her to lift her head, and she met Kwanichi's puzzled eyes.

"How you startled me, dear!" she said, trying to conceal her emotion, "I did not know you had come home."

"I have just got back."

"Ah!" she murmured, and a moment after, as though to protect herself from his looks, she added: "Why are you staring at me so? I don't like it. I....."

But Kwanichi kept his eyes on Miya's face. "Why, Miya," he said, "what is the matter with you? Tell me, dearest."

Miya bent her head and looked down as though looking for a needle in her work-box. "There's nothing the matter with me. Why do you ask?"

Kwanichi sat down by Miya, with his elbow on the *Kotatsu*, and looked her full in the face.

"I have always told you that you were not open with me, though you always deny it, and call

me nervous and suspicious. Now I think you are proving that I am right."

"How so? There's nothing the matter."

"Do you call it nothing, when you are so anxious and distressed as you have been for the last few days, and as I have seen you to be just now with my own eyes? If you are ill or in trouble, won't you tell me dear, and let me try to help you?"

Miya could make no answer, but fumbled awkwardly with the silk lining that lay on her lap.

"Are you ill?" asked Kwanichi after a pause. She shook her head gently.

"Then you have something on your mind?"

Again her head shook.

"Then what is it?"

Miya knew not what to answer. Her breath came thick and fast, and she felt as though she were concealing a crime.

"Did you not hear me ask you what was the matter?"

Kwanichi's tones were peremptory. He was irritated by her prolonged silence.

"I don't know what is the matter with me," he stammered at last.... "But the fact is that during the last few days I have been feeling strangely

moody and melancholy, and that everything has been looking black and miserable "

Kwanichi listened with all his ears.

"What miserable beings we poor mortals are! Here to day, gone to morrow; and even when we are here, and ought to be happy, full of grief and sorrow. These thoughts are constantly with me, I know not why. Do I look ill?"

Kwanichi contracted his brows, as if in deep study.

"I am sure you are ill," he said presently. Miya looked down at her work. Presently she answered.

"But there is nothing to worry about. You quite understand, don't you?"

"I understand your meaning. I won't worry about that," he said. And then, after a short pause, he went on.

"I am sure you are ill. Your brain must be affected. If you go on like this you will go melancholy mad, and never smile again. The world is a poor wretched place, I know quite well, but we must not always be thinking about that. If we did, the world would be filled with churches, monasteries, and hermits' cells, and then it would be worse. No, no, Miya, you must try to look at the

bright side of things. I am sure that you have many happy things in your life, have you not?"

Miya lifted her beautiful eyes plaintively to his face.

"Are you sure that you have none?" he said. She smiled a pained smile.

"None?" He laid his hands on her shoulder and tried to turn her towards him, but she still bashfully kept her face averted.

"Tell me! Have you? or have you not?" he cried, shaking her vehemently in his excitement. Miya felt as though an iron hammer had struck her.

"You rude man." she cried with sudden indignation; and then, apprehensive lest she had offended him, she turned to watch his face. But his countenance bore no signs of anger and there was a smile playing about his lips as he went on.

"You know, I have a pleasure in life, a pleasure that by itself makes life worth living, and it is only for the sake of that one pleasure that I live from day to day. Take away that pleasure, and I cease to live; but now I have the pleasure and am happy. Don't you envy me, Miya?"

Miya shuddered as he spoke, and her blood seemed to freeze within her. But she plucked up

courage in her faint heart, and forced herself to reply :

“ I do envy you.”

“ Well, you can share my pleasure with me if you like.”

“ May I? There is nothing I should like better.”

“ Come on then. I will give you everything.”

As he spoke, he took a paper bag of bonbons out of his pocket, and laid it on the *Kotatsu*. The jerk caused the bag to burst, and the sweet meats rolled all over the floor. They were the sweeties that Miya loved best of all.

CHAPTER IX
Verplexities.

TWO days later Miya was persuaded by Kwan-ichi to consult a doctor who after due examination told the girl she was suffering from indigestion and gave her some medicine ; this somewhat comforted Kwanichi, and the patient, although knowing the fallacy of the treatment, obediently followed the physician's orders ; but naturally no result ensued, and the girl, worn out with her conflicting emotions, looked worse than ever and was scarcely able to go about.

Was not Kwanichi the one she loved ? and yet now she was afraid of seeing him. Yet if he were absent she longed for his presence : every tender word he addressed to her cut to the heart ; and at this time, when he saw her ill and suffering, he redoubled his tenderness, so that the poor girl felt this state of affairs could not continue. So one day she appealed to her mother, and shortly after, mother and daughter might have been seen getting into *jinrikishas* while the accompaniment of a large travelling trunk evidently told of a prolonged absence.

The house seemed very empty, and its master felt very lonely. Shigisawa was not yet sixty but his hair and beard were nearly white : he looked what he was, a kind hearted gentle old man. When Kwanichi returned he found the old man pondering over a chess problem, and to his astonishment alone. On further inquiry Mr. Shigisawa stroking his beard reflectively said :

“ After reading the morning paper my wife and Miya hit on the idea that they would go to Atami, and they packed and started at once ; perhaps the doctor advised the hot springs for Miya. It was quite a sudden idea you see, they got off by the 12.30 train. I feel very lonely, stop and have a cup of tea with me.”

Kwanichi could hardly believe his ears.

“ But how sudden ! it is like a dream ” he stammered.

“ Well yes,” returned Shigisawa “ I feel like that too.”

“ However a hot spring is very good. How long will they stay there ? ”

“ Oh I suppose four or five days, they just went as they were,—no preparation. I expect they will soon get tired of it. I wonder if they will even hold out four or five days. Home is best after

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all." Kwanichi retired to his room to change his clothes: he looked round hoping to find a letter but there was none: he searched in Miya's room if she had left something for him, but in vain: he then told himself he could not reasonably expect one as they had started in such a hurry: the letter would come the next day. But somehow he did not feel happy. He had returned home after six hours' hard work at school, longing for a sight of the lovely girl, and now she was gone.

"She is falsehearted" he said to himself, "she ought to have left me a word, even if she were in a hurry; but to go away for four or five days,—ought I not to have been told of this trip? Sudden idea indeed! A sudden idea need not be carried out instantly: they could have waited till I returned, and after talking it over, might have started to-morrow. She is of course quite indifferent whether she sees me or not for four or five days."

The more Kwanichi thought, the more irritated he became.

"They say women have warmer affections than men, but Miya's character has always been cold, even as a child; but not so cold as she is now I think: coldness would naturally increase as she got older. I can't help doubting her."

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He rose from his seat, and paced the room. "On the other hand what about myself? I love this girl with all my strength, I am really infatuated with her. Yes it is an infatuation I must own, and don't know why. And for all this love I lavish on her what return does she render? She goes off to-day without a word. Could she have done that if she really loved me? I could almost hate her when I think of it."

He sat down again and leaned his head on his hand.

"It reminds me of the novel by Bakin I read the other day," he said to himself; but that Hamaji came to see her lover Shino at the dead of night, when she knew he was to be sent away—that is real love—strange, my situation and Shino's are much alike. I too was left an orphan and have lived under the care of the Shigisawas and am engaged to their daughter.....yes, it all fits in. But *my* Hamaji is different, she makes *her* Shino anxious—is that right conduct? Shall I write and tell her of it? No, she is ill, and a sick person must not be worried."

He began again, "Perhaps she despises me. I am only a hanger on, she is the daughter of the house and the heiress; she is always angry when

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I say this; perhaps I am suspicious without cause; but this much is certain, that her love for me is but a lukewarm thing."

Again and again he went over these arguments in his mind, as was his custom when he had a problem to solve, but this problem would not be solved by these means.

CHAPTER X

The Father's Request.

THERE was news from Atami the next day, but it was only a post card telling of a safe journey and giving the address of the house the travellers were lodging in; it was in Miya's writing and addressed jointly to Shigisawa and Kwanichi. The latter in his disappointment tore the card instantly to pieces. Perhaps if Miya had been there his anger would have melted, for he could never be angry with her except when she was absent.

That evening Shigisawa asked Kwanichi to remain and drink tea with him. The old man was, probably feeling lonely, and wanted to chat with some one: he noticed Kwanichi's depression and asked him the reason, but the latter was ashamed to own his foolish anger, and tried to control his thoughts and talk as usual with Shigisawa on ordinary topics. He was not very successful, however, for his thoughts wandered so much that he often did not hear what Shigisawa said.

If only he had a nice long letter from Miya full of little details, how happy he would have felt: it

would have been almost better than seeing her every day ; she ought to feel how disappointed he would be, especially after leaving him without even a word of farewell. If she loved him, she would write to him ; therefore her silence proved her indifference to him, so he told himself over and over again.

He was suddenly roused by something in Shigisawa's voice, and pulling himself together heard Shigisawa say " I have something to talk to you about."

He looked up sharply, and was surprised to see a look of embarrassment in the old man's face.

" Yes, sir, I am listening."

Shigisawa stroked his long beard thoughtfully and said slowly " It is about yourself."

He paused then resumed " You will graduate from the High School this year I believe."

Kwanichi assumed a more respectful attitude, as he felt Shigisawa was going to talk seriously with him.

" This," continued the old man, " will be a relief to my mind, and I shall feel I have partly repaid to you the benefits I received in by-gone days from your father ; but you must still study diligently, for I shall not be satisfied till you have graduated from the University and secured a

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suitable position. In fact I am considering the possibility of sending you abroad to further prosecute your studies. I do not intend to shake off my responsibilities : on the contrary I intend to strain every nerve to make you a distinguished man, that I may be proud of you."

Kwanichi felt oppressed with the weight of these benefits to be heaped upon him, and ashamed when he thought how lightly and as a matter of course he had accepted for ten long years all the goodness and kindness of this family, sometimes even forgetting how much he was indebted to them.

"Oh, Sir," he said, "I cannot find words to thank you for all you have done for me. I don't know what my father did for you, but certainly not enough to merit all the kindness you have shown me ; what would have become of me when my father died if you had not taken pity on me ? No matter what I do I can never sufficiently show my gratitude towards you."

Tears filled Kwanichi's eyes when he thought how he was left at his father's death a poor boy of fifteen with no means of livelihood, and now he was a fine grown, well dressed, young man in a short time to be married to the lovely daughter of the home, and in the future to be its master.

What a contrast to the poor boy who used to go out daily with a cloth to buy the small portion of rice for himself and his father!

"I am very glad," said Shigisawa, "that you feel grateful: that encourages me to ask a favour of you. Will you do it?"

"What is it Sir. If it is anything I can do, I will do it with pleasure." Kwanichi did not hesitate to give this promise, although he felt a little nervous, as he was sure it must be something important.

Shigisawa continued "It is about Miya. I am thinking of giving her in marriage to an outsider.

Noticing Kwanichi's look of astonishment, he continued hurriedly, "I have been thinking the matter over a great deal, and I have come to the conclusion it will be better for Miya to marry into another family; and better for you to go abroad for four or five years after you have taken your University Course. What do you think of this plan?"

Kwanichi could not answer: he had turned deathly pale, and could only stare dumbly at his benefactor who had dealt this deadly blow to his hopes.

Shigisawa looked disturbed, but continued, "I am extremely sorry to break the engagement, but I

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have given full consideration to the matter, and shall do nothing injurious to your interests; understand me, please, Miya will be given in marriage to another family with your consent. Will you consent to it?"

He waited, but Kwanichi still was silent, so Shigisawa continued the one-sided argument. "You must not think unkindly of me. Even if you do not marry Miya you will still belong to this family: you will be my heir, and all I possess (not very much it is true,) will come to you. Hence my idea of sending you abroad."

He paused, "It may seem as if I were dissatisfied with you that I give Miya to another; but that is not the case. I want you clearly to understand this point. I have always thought it was your great desire to distinguish yourself, and if you become a famous man it will matter very little to you if Miya is your wife or not. Perhaps you do not agree with me. I was afraid of this; but this is the favour I ask of you."

Kwanichi bit his lips to conceal their trembling, as in a tone strangely different from his usual one he faltered out, "Then can you not possibly give Miya to me?"

“ Well, I will not say I can't give her ; but what do you think about it ? Do you still persist in wishing to marry her, notwithstanding my request, even if the marriage necessitates breaking off your studies, and prevents you going abroad ?I cannot think this of you.”

Kwanichi's heart was full, so full that he dared not speak, or he would say too much. He remembered Shigisawa was his benefactor and his tongue was tied. Shigisawa's reasoning was so plausible, it sounded quite reasonable, and yet Kwanichi felt he ought not to be expected to fall in with the old man's plans. He thought—even if he, under the heavy burden of gratitude to his benefactor, should resign himself to give up Miya, would she agree to it ? She did not love him as much as he wished, but he felt sure she would not forsake him. Why need he then dread her father's plan ? He could rely upon her affection ; and thinking thus he endeavoured to calm himself, and soften the bitter anger in his heart against her father. He had often doubted Miya's love for him, this would be the test.

At last he could control his voice “ When you say you will give Miya in marriage to another family, to whom are you going to give her ? ”

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“It is not yet definitely settled. You know the Tomiyama Bank in Shitaya. It belongs to Mr. Juhei Tomiyama whose son is looking for a wife, and overtures have been made to me.”

“Ah! that fellow who made such a display with his diamond ring,” said Kwanichi scornfully.

He was surprised at this unexpected name, but after all he thought he need not be surprised. Who, seeing Miya, would not fall in love with her? He should rather be surprised at Shigisawa's conduct; it was not so easy to break a ten year's engagement, —and then who ever heard of giving the only child to another family? Shigisawa could not really intend to do so. The Diamond, too, as he called Tomiyama in his own mind, was he his rival? he need not fear him surely.

“Ah! yes,” he said, “Juhei Tomiyama is a millionaire, isn't he?”

The colour mounted in the old man's face; but he took no notice of Kwanichi's satirical remark, but continued.

“There is of course the engagement to you, and the fact that she is the only child; but considering well the future of both of you, I think it is the best plan. We are getting old and, as you know, we have not many relations. And although you are young

and strong it will be a great help to you to be connected with such a respectable family as the Tomiyama's. It is entirely for your future good that I have decided with much sorrow to break the engagement and give our only child in marriage to another family."

"The Tomiyamas," he continued, "have pressed me much for my consent; and as Miya is my only child, they have promised to consider our two families as one and do their best for the Shigisawas. You see it is not a selfish motive that actuates me: I am really doing the best for both of you, the Tomiyama connection will also help you to get on. If you agree to my request I will make arrangements for you to go abroad at the end of this year, as soon as you have graduated; and instead of marrying Miya and relieving us of a little anxiety, you will rejoice our hearts much more by taking a degree at a foreign university."

As Shigisawa continued piling up his arguments, Kwanichī saw the motives clearly: it was all words, words, to cover his secret reasons, whereas it might have been summed up in one word Self-interest. But would it not be a disgrace for Kwanichi to purchase to himself a degree by selling his future wife?

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Kwanichi felt confused, his world seemed topsy-turvy. What was good and what was right? He had always looked upon his benefactor as a good man; had he not in gratitude for a small benefit conferred on him, repaid it a hundred times by taking him, Kwanichi into his house and bringing him up as his own son. And now, was it that Shigisawa was mean, or was he, Kwanichi, stupid? He could not understand it. He thought of Miya, his love for her:—death itself could not rob him of this:—her love for him? was it not brighter than the largest diamond that ever an emperor owned?—Comforting himself with this reasoning he turned again to Shigisawa.

“And does Miya know of this matter?”

“Yes, she knows a little about it.”

“Then you have not yet inquired if she agrees to it?”

“Well, I have inquired a little.”

“What did she say?”

“She says she will leave the matter to her parents. She has no objection herself, and when I explained the circumstances to her she seemed to agree with us.”

Kwanichi believed this to be a lie, his heart beat, but he said calmly. “You say she has consented?”

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"She made no objection, so I hope you will do the same. When you think it over you will I am sure find it a reasonable plan? If you see my point you will consent, won't you?" A doubtful yes from Kwanichi "Later on we will discuss it more fully, for the present, consider it well." Kwanichi replied "I will do so."

CHAPTER XI

Atami.

ALTHOUGH only the middle of January, the plum woods of Atami with their 2,000 trees were in full bloom, (for Atami is at least ten degrees warmer than Tokyo), the sun was shining and a delightful fragrance from the plum blossoms filled the air. There were no other trees among the plums; but a back ground of ever-green pines and cedars showed up the delicately tinted blossoms.

The ground was smooth with now and then low irregular stones, and a clear stream dashing rapidly through the wood threw its sparkling bubbles like gems across the path. There was no wind, but the blossoms were falling incessantly, floating gently to the ground, to the accompaniment of the song of the bushwarbler.

Miya and her mother came slowly sauntering through the wood towards one of the many benches invitingly placed for visitors. Miya's face, which she had slightly powdered, was still pale, her step was heavy, her look downcast except now and then, when she looked up at the

flowers, as if remembering she must not show her depression. It was her habit to bite her lip when pensive, and at present she did so frequently.

"Mother dear, what shall I do?" said she. Her mother, who had been gazing at the flowers, turned her eyes on her daughter: "What shall you do? that depends entirely on yourself; it was you that caused these difficulties by saying you would like to marry into the Tomiyama family." "I know all that" returned Miya, "but I can't help being anxious about Kwanichi. Do you think Father has already spoken to him?"

"Yes, I am quite sure he has."

Miya bit her lip: "Mother I cannot face Kwanichi. I feel too much ashamed to see him again, so, if I am to marry, I wish I could be married without seeing him again. Could'nt you manage it for me mother dear."

Her eyes filled with tears and as she wiped them away, she remembered that the handkerchief had been given her by the man she was afraid or ashamed to see again.

"My dear," replied her mother, "if you think so much of Kwanichi, why did you say you wished to marry another? If you are so unsettled, what are

we to do? The marriage negotiations are progressing every day, and you must make up your mind one way or the other. We have not the slightest desire to compel you to marry against your wish; but if we decline this match we must send word at once, though how we shall do it now, I".....

"It is all right," interrupted Miya, "I will go on with it; but when I think of Kwanichi I can't help feeling unhappy."

As Miya's mother was feeling herself very uncomfortable,—it even disturbed her sleep—whenever Kwanichi's name was mentioned, she had not much comfort to offer her daughter; but she still tried to gloss over the sorrow she could not but know Kwanichi would feel.

"When your father has spoken to him and obtained his consent, things will be more settled," said she, "and you will be able to help him in getting on by marrying into another family; moreover men are more prompt in decision than we are, and when your father talks to him he will see the point and agree, so there is no need for you to be so anxious about him. You say you would like to be married without seeing him again, but, my dear, that will not do at all; the right way is for you to meet, and after discussing the matter, agree to break off the

engagement honourably ; you ought to be like brother and sister after this."

Mrs. Shigisawa paused and then said cheerfully, " We may expect news any day now, and then we must return home and begin preparations for the wedding."

Miya sat on the bench, half listening and half following the current of her own thoughts, dreamily biting one blossom after another as they fell into her lap, and half conscious of the murmur of the stream, and the intermittent notes of the bush-warbler.

Raising her eyes, she saw the form of a man moving among the trees : looking more attentively, she recognised him and whispered his name to her mother, who, rising from the bench, walked forward five or six steps, when the man, seeing who it was, called out, " You are there ? "

The voice resounded through the quiet woods, and Miya hearing it shrunk back involuntarily. Mrs. Shigisawa however replied, " Yes, we are very glad you have come too."

Our readers will have guessed that the new arrival was the possessor of the large diamond. He carried a cane as white as ivory with a green gem set in the knob.

Striking back the lower branches of the trees so that the blossoms fell to the ground he called out :

“ I went to your house in Tokyo, but being told you were here, I started off at once. What lovely weather, and how warm it is.”

Miya raised her eyes at last, and rising, bowed politely. He acknowledged it with an expression of pleasure and condescension.

“ Did you indeed? It was very kind of you,” Miya stammered. “ It is so fine that we came out for a walk. Will you not sit down? ”

Her mother dusted the bench, and Miya stood aside to let him pass.

“ Will you not sit down too? ” he urged. “ I have had a letter from Tokyo this morning, asking me to return at once on urgent business. The fact is I am going to establish a company for exporting lacquer ware to foreign countries. I am the Director of the company, so you see I am very busy, and they want me back. I have to leave here to-morrow morning.”

“ Dear me, that is very short notice.”

“ Yes, cannot I persuade you to return with me? ” He gave a stealthy look at Miya, but

as she did not attempt to answer, her mother replied, "Thank you."

"Do you intend to remain here? Don't you find a hotel very dull? I may build a villa here next year, as I think of buying a large lot of ground: then I shall often come here for a change from Tokyo."

"That will be delightful," said Mrs. Shigisawa. "What do you think, Miss Miya?" he said. "Do you like a quiet place in the country?"

Miya only smiled, so her mother answered, "She likes any place where she has a good time."

Tomiyama laughed, "We are all alike in that; then let me give her a good time. She shall go to Tokyo, Kyoto, the country, wherever she likes. Does she dislike travelling by sea? No? she does not dislike the water at all? Then a trip to China or America would be interesting."

"Will you not visit me at my villa in Akasaka?" he continued, "I have a beautiful plum garden with about 200 varieties of plum trees, all old trees. These are nothing compared to them, they are all wild plums. It's quite absurd their calling it Atami Plum Garden. Do come and see mine some day; what is Miss Miya fond of?"

He really wanted to have a talk with Miya, but she remained silent, only smiling bashfully.

He began again, "When are you going home? won't you return with me to-morrow morning?"

"Thank you," said Mrs. Shigisawa, "but we are expecting news from home and we cannot leave till then."

Tomiyama was staring upwards in his usual haughty manner. He suddenly took out a white silk handkerchief from his pocket, and shaking it out diffused a very strong perfume of violets.

"I think I shall take a walk along the stream. I don't know this place, but they tell me the scenery is very fine. I am afraid it would be too far for you Mrs. Shigisawa, but if you will lend me Miss Miya, a walk will do her good, as she is suffering from indigestion."

"Thank you. Will you go with him, Miya?"

Seeing Miya's hesitation he rose from the bench saying, "Come, it will do you good, you must not be so inactive."

He touched her gently on the shoulder and Miya coloured and looked as if she could not make up her mind what to do. She did not dislike the man for his daring to be so familiar,

even before her mother, but yet she felt ashamed ; she could not tell why.

Tomiyama was delighted with these signs of bashfulness, which he attributed to his own charms, and thought how delightful it would be to wander alone through the fields holding the hand of the lovely blushing girl, and thinking thus he was impatient to start.

“ Let us go, it is all right as your mother permits it.”

Mrs. Shigisawa turned to the confused girl. “ Will you go ? what will you do ? ”

Tomiyama said, “ You should not say, will you go ? please command her to go.” Miya and her mother laughed at his earnestness, and he laughed too.

There was a sound of footsteps approaching. Was it a visitor to the plum wood, or only one of the villagers passing through ?

“ You will come, won't you ? please do,” in a pleading voice.

Miya, in a low voice, said, “ Mother, come with us, won't you ? ”

“ I ? ” said her mother, “ not I, but you.”

Tomiyama, feeling the mother's presence would spoil his pleasure, made up his mind to prevent

it; "It would be too far for your mother and the road is bad. We will return as soon as you are tired, so let us start."

By this time the sound of the footsteps had ceased, not that the man had passed on, but because he was stealthily watching this little scene from behind the trees. He wore the uniform of the High School with a brown overcoat, and carried an old leather handbag. It was Kwanichi.

The footsteps were heard again, and this time quite near. The three looked towards the place whence the sound proceeded. Kwanichi suddenly appeared and removing his cap said, "Here I am."

CHAPTER XII

The Unwelcome Visitor.

THE astonishment of Miya and her mother may be imagined. Mrs. Shigisawa in her surprise stared at Kwanichi and seemed as if she could not take her eyes off him, while poor Miya felt that if the earth would open and swallow her, she would be grateful.

In their confusion, the mother in a foolish manner said, "You are here;" but Miya, to hide hers, stood behind a tree, with her handkerchief to her mouth to conceal her hurried breathing. It was painful to her to look at Kwanichi, and yet painful not to look: and she was equally anxious as to what Tomiyama might think.

As for the latter he knew of no reason for their agitation: he merely thought the hanger-on of the Shigisawa's had arrived, and awaited events calmly, flourishing his cane in the hand adorned with the diamond, and looking up at the blossoms.

Kwanichi understood the situation: he recognised Tomiyama, and had probably overheard the invitation; but he made up his mind to control himself, and not even by his looks to betray the state

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of his feelings. So with a bitter effort at a smile he said, "And how is Miss Miya's illness?"

Miya was hardly able to control herself. She bit her handkerchief, while her mother, now recovering from her surprise, said: "She is much better. We intend to return in a few days; but I am surprised to see you. Have you no school?"

"Our class-rooms had to be repaired, so we have three days' holiday."

The hopeless situation of Mrs. Shigisawa between Tomiyama and Kwanichi was like the old man in the fable, who having fallen into the water in a lonely field and clutching a tuft of grass to prevent sinking further, finds a rat gnawing it. She was puzzled what to do, but finally said: "As this young man has come from our home; we will return to the hotel with him. I hope you won't think me very rude. I shall call on you again later."

"Certainly," said Tomiyama, "and may I hope you will return with me to-morrow morning?"

"Possibly; it will depend on what news I now get from home. Anyhow I will let you know."

"I see. Then I will give up my walk, and return to my hotel, and await your visit. Be sure and come too, Miss Miya." He was about to leave, but turned and coming close to Miya, said in

a low tone, "You will come, won't you?" Kwanichi watched them without a sign, but Miya was so embarrassed that she could not answer, and Tomiyama, thinking it was only shyness, stooped lower and softly said again: "You must come: I shall be waiting for you."

Kwanichi's eyes flashed, and he glared at Miya; but she, guessing his thoughts, did not dare look at him. Tomiyama had no suspicion about Kwanichi's appearance, so reluctantly left them and returned to his hotel.

Kwanichi watched his departure, and stood still for a while, as if lost in thought. The two women dared not speak, and held their breath waiting for the storm to break. Kwanichi now turned towards them: his face was deathly pale, but he tried to smile and said, "Miya, is not that fellow the man with the diamond we saw at the card party?"

Miya did not answer, but bit her lip. The mother pretended not to hear, and appeared to be listening to the song of the bush-warbler.

Kwanichi went on scornfully: "When we saw him by night, he was not so bad, but now by daylight what a disagreeable looking fellow he is! what a haughty face!"

"Kwanichi," said the mother suddenly, "has my

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husband told you of the matter we have in hand?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Then I find it very unbecoming of you and quite contrary to your usual habit to speak evil of another in that way. You ought not to do so; let us go back to the hotel. You must be tired, so you had better take a bath, and then have something to eat." The three turned towards the hotel. Kwanichi felt something touch his shoulder; he turned his head quickly, and his eyes met Miya's:

"I brushed a flower off your coat," she said.

"Thank you very much."

CHAPTER XIII.

A painful Interview.

THERE was a slight haze but the moon gave a mellow and almost fragrant light, and the sea, bathed in white sheen, lay extended like a dream, its rippling waves breaking lazily over the stones with a soporific wash, and a gentle breeze exhilarating the languid scene.

Kwanichi and Miya were sauntering together along the pebbly beach.

“I am so full of grief,” said Miya, “that I can scarcely find words to speak”.....

And then, after walking on a few paces, she took courage to say, “Forgive me please.”

“It is almost too late to apologize now,” said Kwanichi. “It is the eleventh hour, you know. But, tell me, did this scheme originate with your parents? And was it done with your consent? That is all I want to know”.....

A pause ensued, and presently Kwanichi continued:

“Until I came here, I was quite convinced in my belief that your consent had not been given. But this is a point about which there should be no

A painful Interview.

uncertainty. We are practically husband and wife, and between us there should be no secrets."

Again a pause, and Kwanichi continued.

"Last night your father spoke to me about the matter, and made a long explanation, ending up with a request" (here Kwanichi's voice began to tremble), "and as I have received so much kindness from your parents, I feel it my duty to go through fire and water to do whatever they wish me to do. But this request is so unreasonable that I cannot possibly give my consent, and I feel terribly pained to think that your father should have made me such a proposal.....And yet I suppose he has good reason for what he proposes.".....

"I wish he could have put it to me in some other way. He said that if I would only consent he would find the money for me to go abroad and study in Europe. Ah! I may be the poor orphan child of a decayed gentleman, but he is much mistaken if he thinks I am going to sell my wife for a travelling allowance."

A sob here choked Kwanichi's utterance, he turned his face to the sea to hide his emotion. For the first time since they had been strolling along the beach, Miya turned to him.

"Forgive me," she pleaded, "it is all my fault. Please forgive me."

She took hold of his arm, laid her head on his shoulder, and sobbed; and they stood thus for a few minutes with their shadows projected distinctly in the moonlight against the white pebbles of the beach. Kwanichi continued again, when he had mastered his emotion.

"At last I concluded that the real situation must have been somewhat like this. Your father undertook to persuade me, whilst your mother brought you down here in order the better to talk you over to the scheme. I am not in a position to refuse your father anything, so I had just to listen and assent to what he said. But you are not in a position of dependence as I am, and if you will only be firm the thing will come to naught. That is why they brought you down here—to remove you from my influence. When this thought came to me I could rest no longer, for I feared that you might be overpersuaded if left to yourself. So I gave out that I was going to school as usual, and came down after you to see what was going on But after all what a fool I am. Here am I, twenty-five years old, and yet fool enough to have believed in a woman's constancy."

Miya sobbed, but she also trembled ; for Kwan-ichi was evidently working himself into a fury.

“ Miya San ! ” he continued impetuously, “ how could you deceive me like this ; you came here on pretence of being ill ; but you came in reality to meet Tomiyama.”

“ No, no,” pleaded Miya, “ You are wrong.”

“ Wrong ? How wrong ? ”

“ To harbour so cruel and so unjust a suspicion.”

Kwanichi looked sternly at the girl.

“ It is not I that am cruel, Miya. It is you. And I am a fool to allow myself to be so cruelly deceived.”

.....“ You gave your consent to this before you came away Miya. Else, why go away without a word of adieu, or even a letter of explanation. You came down here to meet Tomiyama—for aught I know, you may have come down with him—and that is why you sneaked off without a word to me. Miya, Miya, you are but a faithless wife.”

“ I faithless ? ” retorted Miya. “ Indeed, Kwan-ichi, you are wrong. There was no arrangement with Tomiyama. He came down of his own accord, when he heard we were here.”

“ And what did he come for ? ”

Miya was tongue-tied. Kwanichi waited for her to reply, hoping that she would give some

sign of relenting, that she would ask his pardon and return to the paths of duty and honour. But he waited in vain for a word from the silent girl that stood beside him, and as he waited his hopes died within him and the truth dawned upon him. He had indeed been forsaken. In an agony of grief and pain he threw himself upon the beach and lay there almost in a stupor.

CHAPTER XIV

Kwanichi reproaches Miya.

MIYA had now no time to be frightened. She knelt down beside the lover whom she was so cruelly casting off, and tried by all sorts of endearments to make up to him for the pain she had caused him.

“Kwanichi, Kwanichi,” she gasped, as she bent over him, “What is it?”

Kwanichi took her hand in his and suffered her to wipe the tears from his face.

“Miya,” he said, “this is the last time that we shall be together. It is the 17th of January. Where shall I be this time next year, when the January moon shines on the beach at Atami? Where shall I be this time ten years? See, the moon is getting cloudy, Miya. It will be so for you and me, Miya, next year, and every year and when you see the moon of the 17th of January overcast with clouds, remember that I shall be weeping for you,—with tears of anger and resentment.”

Miya clung to him with hysterical sobs.

“Don't give way like this, Kwanichi, please

don't. I can't tell you everything now, but please have patience with me, and forbear. I can assure you that, come what may, I shall never forget you."

"But, if you are not going to forget me, why give me up? I don't want to hear your assurances."

"But I have not given you up."

"Not given me up, when you are going to marry another? Are you intending to have two husbands?"

"I have a plan in my head. Please have patience with me.—You will then have proof positive that I have not forgotten you."

"Rubbish! Are you going to tell me that you intend to act the part of a dutiful girl and sell yourself for the support of your parents?*" There's no need for you to marry out of the family. You are the only child, and heir to at least 7000 yen, are you not? And you have a betrothed husband, have you not?—ready to marry you—a man with good prospects in life before him, and whom you profess to love. It not that so? I can't for the life of me see what you want with another lover, and a marriage out of your family. There must be some

* Girls in Japan will sometimes sell themselves to prostitute houses in order to provide maintenance for their parents.

reason for it that I do not understand.
Either you are not satisfied with the man to whom
you are engaged, or else you want to marry for
filthy lucre, Tell me, Miya, you need have
no reserve.—If you have the courage to throw
over the man to whom you are engaged, you have
surely the courage to tell him the truth.”

“Forgive me, it has all been my fault,” was all
that Miya found voice to reply.

“Then am I to understand that you are not
satisfied with the man you have promised to
marry?”

“How cruel you are, Kwanichi. If you doubt
me, I will give you any proof you like of my
love.”

“Then, if you are not tired of me, I suppose it
is the money that draws you to Tomiyama. It is
just for mammon and nothing else that I am to be
sacrificed. I suppose I am right in concluding
that Tomiyama has your consent. . . . of course, if
you were unwilling to marry him, I could also find
a way to break off your connection with him. I
could for instance. But, there. I shall do
nothing until I know from your own lips that you
wish to have me as your husband. And I think
you really want to marry him, don't you?”

Miya said nothing, as Kwanichi paced by her side, looking anxiously into her face.

"Very well," he said at last with a deep drawn sigh, "I see what you mean."

He started to leave her, and got some twenty yards or so away. Then looking back, he saw the girl standing desolately weeping by the sea-shore. It seemed to him like a dream. He could not understand that the girl, so graceful and so desolate, was no longer his. He retraced his steps towards her, scarce knowing what he did.

"What are you weeping for, Miya? You know your tears are all sham."

"Say what you like," sobbed the girl in response.

"I used to believe, Miya," said Kwanichi, "that you were like myself, and that you had a soul above money. But now I see your mind—and understand that there, too, Mammon rules. I suppose things will go well enough with you, you will be rich and prosperous; while for me there is nothing but anger, hatred, sorrow. I could stab you as you stand, so keenly do I resent the thought of your being taken from me by another. But my sorrow is nothing to you. I am only a humble retainer of the family with whom you have been diverting yourself. I mistook your kindness

Kwanichi reproaches Miya.

for love; and presumed to love you in return, fool that I was! As if I could hope to stand a chance against Tomiyama and his diamonds! And yet I am sure I love you more than a hundred Tomiyamas could love you. Tomiyama's money won't make you happy. A sparrow in a granary can't eat more than what he wants to satisfy him. And I could have given you enough, though I could not offer you Tomiyama's millions. I could offer you the whole of my love, which is more than Tomiyama will give you. You know, his father keeps a couple of mistresses to solace him when he grows tired of his lawful wife. And when your beauty begins to fade a little, the son will treat you in the same way, and you won't find the life of a millionaire's lady to be all joy. Miya, Miya, marriage without love will not bring you happiness, and you don't love Tomiyama. Won't you reconsider your decision? I am sure I am pleading with you for your best. Miya, can't you love me?"

Kwanichi clung to the girl, as though he would fain have protected her from danger. Miya sobbed in his arms.

"What am I to do? Oh, Kwanichi, what will you do, if I marry him?"

Kwanichi threw her from him, like the wind tears the boughs from a tree.

"So!" he cried. "You mean to marry him after all! You faithless woman. You.....!"

In an access of fury Kwanichi gave her a kick that sent her sprawling to the ground. And then, standing over her prostrate form, he spoke from the great bitterness of his heart.....

"Lady Tomiyama, it was in your power to make a *man* of me. You have killed my hopes and made a madman of me instead. My ruin lies at your door. I shall give up my studies, and turn blackguard. You shall see me no more, neither shall your parents. Give them my kind regards, and tell them that I ought to have gone back to bid them farewell, but that I could not do so after what happened on the beach at Atami on the 17th of January."

Miya tried to rise in order to detain him. But the bruises on her thigh, where she had fallen on the sharp stones, prevented her from doing so. But she dragged herself along the ground and clung sobbingly, to his knees.

"Kwanichi! Kwanichi! W-w-w...wait please. Where are you going?"

Kwanichi turned, and seeing the stains of blood!

on her dress said with more tenderness than he perhaps really felt.

"Are you hurt, Miya?"

"Don't touch me, Kwanichi," said Miya pushing him off. "I don't care about the cut and the bruises. But I do want to know where you are going to? I want to tell you something, and I want you to accompany me back to the Hotel. Won't you do so?"

"If you have anything to tell me, I will listen to you."

"But I can't tell it you here."

"There is nothing you cannot tell me here. Let go my legs."

"I won't let you go. Come back with me.

"Don't provoke me to use violence again."

"You may kick me again if you choose, but I shall not let go."

Kwanichi however shook her off, and fled up the low hill that lay between the beach and the village.....

"Kwanichi! Kwanichi!" cried the miserable girl as she tried to follow him. "I want to tell you what it is: please, please, come back.

But Kwanichi did not come back. Only when he reached the top of the ridge she saw his form

standing distinctly in the moonlight, and heard his voice from among the pine-trees, shouting "Miya San, Miya San," and then he disappeared from sight and went out of her life.

The Gold Demon.

BOOK II

CHAPTER I.
In the Train.

THE large clock at the Shinbashi Railway Station had just struck four; the train for the Tokai-do was ready to start, all the doors of the carriages were closed, thick smoke was pouring from the smoke stack of the engine, and the windows of the long train of more than thirty carriages reflected the brilliant colours of an autumnal sunset. The railway porters were running to and fro shouting to two or three belated passengers to hurry; one, a stout elderly European, who sauntered down the platform as if the train was his special property, a Japanese young girl with a gay parasol, then a woman rushing down with a bundle in her arms and a child on her back, so confused that she did not know what to do as the doors were closed, till the guard pushed her hastily into a carriage, then one more old man leading a child who was so unceremoniously hustled into a carriage by a porter, that the sleeve of his dress caught, and he had to call for help; his face expressing even before he started the misery of a journey.

A company of five young men occupied one corner of a second-class carriage. Only one of them appeared to have any luggage, the rest apparently only being bound for Yokohama. Two were in Japanese dress, the rest in foreign, one in a frock coat was putting away his hand luggage in the rack, and some bottles of wine and beer with which he had been presented at the station; he shook the dust from his hands, put his head out of the window as if looking for some one, then looking up at the blue sky, said: "It has cleared up, I think it will keep fine."

"It will be rather fun if it rains this evening," said the man in Japanese dress with a significant smile; "I say, Amakasu."

The man addressed also wore Japanese dress, and was the only one with whistkickers. Before he could reply, Kazahaya, a very young man with a voice too hoarse for his tender years, said,

"Fun for Amakasu, and desirable for yourself, I suppose."

"Nonsense, Amakasu knows, how to look after himself."

The fifth inmate of the carriage, who was in a handsome Japanese silk dress, suddenly sat upright and said:

In the Train.

“Kazahaya, you and I are being sacrificed I say. Saburi and Amakasu are wanting to go to Yokohama, for they have discovered a snug little establishment there I understand, and want to drag us there to show us their find.”

“Pshaw! If you two call yourselves sacrificed by the other two, I am a victim to all four of you. In spite of my declining your offer to go as far as Yokohama with me, you insisted on doing so, and I felt quite sorry for you. But now I see I was only the pretext. It is abominable of you; for as I know that even in your student days these were your amusements I can't help being anxious about your future; you can only afford to do these things so long as it does not affect your position, but you must be on your guard.”

Josuke Arao, who thus spoke, had been Kwan-ichi's friend four years before, the friend to whom he had looked up to with deep affection. Arao had taken his degree and was subsequently appointed to the Home Department, and now he had been promoted to the post of Councillor in Aichi Prefecture, and was on his way to his new office. His uprightness, prudence, and sincerity, had caused him to be looked up to by his fellow students. He continued, “This will be the last

good advice I shall be able to give you, it will be well if you pay attention to it."

The company, which had been in a rollicking mood, felt somewhat depressed at these words of wisdom, and there was a silence, while they all puffed vigorously at the cigarettes they were smoking, till the carriage became full of smoke; for although the windows were open, it was driven back by the wind.

After a short pause Saburi nodding his head said; "When you speak to me like this I feel cold shudders, for the fact is I saw at the station the Beauty Usurer. She always reminds me of the poem of the bird which sings so sweetly and yet devours lizards; it is really surprising how beautiful she is at all times. She was exquisitely dressed and she looks really a perfect lady—she was particularly got up to-day, she had probably some new case on hand. When once you fall into her clutches it is all up with you, she strangles you with floss silk, as the play has it."

"I should like to see her," said the man dressed in Oshima silk, "I have often heard of her."

"When Sakurai," interrupted Amakasu, "was expelled from school, she was his principal creditor they say; she is a rare beauty and

wears any amount of ornaments, but cruel, and devilish—I suppose Saburi thinks himself very adventurous in having to do with her, but he ought to be on his guard, or he will fall into her snares.”

“She must have some backer I think,” said another, “she must have a husband or lover or somebody.”

“There is quite a romance about it,” interposed the young man with the hoarse voice, “it is not a lover, but she has a husband who has been a usurer for ages; his name is Gonzaburo Akagashi and he is a regular old skin-flint, and a well known libertine. He takes advantage of people being in debt to him, and it is said he has had liaisons with many women, in quarters where you would not expect it. The Beauty Usurer, as she is called, was caught in the same way. She was the daughter of a poor gentleman, and was of unblemished reputation, but the old villain cast a lustful eye on her and in order to capture her lent the father a little money. Upon the expiration of the term he could not pay, so the bill was renewed three or four times with no difficulty. In due time, as they could not pay, he proposed taking the girl into his home as a house-keeper or some kind of a maid,—even if the father

had suspected his motive he could not refuse his creditor,—but the old wretch was almost sixty and bald headed, the girl nineteen,—it was almost six years ago—so no one thought anything of it. He had no real wife, and no one knew when she became his mistress."

Arao, who had been listening with great interest remarked nodding significantly, "Such is woman!"

Amakasu glanced at him, and said, "What a remark for Arao to make! Who would have thought Arao would solve the question of woman?"

CHAPTER II

Cream Beauty Usurer.

AT this point the train suddenly increased its speed. "Can't hear, can't hear," said the wearer of the Oshima silk kimono, whom we will designate as Oshima, "speak louder."

"Sit up closer please all of you," said Saburi, "Arao, won't you open that bottle? I am thirsty, and I am coming to the interesting part of the story."

"It is very hard on us—to have to give these refreshers," said Amakasu. "Kamata," said Saburi, "you are smoking some good tobacco, give me a little. "Just listen," said Amakasu. "I had better put away my things."

"Have you a match, Amakasu?"

"I thought so: here you are, Sir."

Sipping the wine and enjoying the fragrance of the Havana, Saburi proceeded calmly. "As the delicate flowering cherry is often hurt by the heavy branch of a pear tree, the poor girl Mitsue was seduced by the old villain. Of course it was kept secret from her father. At first she pined for home, but now was ashamed to go and see her father,

notwithstanding his repeated entreaties. By and by, of course, the secret leaked out, and the father, with true Samurai spirit, got very angry, and at last disowned his daughter. Then the old usurer proposed that she should be properly registered as his lawful wife, concluding that the girl's father was angry at her being merely a concubine. But when the father saw the daughter, he was most dissatisfied and astonished at her request, "Please, dear father, consent;" and thought she must be crazy to want to marry this old man, ten years older than her own father. However, he was obliged to consent. Mitsue gradually got more and more in favour with the old man, so that by degrees he entrusted her with the management of his whole business. It was of course expected that she would send pecuniary help to her own family, but not a bit of it; not a sen more than was agreed upon at first; this also pleased the old man. Mitsue gradually became infected with his avarice, as soon as she began to regard the property as hers. The love of money became greater than her love for her father, and the usurer's trade became a pleasure to her."

"How strange!" murmured Arao with a disgusted look.

"She must be a clever woman, I say," resumed

Cream Beauty Usurer.

the other. "Well, she trained herself in all the craft and wiles of usury, and at last would go anywhere on business as the old man's deputy, or when he was short of agents. Since the year before last he has been unable to move about, as he has palsy; but she nurses him herself, and at the same time carries on the business single-handed. Last year her father died, miserably poor, so poor that his deathbed was only a thin mat on the floor; she would not allow him to visit her before he became ill: isn't it dreadful? One can't really imagine what her state of mind is.—The people call her Bijin Cream, or Beauty Usurer.

"Her age? They say twenty-five, but she looks hardly more than twenty-two, and she has a lovely, gentle, sweet voice, and is charmingly graceful; she manages her business so artfully, and when she says to her victims in that sweet voice of hers, 'Please renew the bond,' or 'won't you make it into a note?' one might almost imagine that she fascinated them as the snake does the bird. I have been fascinated by her about three times. Gentleness controls roughness as the saying is, so a beauty is very fit for the trade of a usurer.—Give her a country to rule and she would be a Cleopatra, she is sure to bring ruin in her train."

The Gold Demon.

Kazahaya seemed the most interested: "Then you say that old man has been lying helpless in bed since the year before last: surely she must have some lover; a woman like that is bound to have some intrigue." I expect she affects to have none, but has one secretly; well, she is a great woman!"

"I'm afraid she is too great!" laughed Saburi, leaning back with his hands behind his head.—A general laughter followed;—ever since the time when Saburi was in his second year at college he had fallen into the clutches of usurers, and now found himself in debt to the amount of 640 odd yen, either in joint bills or promissory notes. Then came Amakasu, with 400 yen of debt, Oshima was 150 yen in debt previous to his graduation, and 200 yen after it. Kazahaya and Arao were the only two of the party that were free from debt.

The train reached Kanagawa, where a passenger, apparently a Yokohama merchant, alighted, with a polite bow as if to thank them for the diversion he had been so fortunate as to enjoy. While the others were chatting together Arao looked gloomy, stared before him and at last said:

"Have any of you ever heard any more of Hazama?"

"Do you mean Kwanichi Hazama?" said one.

Cream Beauty Usurer.

"Oh! who was it said that he was now a usurer's clerk or something of that kind," said another.

"Yes, yes," laughed Kamata, "there was some such rumour, but I am sure Hazama would never make a usurer: he is too soft-hearted."

Arao nodded and looked gloomily from the window. As Saburi and Amakasu had been in a class higher than the others they had not known Kwanichi.

"That rumour about usury must be unfounded, as Kamata says he was too softhearted. It is a pity, for he had great talent. I wish he were with us now."

He heaved a deep sigh. "You would recognise him if you were to see him, would you not?"

"Yes," said Kazahaya, "I remember him well. Those deep scars are an unmistakable mark."

"I always thought" said Kamada "that, when he was listening to a lecture, with his elbows on the desk supporting his head, and his eyes downcast like this, he resembled a picture I have seen of Alfred the Great."

Arao looked up smiling, "You always say such funny things. Alfred the Great! what a strange association of ideas! I will offer you a glass of wine in gratitude for likening my friend to an ancient hero."

"Ah," said Kamata, "you never forget him, for you were like a brother to him."

"Yes," replied Arao, "I sorrow more for the loss of Kwanichi than if my brother had died."

He hung his head sorrowfully; Oshima borrowed the glass which Kamata had just received, and holding it out to Arao said, "Let us drink to Kwanichi Hazama." Arao agreed joyfully and the two glasses, brimming with wine, were held up, then knocked together and drunk to the dregs.

Saburi on seeing this touched Amakasu's knee saying, "Kamata is sharp, isn't he? ugly as he is, he always manages to pick up something,—a real diplomat."

"It is very strange," said Arao, "but I feel sure I saw Hazama at the station. I am almost sure it was Hazama."

Kamata, who had been drinking the latter's health, looked surprised, and stared at Arao; "Humph, that's strange! did he not recognise you?"

"I saw him first at the entrance to the waiting room, and being surprised, I rose from the sofa where I was sitting; but he instantly disappeared: then, after a while, I looked round and saw him again."

Cream Beauty Usurer.

"Quite a detective story" said Amakasu.

"The moment he saw me get up," continued Arao, "he vanished again. Then, as I walked down the platform I looked back, and saw some one waving his black hat to me. And I am sure it was Hazama."

The train ran into the station, and the cry of 'Yokohama, Yokohama,' was heard many times. All was bustle and confusion, the crowd streaming out looked like a box of toys upset, the noise of the bell being heard above all.

CHAPTER III

An Old Acquaintance.

AS Arao had surmised the man whom he had seen waving his hat at the station was indeed Kwanichi Hazama, who for four long years had vanished from the circle of his friends. He had been completely successful in concealing his whereabouts: but during all that time he had kept himself well informed as to his friend Arao's movements. He knew that Arao had obtained the post for which he was now starting, and also he had managed to discover the time and day he was leaving, and had come to Shimbashi railway station to see him depart, with the marks of honour to which Arao had attained.

But why had Kwanichi ceased to hold communication with his friends? why did he not come openly to bid farewell to one whom he had evidently not forgotten? If my readers will have patience to follow this story a little farther, they will be able to solve this riddle.

Kwanichi did not stand alone there watching the train disappear: many others, old and young, rich and poor, noble and peasant were assembled,

some with sorrow, some with joy, others anxious, and many indifferent ; but after a few moments the crowd dispersed, and as Kwanichi turned with heavy dragging footsteps, as if weighed down with some burden, he was, with the exception of a few railway porters occupied in cleaning the station, the only person to be seen.

Kwanichi pulled himself together, as if surprised at being the last, and was about to leave the station when a voice, which he did not recognise, suddenly called to him from the door of the waiting room.

“ Hazama-san ! ”

He turned round in surprise, and saw a woman standing in the doorway, her hair dressed in European style ; she pressed a silk handkerchief to her lips, the sleeve of her kimono falling back showed a heavy gold bracelet on her arm.

“ One moment if you please.”

She was exceedingly handsome, and smiled graciously upon Kwanichi, but he did not reciprocate ; on the contrary, as he recognised her the tone in which he uttered her name, “ Oh ! Akagashi san,” was decidedly cold.

“ What a piece of luck to meet you here,” said she. “ I want particularly to speak to you. Will you come in here a moment ? ”

The woman led the way, and Kwanichi with evident reluctance followed. She seated herself on sofa and motioned to him to sit beside her.

"I want to speak to you about Ume Oguruma of the Insurance Company." She took a gold watch from the folds of her *obi* and looking at it said, "I think you cannot have yet taken your evening meal, so I will take you to some Restaurant as we cannot talk here." The woman rose, it was plain to see that Kwanichi was annoyed.

"Where?" said he abruptly.

"Wherever you like, you are the best judge."

"I don't care where we go," was his rejoinder.

He was evidently reluctant to go with her, but as she continued to press him, he did not seem able to shake her off, and rose unwillingly to follow her. As he passed the door some one entered hastily and trod heavily on his toes: looking up in surprise, he saw an old gentleman who was looking with a leering glance at Kwanichi's charming companion, his eyes following them as they passed out of the station. The two sauntered towards Shinbashi bridge, evidently not knowing where to direct their steps.

"Which way shall we go?" said she again.

"I don't care where."

“If you keep saying that we shall never arrive anywhere : let us settle it.” The woman was quite aware of Kwanichi’s unwillingness, but as she had determined to make him yield to her she was not to be deterred by his coldness.

“Well then,” said she after a pause, “do you like eels?”

“Eels? Oh yes, I like them well enough.”

“Or do you prefer chicken?”

“Either will do, I don’t care,” said he sullenly.

“How very amiable you are!” said she sarcastically.

Kwanichi looked full at her. Her beautiful eyes, which could express so much, met his with a smile disclosing her shell-like teeth, many of which were filled with gold, and although he had often cursed her in his heart from a knowledge of her character, he could not but feel the charm of her beauty.

“It’s all right,” said she, with a brilliant smile, “we will have chicken.”

They turned the corner and walking about two blocks further on, came to a little side street and stopped at a house at which the character for “tori” (chicken) was engraved on the glass lantern hanging at the gate. The two entered : apparently from the landlord’s view they were

not quite *comme-it faut*, for he conducted them into a small back room, which was only entered by a zigzag verandah, so tucked away that no one would have suspected its existence.

Kwanichi did not feel very comfortable, but he sat there with an air of circumspect reserve, probably assumed to hide his uneasiness at being in the company of a woman in such a doubtful place.

Mitsue quickly gave her orders for a dish or two; the tobacco box was placed between them, and she turned to Kwanichi. "Hazama-san please make yourself at home and sit more comfortably."

"Thank you, this suits me better." •

"Don't say so. Please sit more at ease."

"I always sit like this when I am at home."

"How can you tell such fibs?"

Notwithstanding this Kwanichi continued to sit upright. On taking out his cigarette case, he found it was empty, and was about to clap his hands for the servant, when Mitsue, leaning forward with her bewitching smile, said: "Won't you smoke this as a makeshift?"

The gold mouthpiece of the small pipe peeped out from the end of the pipe case, and the tobacco

An Old Acquaintance.

pouch which she offered him was of magnificent brocade that would not have disgraced a palace.

“Gold teeth! gold obi-fastener! gold ring, gold bracelet! gold watch! and now even the pipe is of gold,” said Kwanichi to himself; “and of course she thinks of nothing but gold.”

“No thank you,” he said, declining the pipe, “I don’t care for Japanese tobacco.”

Mitsue stared at him, “Although the pipe is not dirty, I am sorry I did not think of it,” So saying she took out some paper, and wiped the mouth-piece carefully.

“No, I did not mean that,” said Kwanichi. “I do not smoke Japanese tobacco I say.”

Mitsue looked hard at him:

“If you have to tell lies, you ought to have a better memory.”

“What do you mean?” he said.

“Were you not smoking it the other day when I called on Wanibuchi-san? With a pipe in the shape of a gourd, and a piece of paper wound round where the stem fits into the bowl?”

He looked astonished, and Mitsue laughed, holding her sleeve before her mouth as a bashful girl does. As a punishment for his untruthfulness three pipefuls of tobacco filled by herself were imposed on him in quick succession.

CHAPTER IV

Sake.

IN the meantime the *saké* tray with its accompaniments made its appearance, but both Mitsue and Kwanichi disliked *saké* and neither was able even to drink three cups. However she held out her cup after rinsing it in the bowl of water provided for the purpose.

"Please accept the cup I offer."

"No thank you, I can't."

"The same old story" said she.

"This time I am in earnest."

"Shall we drink beer then?"

"No, thank you. I do not like Japanese *saké* or European drinks either, so drink what you like yourself."

There is a certain etiquette in drinking *saké*. If you decline it yourself, you must pour it out and offer it to the other party. But how rude was Kwanichi. He would neither drink himself nor offer it to her, and how coldly he replied to her invitations! But Mitsue was rather amused than indignant.

"I am no good at drinking *saké* myself," she

said, "but will you not accept this one cup which I offer you with my best wishes?"

As it was impossible to refuse, Kwanichi accepted the cup. Although they had been now sitting some time together, still Mitsue did not touch on the business which she had said was so pressing. At last Kwanichi began.

"By the bye what was that about Ume Oguruma that you wished to say to me?"

"Take another cup, then I will tell you. There that's right, now one more."

Kwanichi frowned, "No, I will not."

"Then I will drink, please pour it out for me."

Kwanichi began again: "What about Ume Oguruma?"

"There is another case besides that."

"You have so many?" said he.

"It is a topic I can't discuss unless I have a little Dutch courage, so give me another cup."

"You should not drink when you are talking business. That comes first."

"Never mind, I intend taking *saké* first."

Mitsue's eyes got brighter, and her cheeks flushed, she removed her outer garment, under which she wore a kimono of figured crape, with an *obi* of black figured silk tied loosely over a

piece of scarlet figured crape. The gold bracelet on her left arm in the shape of ferns twisted together, glittered when she raised her arm to push back one or two loose hairs on her forehead.

The whole style of the woman was an abomination to Kwanichi; he himself was very plainly dressed in a black silk *haori* marked with the family crest, dark blue *kimono*, and a white crape girdle which was not even new.

Those who had known him before would have found him much changed; all that had been pleasant and amiable in his appearance had vanished, the four years of sorrow had left their mark upon him. Although there was a certain look of steadfastness and strength, the eyes were dull and heavy, his manner was cold and reserved, people were afraid of him, no one tried to get intimate with him: perhaps in his own mind he was afraid of intimacy; and sometimes he wondered he had not lost his reason, when he thought of his lost love.

With quiet dignity Kwanichi watched Mitsue drink one cup after another, her eyes and flushed cheeks showing the stimulant had gone to her head.

"Shall I take another cup?" she said, smiling on Kwanichi."

"I think you had better stop."

"If you say stop I will do so," she said.

"I have no right to forbid you," was Kwanichi's answer.

"Then I will drink more."

As there was no reply to this, Mitsue drank half the cup she had poured out: then holding her hands to her hot face she exclaimed: "Oh I have drunk too much." Kwanichi smoked on affecting not to hear her.

"Hazama-san".....

"What is it?"

"I have something special to speak to you about this evening, will you listen to me."

"Have I not accompanied you here in order to hear it?"

With a slight smile, Mitsue continued, "I hope you will not get angry, even if I say something rude; but I am not speaking under the influence of *saké*; please understand that."

"Are you not contradicting yourself?"

"What does it matter?" she returned, "it will be only what a mere woman says," Kwanichi found the situation more and more unpleasant: he folded his arms and looked down, trying to appear as unconcerned as possible,—Mitsue drew nearer to him:

"Just drink this one cup, and I won't trouble you again."

Kwanichi accepted the cup in silence.

"You have now fulfilled my request."

"It was a very simple request," he had almost said, but he stopped short with a bitter smile.

She began again: "Hazama-san!"

"What is it?"

"Don't think me rude, but do you intend remaining much longer with Wanibuchi-san? I should think you would make yourself independent."

"Of course I intend to do so eventually."

"When do you think of leaving him?"

"I must wait until I have a little capital." Mitsue paused, knocking her pipe against the edge of the tobacco tray. Suddenly the electric light went out, she looked up startled, but the light soon came on again; at last, as if making up her mind, she looked at Kwanichi and said: "Don't think me interfering, but would it not be better to leave Wanibuchi at once and start independently? You might even leave to-morrow," she hesitated embarrassed, "I..I.. can't do much, but I will help you all I can. Won't you do so?"

Kwanichi was astonished at the unexpected

nature of her business. He stared at her and said "What do you mean by that?"

Mitsue stammered: "I can't explain, but I thought you would understand me. Do you suppose I want to stay with Akagashi forever? That's what I mean."

"I do not understand you at all" replied Kwanichi.

"Don't pretend," said Mitsue, angrily twisting the tobacco between her fingers.

"Excuse me," said he coldly, "I will continue my dinner," he drew the rice-box nearer to himself; Mitsue seized it.

"I will wait upon you if that is what you want." She pulled the rice box to her side upset the rice bowl and pushed them both to the wall.

"It is still early," she said, "please take another cup."

"I really cannot," he replied, "I have already a headache, and I am hungry."

"You think it hard if I will not give you rice when you are hungry."

"Naturally."

"Well it is far harder for me when you will not understand my wishes; if you are really hungry I

will fill the rice cup for you, but first you must give an answer to my suggestion."

"I can't answer you, for I do not understand your meaning."

"You do not understand?" said she, staring him full in the face. He returned the stare defiantly and then continued: "You say you will supply me with funds, when you know we are not on such intimate terms as to make it possible, and when I ask your meaning you say you will leave your house too. Bah! give me some rice."

"You are cruel, you can't accept my help. Then you are displeased with me."

"It is not that," he returned. "But how can I take money from one who is not in any way connected with me?"

"Have you engaged yourself to any other party?" she asked.

Kwanichi, thinking that now Mitsue would drop the mask, still affected to misunderstand her;

"You talk very strangely," he said.

"If there is no one else I have a request to make to you." was her answer.

CHAPTER V

Kwanichi tells his Story.

KWANICHI was now quite determined what to do.

"I quite understand you, now," he said.

"Ah! you have understood, have you?"

A happy look came over her face, as she hastily drained the last remnants of saké in her cup, and held it out to Kwanichi.

"More saké?"

"Positively, yes."

Her manner was so pressing that he took the cup in spite of himself. Before he well knew what she was doing she had filled the little cup to the brim.

He could not put the cup down, so he drained it off in one gulp. Mitsue's face beamed with joy.

"The cup had not been washed, you know."*

Kwanichi felt his patience ebbing away before the woman's persistent use of these covertly significant phrases.

* In the customary exchange of sake cups they are always washed out between the drinks. But with lovers and intimate friends this formality is dispensed with.

"Why don't you answer me," she said, "if you understand my meaning?"

"If that is what you want," was his answer, "the matter had better rest as it is," said Kwanichi, lapsing into silence.

Mitsue's ardour had received a rebuff. She waited in patience for him to make the next move, but he held his peace. Presently she found herself constrained to speak.

"I ought never to have broached so delicate a subject. I know that quite well. But having once done so, I cannot allow the matter to rest here."

Kwanichi gave a slow nod.

"Being a woman, I ought never to speak on such a topic at all if I could help it. But if you disapprove of what I have done, will you please give me your reasons, so that I may the more easily reconcile myself to your refusal? I did not speak merely to give you amusement."

"You are quite right," replied Kwanichi. "I confess that I felt it somewhat of a compliment to be addressed in that way, and by you: and I will show my recognition of your kindness by speaking to you frankly, without any reserve. But you must remember that I am an eccentric fellow, and

that my way of looking at things is peculiar to myself.

“In the first place, I intend never to get married. As you perhaps know, I used to be a student. I broke off my studies half-way through my course, not because I had gone to the bad, nor yet because I was short of funds. If I had taken up with business because I was tired of my books, there are many trades nicer than the usurer’s that I might have chosen. Why indeed should I choose to be a usurer, a wicked, inhuman trade, not unlike that of the sneak thief or burglar, which not only robs others of their money, but oneself of honour which should be dearer than life ?

Mitsue listened with attention and became sober. “It is not merely an injustice,” continued Kwanichi, “it is a positive crime ; and this is not the first day that I have made the discovery. I walked into this pit with my eyes open, because I was at the time in such an agony of despair and grief that I wanted to kill a certain person and then put an end to myself. My whole sorrow came from having put my confidence in certain people whom I thought worthy of a confidence to which they certainly had a claim. But self-interest came

in their way and they broke their promises and betrayed me..... ”

There was a gleam in his eye as he tried to evade the light of the lamp. It was a glistening tear, brought to his eye by the recollection of his old yet ever recent sorrow.

“ The world, ” he went on, “ is a very unreliable place. My friends sinned against me cruelly all because of money, and it was for filthy lucre that they betrayed me. A *man*, as I was then, to be betrayed for money ! It was a grief which I shall never forget, as long as I live.....But that’s just the way of the world. It is either treacherous or illusory, either illusory or selfish.....and always disgusting.....Perhaps you will wonder why, if I find the world so disgusting, I don’t kill myself. I will tell you. I can’t die by my own hand because of my feeling of resentment. I don’t mean by that that I mean to have my revenge on them. Not at all, it is because of the feeling of resentment in myself, caused by the pain I once had to suffer. I mean to conquer that resentment, which is driving me mad, and I can only do it by steeling and hardening my heart. This trade of yours, the usurer’s, which demands the hard heart of a murderer, is just the trade for a madman like my-

Kwanichi tells his Story.

self. Money was the beginning of my sorrow: I was betrayed because I had no money: I can avenge myself by getting money, and this thought makes me enjoy money, getting even though it be by the abandonment of humane and righteous principles. And now that I have placed all my hopes on money, I have no more thoughts of love or honour. Money is the most reliable thing in the world. The heart of friends may change: money never does.

“Now, you will see how I stand. Actuated by the motives I have just mentioned, I have many uses for the funds you propose to put at my disposal, but for yourself, a mere human agent, I have none at all.”

He was laughing when he finished his speech and looked up, but his face was full of anger all the same.

Mitsue was convinced that he had told her the truth about himself, for she knew that he was eccentric, and eccentricity must shew itself somehow. But she was also of the opinion that Kwanichi had never known the sweetness of love, and that for this reason he had closed his heart against a world which, as far as he knew it, was nothing but a mass of deception, perfidy, and self-

interest. She proposed to herself to give him a little instruction, and felt confident that she would not in the end be disappointed in her pupil.

"Then you are afraid," she said, "of trusting yourself to me, either."

"Afraid or not afraid—that is a secondary matter. The main thing is that ever since my disappointment I have hated the world and disliked my fellow-creatures."

"Would you feel the same if there were some one who loved you very dearly—as dearly as life?"

"Of course I should. I loathe the thing you call love or affection."

"Even if you knew that some one loved you as dearly as life?"

"Yes." There are no tears in a usurer's eyes. Mitsue was quite at sea, for a while, like a mariner in waters where there are no islands to flee to.

"Please give me some rice," he said laconically. Mitsue filled the bowl and handed it to him.

"I am sorry to trouble you," he said, as he took it from her. He ate as though quite unconscious of her presence. His face was still flushed with the wine, but she was soberly pensive.

Kwanichi tells his Story.

“Won't you have some, too?” he asked as he took his third bowl-ful from her hands.

Presently, Mitsue cried out abruptly: “Hazama-San!”

Kwanichi's mouth was full at the moment, so that he could not reply, but simply looked up at her.

“What I have told you to day,” she continued, “has been on my mind for a very long time, and I have always feared that you might not give your consent. I was hardly prepared for so flat a refusal.....and I cannot tell you how deeply ashamed I am of myself.”

She took out her handkerchief to wipe her tears—they were tears of resentment.

“I cannot rise from my seat, I am so full of shame, Mr. Hazama. Please pity me.”

Kwanichi looked coldly at her.

“I might perhaps pity you, if you were the only person I disliked, but—don't take it ill of me if I say so—I dislike all men. Won't you take some rice? By the way, what about Ume Oguruma?”

Mitsue made no answer, but her eyes were red with tears

“You said you wanted to speak with me about him.”

The Gold Demon.

"Never mind about him, Mr. Hazama. It is the other matter that I cannot get out of my mind. I can't give up thinking of you. If you say you dislike it I can't help it.....but please don't forgetplease remember that I love you dearly."

"I will. That I promise."

"Ah! you will give me some more kind words?"

"I will remember."

"No, not that. Can't you say a warmer word than that?"

"I will never forget your wishes. That ought to satisfy you."

But Mitsue, without a word, rose from her seat and, taking Kwanichi unawares, threw her arms round him, pleading, "Please don't forget."

Words and gestures were alike emphatic, but Kwanichi shook her off with equal emphasis. Mitsue at once retired to her seat, and clapped her hands for the maid.

CHAPTER VI

The Viscount Photographer.

EVERYONE knew his "Lordship the Photographer" as he was called: he lived near Hikawa, Akasaka, and he had earned his nickname by always carrying a camera with him, even in his carriage.

With his intelligence, learning, sense, and tact, he was well qualified to take up a prominent position in the political world, and to be a great addition to the House of Peers; but he preferred retirement, he was a great student, having in Germany during five years' residence there, acquired a love of books and scholarly life. He cared nothing for the world, or for money: he was a wealthy man but spent comparatively little, his income being about five times the amount of his expenditure, such was Viscount Yoshiharu Tazumi.

Side by side with an old-fashioned mansion with a roof in ancient Chinese style, stood a brick three storied building which had been erected by the Viscount soon after his return from Germany, in imitation it was said of an old castle in that country. In this building he had his library,

The Gold Demon.

study, and sitting rooms, and spent his time there, taking great pleasure in pictures, engravings, and music, and now especially in photography. He was now thirty-four years old but obstinately refused to marry. Although he would not follow the usual customs of the nobility in his home life; but went in and out unattended, still he had all the appearance of a Daimyo of high rank, he was a handsome man of fair complexion, of good nose, and fine eyes, with an aristocratic look about him. The former retainers of his clan were proud of their Lords having been all handsome generation after generation.

The number of proposals of good matches was therefore as numerous as the threads a spider spins to catch a butterfly, but craftily as they were spun, he escaped from them all, refusing to listen to all counsels of marriage, and sturdily maintaining his principles of celibary.

The fact was however that during his stay in Germany he had fallen in love with the daughter of a colonel in the German army. He had spent many happy hours with her, for his affection was returned and in his last visit to her in a moonlight row on the lake together, they had sworn to be faithful to each other.

The Viscount Photographer.

On his return home he had begged the permission of his mother to marry this girl, but she had indignantly refused an alliance for the House of Tazumi with barbarians. They were more despicable than the *Ita* (a class of people who deal in skins and are considered the pariahs of Japan). She considered her son's conduct disgraceful; she took it so much to heart that she finally fell ill, and Tazumi, finding nothing could be done for the present, could only write comforting letters to the German girl, begging her to have patience, and assuring her of a happy future. The young lady bore her sorrows for three years; but in the autumn of the preceding year, hopeless of seeing her lover again, she had died broken-hearted, glad to leave a world in which she had had so much sorrow.

When Tazumi learnt that he would never see his beloved one again his grief nearly drove him crazy: he shut himself up in his rooms, denied himself to everyone, brooding over his loss, his most precious treasure being a picture of the girl of nineteen which she had drawn herself and sent him.

The Viscount tried to divert his mind with idle pleasures. He would spend thousands of yen on a photographic apparatus with which he would amuse himself, wasting his time and his money on trifles.

Fortunately he had a wise steward, Motoo Kuroyanagi by name, who notwithstanding his lord's extravagances managed his affairs so well that the House of Tazumi was saved from ruin.

One piece of business that the steward engaged in was lending capital to usurers. As he could easily lend from one to ten thousand at a time, there was hardly a usurer that did not apply to him when negotiating loans larger than usual. But the steward pursued a prudent policy: he would not let himself be carelessly tempted by too high gains, and, from the beginning, all the funds supplied were lent through one man Tadayuki Wanibuchi, one of the former retainers of the House of Tazumi. The steward had no direct dealings with usurers, all business was carried on through Wanibuchi, so that, although the other traders had no doubt that Wanibuchi had a capitalist behind him, scarcely any one knew who it was.

Wanibuchi was formerly, as I have said, a poor retainer. He had a very insignificant office, but, as he was a clever man, after the abolition of the clan system he got a small civil appointment; afterwards he was employed by a business firm. At one time he had an agency for the purchase and sale of houses or land, at another he speculated on the rice

The Viscount Photographer.

exchange, always showing his sharpness, although not succeeding in obtaining any pecuniary success. At last, he applied for the post of a policeman; here he rose in favour with his superiors and was made a sergeant. But he had come to the conclusion that "Money is power," and with the savings he had made in the police service,—about three hundred odd yen, he started as a usurer.

Taking advantage of the comparative ignorance of people, he deceived, coerced, oppressed, only just keeping out of the clutches of the law, and at last by these means found himself in the possession of funds amounting to five or six thousand yen, accumulated by grinding the poor. Then he was so lucky as to find a backer in Kuroyanagi, so that at the present time he had money in circulation amounting to several tens of thousands of yen.

Half of the gains thus obtained Kuroyanagi would place to his master's credit and the other half he put in his own pocket. Wanibuchi had of course his profit too: thus the money profited three people, by which means the non-productiveness of his Lordship was amply compensated for by the services of the six-armed* steward.

* A good fighter in a battle was in the olden time described as having three faces and six arms.

The Gold Demon.

Wanibuchi was the man, to whom Kwanichi in his despair for the loss of his love had sold himself. During four years he had been in Wanibuchi's service, doing his devilish work. He was given a room upstairs, and although a servant in name, he was treated as an honoured guest, and a valued clerk and adviser. Kwanichi saw no reason to leave him: he was sensible enough to see the wisdom of remaining where he was for the present, and to save his small capital until a good opportunity offered for establishing his own business, rather than risk his savings by too premature attempts at independence.

It was not only his ability that had gained for him Wanibuchi's confidence. But young as he was, his master noticed his steadiness. He did not run after women, nor drink, nor waste his time in indolence. He performed all his duties faithfully and quietly, with no brag or conceit. His master esteemed him highly, and was in truth somewhat in awe of him. As he gradually learnt to know Kwanichi's character he, often wondered why he had adopted the ignoble business of a usurer; for Kwanichi, on entering his service, had said nothing of his past life, nor of the disappointment which had driven him to despair; even the fact that he had

The Viscount Photographer.

been a High School student Wanibuchi did not discover for some time. He however made much of him, promising in the future to establish Kwanichi in a branch office of his own business and to help him in every way. Wanibuchi was now fifty-one years of age and his wife O Mine five years younger: she, unlike her husband who was so hard-hearted that he cared not a pin for the sorrow he often brought on people, was, though not exactly tender hearted, still, kindly, and of a good disposition. She saw that Kwanichi, though often eccentric, was truthful and honest, and though he showed no loveable side to her, still there was nothing to dislike in him, and accordingly she looked after him and he had her best wishes for his welfare.

Kwanichi ought really to have felt happy at this time. For although he had, in his hatred of mankind, chosen the way of Three Evils, as the Buddhists say, and was determined to avenge the injuries he had received by a merciless treatment of others—in which case he had resolved to suffer a hundred trials and a thousand difficulties,—now, contrary to his expectation, he had received generous confidence and warm sympathy. This should have been a joy to him in the midst of his sorrow,

but did he accept it as such? No: Kwanichi, who was willing to bear any ill-treatment, could not believe that this would last, but was continually anticipating the time when greed and self-interest would rob him of the kindness and sympathy he now enjoyed.

CHAPTER VII
Unpleasant Experiences.

AMONG Wanibuchi's debtors was a man connected with a certain political party, who was famous for his skill in borrowing money. He owed the usurer 3,000 yen principal and interest which had been accumulating for three-years, but all the cunning and experience of Wanibuchi were not sufficient to get the money out of him. Not a few usurers had been baffled, by him, and Wanibuchi hated him for being so unmanageable that even an iron lever would have broken in trying to move him.

But although it was useless, the usurer could not leave him to himself, but periodically went or sent to him, that he might have the satisfaction of at least abusing him. With this object in view Kwanichi had been sent to him as Wanibuchi's deputy the day before, with instructions to give it to him well.

Kwanichi however did not come off scathless; after wrangling for four hours, the man, finding Kwanichi, whom he had at first despised as a green horn, not to be browbeaten, drew the blade from a

sword-cane lying in front of him and brandishing it in front of Kwanichi's nose, swore he would not let him depart alive. Kwanichi received this threat with unflinching calmness, whereupon some political roughs (*sōshi*) who were present, fell upon him with blows and turned him out of the house.

He returned home, slightly wounded, and being naturally of a nervous excitable temperament was unable to sleep all night. The next morning he felt ill, took a holiday and remained in his room. It was always his way when he had gone through unpleasant scenes, as this one had been, to feel wretched the next day. His brain felt tired, his heart sore and restless, he was angry with himself for losing his temper, reproached himself, and was generally obliged to take a day off, being fit for nothing. He often felt that he was unfitted for the trade of a usurer: he was too sensitive and too fine-feeling. Wanibuchi had often laughed that during the first year of Wanibuchi's service he had more holidays than work.

Of course he gradually got more accustomed to the business, but his heart was never in it. He simply learnt to disguise his feelings and put up with it. One reason for this was that it served to divert his mind from the anger and resentment he

Unpleasant Experiences.

still felt at the way his love had been treated; anything that made him forget that for the time being was bearable. Notwithstanding, he often repented for the cruel things his trade forced him to do, and the insults he received so rankled in his mind that he was still often obliged to take a day's holiday to recover.

It was a fine autumn day, clear and invigorating. The blue sky, with fleecy white clouds floating dreamily by, added to the beauty of the day. The sun sent his golden rays through the paper slides of an upstairs room facing south, in which lay Kwanichi, his tall lean form stretched on the bed. His cheeks were pale and hollow, and his face, turned sideways, showed in the sharp profile how very thin he was.

His eyes had a sad look under the heavy eyebrows. He lay quite still leaning on his elbows, and supporting his head, till suddenly, as if impatient of his thoughts, he turned over, took up the newspaper lying near him, and, barely glancing at it, tossed it impatiently away and threw himself on his back. Footsteps were heard ascending the stairs: Kwanichi lay motionless with his eyes shut.

Some one pushed back the sliding screen and entered: it was the mistress of the house. Kwan-

ichi sat up hastily in bed, but she bade him lie still and seated herself at his desk.

“ I have made some black tea for you and boiled you some chestnuts, please help yourself.”

She placed the basket with the chestnuts and the tea at his bedside.

“ How do you feel ? ” she continued.

“ Thank you,” Kwanichi replied, “ I am really not ill enough to take to my bed, Madam. It is very kind of you to bring me this refreshment.”

“ Help yourself before it gets cold.”

With a bow he raised the cup to his lips.

“ And when did the master go out ? ”

“ Earlier than usual this morning : he said he was going to Hikawa.” The answer was given in a disdainful tone but Kwanichi did not appear to notice it.

“ Oh, indeed ? ” he said. “ Has he gone to see Kuroyanagi-san ? ”

“ Who knows ? ” answered O Mine sneeringly. The sun shining on her face showed unmercifully the fine wrinkles, and the thin hair, neatly arranged in a *maru mage* (style of a married woman), not a hair being out of place. Her face was somewhat red, with a few pockmarks, and she had a habit of compressing her lips. Saying her

teeth were bad, she had dyed them black and they shone with the lustre of a crow's feather.

She wore a thin woollen *kimono* and, as it was somewhat chilly, had put on over it a *haori* of crape which had evidently been dyed.

Kwanichi could not pretend again to misunderstand her, so he quietly said, "What do you mean?"

O Mine was tying and untying the cords of her *haori*, apparently hesitating whether to confide in Kwanichi or not. He did not press for an answer, but, taking a chestnut from the basket, began peeling it. After a slight pause, she said:

"Are there not bad reports about that Akagashi Beauty? Have you not heard any?"

"Bad reports?" said he hesitatingly.

"Yes, that she sets traps for men and gets money out of them."

Kwanichi involuntarily nodded. He probably recollected his experience of an evening or two before: "I never heard of it, and I don't think it is true; for she has plenty of money, and so has no need to get more."

"You are wrong then: there is no limit to wanting money; but you belong to the *Beirosha*

Society,*—so you do not understand, but I have heard these reports."

Kwanichi continued his occupation, but O Mine, noticing his silence, took the chestnut from his hand saying: "Give it to me, if you peel it that way there will be nothing left to eat."

She felt she could talk better with her hands occupied, so, picking out a large chestnut, she commenced peeling it.

* "Beirosha Society" means too stupid to know anything of love affairs. *Beirosha* is a corrupt Sanskrit phrase often used in Buddhist chants.

CHAPTER VIII

O Mine's Proposition.

“**D**ON'T you think she looks the kind of woman to do such things?” she began again. “She would not tempt you, for you have a strong character; but don't you think it is very dangerous to have dealings with her for people who are not so strong?”

“Is she really like that?” said Kwanichi.

“I wonder you have not heard of it,” said O Mine. “I have often; all kinds of people have told me about her.”

“There may be such rumours,” he replied, “but they have not reached my ears; though of course it may be the case.”

She drew a little nearer to him: “What I am going to say to you I cannot speak of to any one else, but I have known you now many years and you are like one of the family, so I must tell you—a serious difficulty has arisen, and I am puzzled what to do for the best.”

O Mine's hand which held the knife trembled slightly: “This chestnut is very wormy, look here.” She took another, and began peeling it

slowly, then looking at Kwanichi she said impressively: "What I am about to say is quite confidential, you understand."

Kwanichi assured her of his discretion and she continued, involuntarily dropping her voice:

"For a long time, from different signs and little things I have noticed in my husband, I have had my suspicions that he has some intrigue with the Akagashi Beauty."

She ceased peeling the chestnut, and Kwanichi burst out laughing:

"Nonsense!"

"You need not believe me, but I am his wife and I am sure it is true."

Kwanichi asked thoughtfully:

"How old is your husband?"

"Oh! quite an old man, fifty-one."

He thought again.

"Have you any proof?"

"Proof? I have no letter that she has written to him or anything like that, but you may depend on it."

Kwanichi remained silent as she seemed so positive, looking down and meditating on the matter. O Mine continued peeling the chestnuts and after a pause said slowly:

"It is a man's privilege, as the saying is, that if he can afford it, he is entitled to indulge in concubines or any other little pleasures. If he kept a *geisha* or a concubine in a separate house I should say nothing. But, in the first place, Akagashi-san has a lawful husband of her own, and being such a clever woman, and not a common creature, this makes me more troubled about it. This is not jealousy on my part, nothing so simple as that; but if he continues this connection, what will become of us? That is my trouble; my husband is a clever man, so what can he be thinking about? There was something strange about him when he went out this morning. I don't believe he went to Hikawa."

She looked hard at Kwanichi but as he made no sign she continued:

"You see too how dandified he is now-a-days. This morning he had on everything new, just from the tailor, *haori*, *obi* &c. Quite a fop. He wouldn't dress himself like that to visit Hikawa. I am sure he did not go there."

"If this is a fact," said Kwanichi, "of course, he ought not to have any connection with her, and I am sure you must be troubled about it."

"I am not talking out of jealousy," said O Mine,

“but out of real consideration for my husband, for she is a bad person to have dealings with.”

Kwanichi thought it over, but he was not in the least convinced of the truth of her suspicious.

“How long has this been going on?”

“Not long,” she replied. “Now I want you to do me a favour. I intend to warn my husband, but I can do nothing without some definite proof, and it is impossible for me, sitting at home, to get it.”

“Exactly,” said Kwanichi.

“As I have special confidence in you I want you to try and find out for me the real facts. If you had been feeling well to-day I was going to ask you to do something for me; it is unlucky, isn't it?”

It was tantamount to bidding him go; black tea and chestnuts! Kwanichi smiled as he thought how cheap the bribe was.

“Never mind, tell me your request,” he answered.

“Really?” said she, and her face brightened, “Oh! it is too bad to trouble you to-day.”

“No, please tell me what you want.” On seeing his prompt consent she felt a little ashamed, thinking too late that black tea and chestnuts were rather a poor reward.

O Mine's Proposition.

"Well then, will you go to Hikawa for me? go to Kuroyanagi-san and find out if my husband went there to-day, and at what time, and when he left. I feel sure he did not go there; but if you make sure, then I shall have detected him."

"I will go then," said Kwanichi.

He rose from his bed, and she left the room, saying she would order a *jinrikisha*.

Left alone, Kwanichi dressed and thought the matter over; as he went downstairs he muttered to himself:

"Forsaken by my betrothed, failed to graduate at the University, a clerk to a usurer, and now the spy of the usurer's wife."

A bitter smile overspread his features as he thought of his position.

CHAPTER IX

In Search of the Usurer.

KWANICHI arrived in his *jinrikisha* at the house of Mr. Kuroyanagi which was on the premises of the Viscount Tazumi. The entrance to Kuroyanagi's residence was by the back gate of the compound: it occupied a fairly large space close to the big mansion, and was surrounded by a flowering hedge. It was an old-fashioned two-storied building; but in contrast to its plain exterior, it was built of very fine timber, which was in reality some of the wood taken from the old mansion, at the time of its re-building, by the present owner.

As both Kwanichi and his master wished to avoid notice when visiting Kuroyanagi, they used the little side entrance instead of the front door.

On arriving Kwanichi looked for, but could not see, any foot-gear in the entrance belonging to his master; and wondered if he had already returned, or if he had, as O Mine suspected, not been there at all. Thus thinking, he called* out, but no one

* A Japanese house has neither knocker nor bell, a visitor stands in the outer hall and calls *Gomen nasai*, Excuse me.

came : he called again, and he could hear the well-known voice of the mistress of the house calling to the servant to answer the door. As she did not come the lady appeared herself :

“Oh please come in!” she said. “You come at a very good time.”

She was a woman of about fifty with grey hair, dreadfully thin, in fact a perfect skeleton, the only thing noticeable about her being her large eyes and a loud and harsh voice, which startled people when it came from such a small body.

With a polite bow, Kwanichi replied, “Thank you, Madam. I cannot come in as I am in a hurry, I only wanted to know if Mr. Wanibuchi had been here to-day?”

“No, he has not ; but my husband has been saying he wanted to see you. He is at present with the Viscount, but I will send for him if you will come in and wait a moment.”

Kwanichi entered and seated himself near* the door of the parlour. The lady called the maid, who was at the well, and sent her to fetch her master ; she then brought out a tobacco box and some tea, and retired into a back room.

When Kwanichi cogitated over his mission as a

* To sit near the door is a mark of humility.

detective, in a few moments the maid returned out of breath, and Mrs. Kuroyanagi in her hoarse voice told him that her husband was unable to leave the Viscount's house and begged Kwanichi to go there, as the maid would show him the way.

He took leave of his hostess and prepared to follow the maid, a bright looking girl of about twenty-years of age. She led him round the hedge, through a lane which opened into the grounds of the Viscount. Behind three store houses was a wide pathway, overshadowed by tall trees, which led up to the kitchen. Smoke was ascending from the chimney and the smell of saké and food preparing, together with servants trooping to and fro, made him suspect that his Lordship was entertaining guests. He passed through the kitchen and was ushered into a room which he thought must be Kuroyanagi's office.

CHAPTER X

The Figure in the Garden.

SHIZUO, the daughter of the Kuroyanagis went daily to the Viscount's as an attendant.* She had been specially summoned that morning to entertain a lady-guest, and to see that every thing was done to please her.

Shizuo was now conducting her to the third story of the foreign building to see the view.

The lady was elegantly dressed in an underskirt of pink silk gauze over which she wore a grey crepe *kimono*, and a green satin *obi* embroidered with gold. Her hair was dressed very high with a long coral pin as ornament, and a gold lacquer comb.

Shizuo, who was ascending the stairs in front of her, could not resist stealing a glance at the beautiful figure, 'stumbled and fell up the stairs with a great noise. She was not hurt, but dreadfully ashamed of her clumsiness, and afraid she had startled the lady. She blushed and apologised: the

* It is the custom for the daughters of middle class families to be sent to the houses of the nobility to be trained: they occupy the position of humble friends and not unfrequently of confidantes.

lady smiled and said she hoped she had not hurt herself. Then, noticing that the girl's *obi* had got loose, she called to her to wait, and fastened it for her.

Shizuo was overwhelmed at the condescension of the beautiful lady, and was reminded of a passage in "The Precepts for Women," which her father used to read to her. "Not even robes of five gorgeous colours should be regarded as the glory of a woman, but chastity, obedience, and uprightness. Shizuo felt that this lady would be the realization of this precept; for, although so beautifully dressed, she did not seem vain at all, but was kind-hearted and gracious.

Upon reaching the third floor, Shizuo drew the curtains back from the window and flung it open:

"Will you come here?" she said, "You will have a very fine view."

"Oh, what a lovely view of Fuji, and what a delicious scent, have you *mokusei** in the garden?"

The air was pure and refreshing, as it often is in autumn, with that feeling of exhilaration and buoyancy; the rays of the sun shone on the figure or the lady; and she looked like a pure white flower set in a vase which enhanced her beauty.

* *Mokusei* a sweet smelling flowering tree.

The Figure in the Garden.

Shizuo could not help staring at her, and felt herself strangely attracted. Her eyes how bright, and what a kind look in them! The eyebrows delicately arched, mouth like a rosebud, hair thick and glossy, the figure slight as though a breath would blow her away, the contour of the face a little too thin, giving her an appearance of sadness. Shizuo was by no means a bad-looking girl, but beside this vision of beauty she was but a humble flower, growing in the grass, at her feet.

“What a happy woman she must be,” said Shizuo to herself, “not only beautiful but graced with womanly virtue; and then, to crown it all, wealth. She has a gold watch, coral pins, rings on her fingers: she could ride in a carriage if she wished; some women are beautiful but poor, others ugly but rich, but to be both beautiful, amiable, and rich was as good as being born a man.”

Shizuo could not even feel envious. The lady was so far above her that she felt no jealousy. Stupidly staring at her, she forgot to offer her the binocular she had brought with her to enable her to see the view. The Viscount had brought the glass with him from France. It was a very pretty one of mother of pearl, and very powerful. She now offered it to the lady, who was delighted with it:

"Oh, look!" said she, "there is a flag, and you can see the colours distinctly, and a crow perching on the top of the flag-staff seems so near one might touch it."

"They say," replied Shizuo, "that a glass like this is rare even in the West; when I look through it I wish I could hear the people talking, things look so near, it seems as if we ought to hear the voices and sounds."

"If one could hear all the sounds it would be a dreadful confusion," said the lady and they both laughed.

As Shizuo was accustomed to entertain visitors, although she seemed shy at first, she soon found plenty of topics for conversation.

"When I was first allowed to use this glass," said she, "his Lordship teased me a great deal. He told me to put the glass to my ear as soon as I saw anything; and if I did it quickly he said I should hear the sound, and even the voice. I tried many times, but, of course, I heard nothing. Then all his attendants, and even the family tried; he used to say we were not quick enough, and one of the servants, trying to do it quickly, gave himself such a blow on the ear that it began to bleed."

The Figure in the Garden.

The lady found this story very comical, and Shizuo, seeing she was interested, brought her a chair, and then continued ;

“ Then his Lordship held it to his own ear, “ Dear me ! ” he said, “ What is the matter with my glass ? ” he looked so sorrowful that we quite believed him. “ I could hear quite well when I was in France : it must be the climate of Japan does not suit it, something in the atmosphere. ” We all believed it, and some of us kept trying for about a year.

“ His Lordship must be full of fun. I suppose he often does amusing things. ”

“ Not lately, he often feels ill and looks sad. ”

The lady, who knew that the picture in his study was the reason of this, suddenly looked pensive. After a pause she rose, and holding the glass again to her eyes, looked in a desultory way at nearer objects. She noticed a tree and was wondering at the fruit she saw, when she saw a tall figure between the branches that seemed familiar ; tightening her grasp of the glass, she hastily wiped it, and applied it again to her eyes. She saw the figure and another one beside it. It had black hair and a bald forehead : it was the Steward whom she had seen a short time before.

The other man had thick eyebrows and some scars and looked about thirty. She knew him, how could she forget him? The glass trembled in her fingers.

For four long years she had thought of him, longed, yet feared, to see him; that last sight of him in the moonlight at Atami had never left her memory. He had indeed haunted her: on stormy rainy nights she had prayed for his safety; yet, with all her longing and affection, Miya (for it was she) had never heard of him in all that time. And now, as she looked, she wondered what anxieties had made him look so old.

He seemed to be poor, for his clothes looked shabby; and she wondered if he had friends to help him. As she looked tears filled her eyes: her emotion overcame her and although she felt Shizuo's eyes were on her, she was obliged to press her handkerchief to her streaming eyes.

"Oh dear! what is the matter?" said Shizuo in astonishment.

"Oh, nothing. When I stare at things too long, it makes me giddy and my eyes water."

"Please sit down and I will massage your head."

"Thank you: but I shall soon recover if I keep quiet. Would you fetch me a glass of water?"

The Figure in the Garden.

Shizuo turned to fetch it, when the lady said, "Don't say anything of this to any one please ; it is nothing serious."

The moment she was alone she seized the glass again, but her eyes were too misty to see : so she sank back in the chair and indulged in bitter weeping.

CHAPTER XI

An unexpected meeting

MIYA, now Mrs. Tomiyama, had been invited with her husband to Viscount Tazumi's, and while the two men were talking together, she had wandered forth to see the house and garden.

Viscount Tazumi and Tomiyama were both members of the Japan Photographic Society, and this had produced a certain amount of intimacy between them. Tomiyama had been very anxious to get acquainted with the Viscount; but his endeavours for some time were fruitless. Tazumi had not considered his acquaintance desirable; but circumstances had unavoidably thrown them together, and the Viscount had accepted an invitation to Tomiyama's house in Shiba, ostensibly to criticise an old picture, which the latter fondly hoped was by an old master. The entertainment to-day was in return for the same.

The other Members of the Photographic Society, seeing Tomiyama's efforts to curry favour with Tazumi, put them down to a wish to get something out of him; but in this they were mistaken. Tomiyama chose his friends by a certain

standard: they were always his superiors in something either rank, fame, or wealth. But he did not necessarily take advantage of them, he only wished to shine in their reflected glory. In consequence of this, he had only acquaintances, no real friends. There was not one among them all to whom he could take his sorrows: acquaintances are good for pleasures, but there were none on whom he could rely. His friends were, as the saying is, "brethren in *saké* and meat". Perhaps he applied the same principle to his wife, for was she not now shedding bitter tears for a usurer's clerk?

We left Miya weeping for her lost love. When she heard footsteps on the stairs she hurriedly wiped her eyes, and rising from her seat walked round the table, holding her head with her hands. She then drank the water Shizuo brought, and declared she felt better. She looked from the window, and pointing to the place where she had seen Kwanichi, asked if that also was a part of the grounds.

Shizuo replied in the affirmative, and told her she resided with her parents in the two-storied building visible from the window; whereupon Miya expressed a wish to visit that part, and then

casually asked who the gentleman was who had been talking with Shizuo's father. Shizuo had no knowledge of Wanibuchi's business, so she merely replied :

" He is a clerk of Mr. Wanibuchi, an agent for land and houses, living in Bancho, and his name is Hazama or something like that. " Oh ! " said Miya, " Then I am probably mistaken. In what part of Bancho did you say he lived ? "

" I believe it is Go-Bancho. "

" Does he often come to your home ? "

" Yes, pretty often. "

Miya now knew that Kwanichi lived in a certain Wanibuchi's house in Go-Bancho, and hoped that she might chance to see him ; but as the chances seemed rather remote she thought perhaps it might be better to use the opportunity she now had of gazing once more on his dear face. They could not exchange words, but no matter : if she could but see him once more, him, for whom her heart had hungered during the last four years. But was not the situation too risky ? for her, a guest in this noble house, accompanied by an attendant, to meet a usurer's clerk, suppose something unexpected happened, she might disgrace herself and her husband too. If the disgrace were

confined to herself she would not mind. There was no necessity for her to see him to-day: she resolved to give up the idea, but, notwithstanding this, she begged Shizuo to take her just once round. As they walked through the narrow lane, Shizuo, pointing to her father's office, said:

"That is where my father's visitor is now."

Miya's heart beat rapidly, as it was only a few minutes since they left the house he could not possibly have left; if he appeared, what would happen? She walked on dreamily, hardly hearing Shizuo's remarks; the latter began to get anxious about the lady who had said she wished to see the grounds; but now, instead of looking about her, drooped her head, and took hardly any notice of anything.

"Do you still feel ill?" said Shizuo pityingly.

"Not very," was the answer, "but I have a pain at my heart."

That is bad, had you not better return to the parlour?"

"I prefer being outdoors. Let us walk on. Is this your house? How pretty it is with the hedge in full bloom."

Kuroyanagi's house stood at the end of the grounds, so the visitor could go no farther.

Through the fence could be seen the well, clothes drying, chickens running about, a dog sleeping in the sun. Miya was on the point of turning when she suddenly thought that if she met Kwanichi in this narrow lane, there would be no possible means of avoiding meeting him face to face: she would not mind that if she were alone, but the thought of Shizuo's sharp eyes watching her was intolerable. Kwanichi might pretend not to know her, but meeting her suddenly he might betray his knowledge of her. She broke out in a cold perspiration at the thought of the possible rencontre, and asked Shizuo if there was a side lane into which they might go. But the reply was "no." Repenting now that she had put herself in such a dangerous position, she looked bewildered round for an escape, and hurried towards the corner of the store-house in hopes to get behind it; but alas! a figure appeared and there was no hope of avoiding the meeting.

Kwanichi, who was now on his way home with some story to quiet O Mine's suspicions, was walking quickly as in his college days, his felt hat over his eyes, when the forms of the two women arrested his look; the one he knew to be Kuroyanagi's daughter, the other in elegant attire he supposed to be a guest of the Viscount. As they

drew nearer Kwanichi greeted Shizuo, Miya kept as close to the girl as possible to hide herself, but her knees trembled and her heart beat tumultuously. Kwanichi was replacing his hat when his glance fell on the figure of Miya, their eyes met. Yes, it was Miya, the faithless Miya! Resentment and rage filled his heart, he stared fixedly at her with a look of hate, she hardly knowing what she did, felt only shame and yearning. If he would take her once more in his arms, he might torture or kill her, she would not care; but she made no sign, and could only express her love with her eyes.

The little scene was over in a moment, but it lasted long enough to astonish Shizuo. She could not understand it. She said nothing however till they came to the entrance to the garden: then she turned to Miya:

“You look very ill, will you not go back to the parlour and rest?”

“Do I look so ill then?”

“Yes, you are deathly pale.”

“I don't know what to do. If I return to the parlour now, they will be alarmed at my looks. perhaps I had better walk round once more before returning: I am much obliged to you for all your kindness.” So saying Miya took a small gold ring

from her finger and wrapping it in a piece of paper begged her companion to accept it

Shizuo was much astonished and, half afraid, she hesitated, but Miya, insisted adding, "Please do not show it to any one, not even your father and mother." They walked on in silence till they came to the bridge and pond in front of the mansion: then hearing from the parlour her husband's loud laugh, Miya tried to calm her feelings, but it was impossible: the love which she had tried to smother seemed to be stronger than ever from the restraint she had been obliged to put on herself. If she were only at home alone, she thought,—but to be obliged to talk, laugh, and pretend to enjoy herself! She bit her lip violently. They walked on till they came to a little summer-house half concealed among the bamboos, where Miya paused and threw herself exhausted on the seat. Shizuo stood leaning on the post till Miya, noticing her, begged her to sit down too:

"You must be tired," said Miya: "tell me, do I still look ill?"

Not only was her face so pale, but her lower lip was bleeding profusely.

"Oh dear," ejaculated Shizuo, "your lip is bleeding. What have you done to it?"

Miya pressed her handkerchief to her lip, and taking out a small pocket mirror proceeded to examine herself. Her face looked so changed that she was alarmed. She thought scornfully of her folly, and wondered how long she must wander in the garden before she could dare present herself to her husband.

CHAPTER XII
The Camera.

SUDDENLY a woman's voice was heard from the other side of a little grassy mound calling, "Shizuo-san, Shizuo-san."

She ran forward and disappeared in the trees. Soon returning she bowed to Miya and said :

"They have been impatiently waiting a long time for you in the parlour : will you kindly return at once?"

"Oh ! Are they?" she replied, "We have been playing truant too long."

Shizuo chose a different road in returning. They came to a high arched bridge from which they could see into the parlour, the floor of which was over-spread by plates, dishes, cups, trays etc.

The Viscount, seeing her approach, stopped on the verandah and beckoning to her called out :

"Please cross the bridge, and kindly stand beside the stone lantern for a moment. Will you allow me to photograph you?"

The camera had been already arranged, and the Viscount, stepping down into the garden, put on the cover of the camera saying :

"The light is very good now."

Tomiyama now leisurely stepped out to see the situation. He had a half-burnt cigar in his fingers, and the fatuous smile on his lips showed he still doted on his young wife.

"Oh, it won't do," cried the Viscount, "if you walk on. Please stand still."

The Viscount popped his face out suddenly from the satin cover.

"Please don't move," he said again, "it won't take a moment: there, that is an excellent pose. One has to beg so much now, for there are more people anxious to photograph than to be photographed. Won't you oblige me, Mrs. Tomiyama? Shizuo, you take the lady and place her near the lantern."

Tomiyama looked at his wife and said:

"As the Viscount has made special arrangement for taking your photo you can't refuse. Go and stand by the stone lantern. Don't pretend to be bashful: you are taken often enough at home. It's all the same. I will arrange your pose. Suppose you lean on the lantern, support your cheek on your hand and look upwards. Now, will that do, Sir?"

"Very well indeed," said the Viscount.

Miya went reluctantly to the place ; she could not well refuse the request.

“ It won't do if you are so stiff,” said her husband, “ you had better hold something in your hand.”

So saying, he hastily put on his clogs, hurried to the place, and began to place his wife in position, adjusting her dress etc. ; then retreating a little to judge the effect he suddenly discovered her pallor and tear-stained checks.

“ What is the matter with you ? ” he said, “ Are you feeling ill ? You look dreadful.”

“ I have a little headache, that's all,”

“ Headache ? Then it pains you to stand here.”

“ Oh ! no, it does not matter,” she repli

“ If you feel ill I will make an excuse.”

“ No, it's all right, dear.”

“ Are you quite sure ? ” said he affectionately.

The Viscount called out impatiently :

“ Are you ready ? ”

Tomiyama retired, and Miya stood as she had been placed, leaning on the stone lantern, looking upward with her head resting on her hand. Her dress of bright colours had an admirable background of trees, and a couple of geese searching for food by the waterside made really a pretty

The Camera.

picture. The figure of Miya however, unintentionally had the appearance of the deepest melancholy

The Viscount went to the front of the camera and was just about to remove the cap when the lady tottered and fell in a heap at the foot of the stone lantern.

CHAPTER XIII

The Invitation to Supper.

RYOKITSU Yusa had enjoyed the reputation, in his native town, and during his residence in Tokyo for purposes of education, of being a very respectable man, but now having secured a position in the Japan Navigation Company his friends were much surprised to learn that he had contracted a debt of 300 yen at the usual high interest.

Some said he had borrowed money to pay the expenses of his wedding; others thought it was to make a good show, and some even suggested he had been mulcted heavily for certain clandestine pleasures. But the fact, that he had put his name to a bill to oblige a friend, under circumstances he did not choose to tell, and that as is usually the case he was left to pay the bill, was well known to two of his friends, Tetsuya Kamada, an attaché in the Diplomatic Service, and Kuranosuke Kazahaya, an official in the same company as himself.

A usurer's policy is like selling water to a thirsty person, when the thirst is intense one will barter anything for a cup of water, it seems like nectar, but afterwards they find it was only water.

and often not even clean water; and, alas, they must return a double portion according to the promise wrung from them. The usurer is a bold man, but is not the borrower still bolder to risk putting himself in such a position, when he knows he is not prepared to repay it?

Yusa and his two friends were returning from a Committee meeting, or friends from their own province, and Yusa had invited them to accompany him home.

“I have no delicacies to offer you,” said he, “but there is a special kind of mushroom, and some brewers have given me some black beer, so I will get a little chicken for supper, and we will have a chat afterwards.”

The tin of ham which Yusa had in his hand had been bought on the way home for the same purpose, so Kamada replied:

“Very good, and there is no hurry now we have arranged to return with you. What do you say to a game of billiards first?”

Kazahaya laughed at Kamada's wish to play billiards, and after a good deal of wrangling as to which was the best player, Yusa settled the dispute by suggesting that they should, as there was plenty of time, first take a bath. They according-

ly walked on and at last arrived at a neat looking home with lattice doors through which could be seen a pretty garden ; this was Yusa's house.

When he opened the gate his lovely wife appeared, somewhat confused at the sight of his two companions ; but quickly recovering herself, she smiled and bade them welcome.

" Will you take the gentlemen upstairs ?" said she to her husband. He looked surprised and said, " why not the parlour ?" but she looked more confused and said, " It is occupied for a moment."

The visitors, knowing the house, passed through ; but she detained her husband and whispered to him :

" That man from Wanibuchi is here again."

" Is he still here ?"

" He insisted on seeing you, so I was obliged to let him wait. He is in the parlour, won't you see him for a moment, and get him to go away ?"

" What became of the mushrooms ?"

His wife was surprised at the question but answered quietly :

" Not mushrooms now, dear. But go quickly."

" Wait,"—said the man, " have you black beer ?"

" I have both mushrooms and beer, so please send him away quickly : as long as that fellow is here I have no peace."

The Invitation to Supper.

Yusa knit his brows in perplexity. A peal of merry laughter came from upstairs: perhaps they were still chaffing each other about the billiards.

After a while Yusa mounted the stairs.

"Hallo," said Kamata, "are you ready for the bath? Please lend me a towel."

"Wait a moment," said poor Yusa, "I will go presently: I am at my wits' end what to do."

Yusa looked indeed as he described himself.

"What is the matter?" said Kazahaya, "Sit down and tell us."

"I cannot sit down," replied Yusa, "there is a usurer downstairs. He arrived some time ago and has been sitting there waiting for me. What shall I do?"

Yusa leaned against the post, the picture of misery holding his head in his hands.

"Send him off with some promise or other."

"He won't go," said Yusa, "he is such an obstinate, tenacious fellow."

"Throw two or three yen at him."

"I have done that repeatedly, but to-day he is going to renew the bond, and he won't go without something in hand."

"Go and try," said Kamada; "use all your eloquence."

The Gold Demon.

"Eloquence is no use in this kind of business : it all depends on money, empty-handed eloquence is no use."

"Well, go and have a talk with him," said Kamada. "I will listen outside and come in and help."

Yusa was afraid it would be of no use, but he went down to try once more.

Kazahaya said : "What a shame ! Yusa looks shrivelled up, poor fellow. Kamada go and try to help him."

"Well, I will try," returned the other, "but Yusa takes it too much to heart. After all it is only money, it does not injure his life."

CHAPTER XIV
An Old Friend with a
New Face.

“IT does not affect one’s life, but it does one’s honour. That is what a gentleman fears, isn’t it?”

“Why should one fear?” replied Kamada, “If a gentleman lends money on usury that injures his honour. It is really far more honourable to borrow money at high interest, than to borrow at low or no interest at all. A gentleman may be short of money: he is short, and he borrows. He does not say he will not repay, so there is nothing in borrowing to injure his honour.”

“I stand corrected. What beautiful motives for a gentleman about to borrow!”

“Well, I will yield one point then, and say it is not honourable for a gentleman to borrow on usury. But if it is not honourable, he had better avoid it altogether. What I mean is, that if he is not ashamed to borrow, neither must he change his attitude and feel ashamed when the natural consequences ensue.”

“There is a story,” continued Kamada, “of an insurrection that took place in China, a long time

ago. Some one sent a representation to the throne that there was no need to send an army to subdue the rebels, but that one of the generals should go and read an essay on the Doctrine of Filial Piety to the enemy, and the rebellion would be instantly at an end. A beautiful idea! and such a man is our friend Yusa; he is always reading the essay; and now he has to pay 40 per cent., and the usurers suck his blood. In such a position no one can afford to have a gentleman's conscience, such as he had previous to borrowing. It is too expensive."

Kamada continued his argument without waiting for an answer: "We have no need to avoid the evening dew, after we got wet through, as the saying goes."

"Yusa should not have gone to a usurer, but having gone, he should not now be too scrupulous; I do not say a man should be devoid of conscience, but the codes of a samurai and of a tradesman are different. Of course, the code of a tradesman does not permit injustice or immorality any more than that of a samurai does, but in other matters it is not the same. Before a gentleman borrows, he has the samurai code, after he has been to a usurer, he must of necessity adopt the tradesman's

code. It is the only policy in dealing with an enemy."

"I quite agree with you on that point. But when you say it is quite honourable for a gentleman to borrow money on usury".....

Kamada looked crest-fallen ;

"It is rather like the logic that 'a white horse is not a horse' I must confess," said he. "Had you not better go downstairs and see how matters are progressing?"

"All right!" said Kamada. "I'll be a hero and beard the lion in his den."

So saying he descended the stairs. Kazahaya waited impatiently to hear the result, he got restless, walked up and down the room, sitting down for a moment, and then restlessly rising again. At last Mrs. Yusa arrived, bringing the tea and apologising profusely for her neglect of her guests.

"Did Kamada go into the parlour?" asked Kazahaya.

She coloured and said: "He is in the adjoining room and is listening behind the screen. I feel very much ashamed that you should see us in such an unpleasant situation."

"Oh! never mind, we are not strangers, and we know all the circumstances."

"Whenever that usurer fellow comes, I feel cold shudders all over me. He has such a horrid face. I suppose his trade changes his looks; for he is the most wicked looking man I ever saw."

Noisy steps were heard ascending the stairs and Kamada burst excitedly into the room treading on Mrs. Yusa's foot as he rushed in, shouting, "Kazahaya! The mystery increases."

He turned to Mrs. Yusa, "Pardon me for my clumsiness. I hope I did not hurt you. I am very rude."

The lady concealed the pain she really felt in her toe, and received his apologies smilingly.

"You are as rash as ever," said Kazahaya. "Why are you in such a hurry?"

"How can I keep quiet? Who do you think the usurer downstairs is?"

"Is it the same usurer as yours?"

"It is abominable of you to say *yours* before other people."

"I own I was rude."

"I trod on Mrs. Yusa's foot, but you tread on my face."

"Fortunately your face is brazen."

"Impudence!"

Mrs. Yusa could not restrain her laughter, in which the others joined, till Kazahaya said :

“ We ought not to jest, when there is a man down-stairs suffering.”

“ The fellow who is now inflicting suffering on our friend downstairs is no other than Hazama ! Kwanichi Hazama ! ”

Kazahaya started, “ Kwanichi our old school-mate ? ”

“ Yes, are you not surprised ? ”

Kazahaya whistled, “ Is it possible ? ”

“ Well, you had better go and see.”

Mrs. Yusa looked in astonishment at the two men :

“ Is that man downstairs a friend of yours ? ”

Kamada nodded hastily ;

“ Yes, he was with us at the High School. We had heard that he had become a usurer, but we did not believe it, as he was a particularly gentle fellow, not at all fit for such a trade. But there he is downstairs, the identical Kwanichi Hazama.”

“ How strange ! ” said Mrs. Yusa, “ But why on earth did he become a usurer after having had such a good education ? ”

“ Well, that is why we all thought it was surely a rumour.”

Kazahaya, who had gone downstairs to remove all doubt, now returned.

“Well, am I not right?” said Kamada.

“Extraordinary! It is indeed Kwanichi.”

“Hasn't he a look of Alfred the Great?”

“Like him when he was expelled from Wessex, I should think. Who could have imagined he would turn usurer?”

“I should never have thought he could do anything hardhearted,” remarked Kamada.

“Far worse than so hardhearted,” said Mrs. Yusa with a frown.

“Is he very cruel?”

“Yes, very cruel,” she replied with tears in her eyes.

Kazahaya seemed to be making up his mind: he drank his tea with an air of resolution.

“On the whole it is rather fortunate that it is Hazama; we can now go down, as we are old friends, and negotiate with him. He won't be able to press his point so obstinately with us, we will gradually get him down to.....say the principal only. We need hardly fear Hazama.”

He rose and adjusted his girdle. Kamada remarked, “Preparing for the fray?”

"Hold your tongue. See your watch is dangling from your girdle."

"So it is." Kamada rose.

"Won't you remove your *haori*?" said Mrs. Yusa.

"No thank you, we must arm ourselves; for on the stage it is always the more numerous party that gets beaten."

"Nonsense," said Kazahaya, "not by a man like Hazama."

"Take another cup of tea*," said Mrs. Yusa.

"It really looks as if we were starting on a feud," said Kamada.

* Cups of water are exchanged when men start out for revenge and expect to die.

CHAPTER XV

Tête à tête with the Usurer.

YUSA and Kwanichi sat opposite to one another in the parlour, the tobacco-box, in which the fire was extinguished, between them; the tea-tray with the tea cup by Kwanichi's side. This tea-cup had once been inadvertently used by a consumptive patient, and Mrs. Yusa had put it on one side for fear of infection; but to-day she had purposely used it for the hated usurer.

Yusa was speaking in a tone of suppressed anger :

“ I can't do that. I have friends, but I am not going to ask them to put their seal to a bill for me. Would you ask your friends to do such a thing for you? Why do you annoy me by suggesting it? ”

Kwanichi answered gravely :

“ I don't wish to annoy you in any way. You don't pay interest, and you say you can't renew your bond. What are we to do then? You must decide on something. A joint obligation will not harm any one, you can easily get a friend to lend you his name; it is merely nominal, as we fully trust you, and shall not trouble the other party at

all. I must give some answer to my master. If I can say to him, I could not get the interest paid, but I have renewed the bond, it will be something."

Yusa made no answer :

" Any one of your friends will do."

" No, I can't ask them."

" Then we shall be compelled to take very unpleasant measures for you."

" What do you mean ? "

" I mean distraint."

This was a severe blow to Yusa. He groaned inwardly and viciously twisted the ends of his moustache.

Kwanichi continued :

" We do not wish to bring such a disgrace on you for a trifling debt of 300 yen, so think it over again."

" You want me to renew the bond on your conditions, which are to add the legal interest for one year, together with 90 yen which I must pay now you say,—altogether 300 yen. Then the *tembiki* (top reduction) of that for three months is 170 and odd yen, and you want me to change the present bond into another for 500 yen. You may call it a joint obligation, but I have not had one sen of

tembiki, usurer's term.

that money, and yet I was made to pay you 90 yen the other day, and now I am to sign for 500 yen more! How would you like to sign a bond for 500 yen without having had one sen of it?"

Kwanichi laughed, "All this comes too late."

Yusa looked sternly at him. Having fallen into such difficulties himself from being surety for another, he was unwilling to drag his friends into the same position, and so rejected Kwanichi's advice. In this case he must pay the interest; but this was impossible. He was like an animal caught in a trap, he could see the end approaching. He pitied himself, but he felt furiously angry at the cruelty of this man, and his want of common humanity.

Yusa tried once more:

"In the first place, did you not promise you would not come dunning me to-day?"

"You have not yet paid what is owing from the 20th of last month," was Kwanichi's rejoinder.

"Why did you take a postponement fee from me then?"

"I got no money from you for postponement. I came on the day the money was due, but you did not pay, you merely gave me money for my wages

and jinrikisha fares. If you call that a postponement fee, then it would mean it was postponed for that one day."

"You rascal! When I offered you ten yen, you wouldn't take it at first because it was only ten yen, then you took it as a postponement fee for three days. And you had another ten yen from me the other day."

"Oh yes," said Kwanichi, "I had that, it was my wages for coming here in vain, but that is not the point. Let us now settle. You say you cannot renew the bond, nor can you pay."

"I can't give you what I haven't got."

Kwanichi looked sharply at Yusa, and the look brought Yusa to a sense of his dangerous position; it would be no use to abuse Kwanichi, he had him in his grip. There was a pause, then Kwanichi said quietly:

"When can you pay me?"

Yusa replied: "Please wait till the 16th."

"Are you quite sure?"

"I am sure if it is the 16th."

"Then I will wait and....."

"Do you want another postponement fee?"

"Well," said Kwanichi, "listen to me. Write a promissory note, that will suit you, eh?"

"It does not exactly suit me".....

"Then give me some money instead."

So saying Kwanichi opened his satchel and took out a form of a promissory note.

"I have no money," said Yusa.

"Just a little as a fee."

"A fee again! Well I will give you one yen."

"Five yen please, to include my wages, jinrikishas, etc.

"Five yen! it's impossible; I will give you three."

The sliding doors opened and Kwanichi looking up saw two gentlemen entering. At this intrusion on a confidential interview, Kwanichi thought it must be a got up plan. The gentlemen took their seats between Yusa and Kwanichi, the latter bowing to them respectfully.

CHAPTER XVI
A Hot Argument.

KAMADA began by saying :
“ Have I not seen you before ? are you not Hazama ? ”

Kazahaya joined in, saying : “ You have changed so completely that I should not have recognised you. It is a long time since we last met.”

Kwanichi stared in astonishment at the two visitors. He gradually recollected them and said :

“ You are quite strangers. I was wondering who you were, but now I know, you are Kamada and Kazahaya. I hope you are both well.”

“ How are you getting on ? ” said Kamada, “ You seem to have adopted a strange trade, but I suppose it's very profitable.”

“ Not so profitable,” answered Kwanichi, “ but I got into this trade by a mistake.”

As he did not seem at all ashamed the two were rather taken aback. Kazahaya, who had looked down on him, now began to fear he might prove unmanageable.

“ Any trade will do,” said Kazahaya, “ if profit is the only aim, but it must have cost you a

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strong resolve to adopt this trade ; in fact," continued he sarcastically, " I am filled with admiration to see a man of your character carry on such a trade."

" It is, I must own," said Kwanichi, " not exactly a manly trade, but as I gradually discovered that a man of my character would never get on in the world, I gave up my manliness when I turned usurer."

" Well, I hope you will act like a man while with us your friends," said Kazahaya.

" By the bye, where is that pretty girl in whose house you lived ?" demanded Kamada, " There, was a lot of talk about it, I remember."

Kwanichi feigned ignorance.

" Oh come ! that won't do ;" said the other, " why she was called.....what was it ?"

" Tell us," said Kamada, " you know whom I mean."

" It's all nonsense, please do not speak of the past. Now Mr. Yusa, please affix your seal here."

Kwanichi pulled out a pen from his writing case, and was about to write the amount on the promissory note.

" A moment please," interrupted Kazahaya, " What does that note mean ?"

Kwanichi briefly stated the case, and he rejoined: "Very well, now I want to speak to you a little."

Kamada kept silence and folding his arms in a defiant manner prepared to listen to his friend's argument.

"Now about Yusa san's debt, I want you to deal with it specially. Of course as it is a business matter I don't expect you to suffer loss. But as an old friend I ask you to deal leniently,"

There was a silence. Kwanichi did not answer, and after a pause Kazahaya continued:

"I beg this of you."

"What do you mean by leniency?"

"I mean, I want you to reduce the debt as far as it is no actual loss to you. You know that this debt was contracted by Yusa san signing a bond for a friend, and that quite unexpectedly he was called upon to pay. Of course this makes no difference from the creditor's point of view, and I don't mean to complain on that score. But from a friend's point of view, Yusa has undeservedly met with great misfortunes and is to be pitied. Now it happens that you are the creditor, which makes us bold to interfere; we are not dealing with the usurer Wanibuchi, but with our old friend Hazama, who, even if our request seem unreason-

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able, can well grant it. We have been told that Tōbayashi the original borrower has already paid 270 yen in three instalments as interest. And Yusa has paid 90 yen out of his own pocket, Therefore you have already received 360 yen. You see you have suffered no loss, and so what I propose is this, that Yusa shall pay the principal, 300 yen, and you will charge him nothing else."

Kwanichi gave a cold smile, and Kazahaya continued:

"This means that Yusa is to pay 390 yen for which he has had nothing; this is very hard for him, but it is hard for you to give up what will continue to bring you in more and more profit. Let us see which is the worst off; for the money you lent, 300 yen, you have a return of 660 yen, but Yusa loses 390 yen. I want you to consider this point and deal leniently."

"It is quite out of the question," said Kwanichi, and he took up the blank form and calmly inserted the amount of money Yusa had all but agreed on.

Kamada and Kazahaya who had been intently watching Kwanichi's face, exchanged angry glances.

"I beg you to agree to my proposal," said the latter.

Kwanichi took no notice, but turning to Yusa said :

“ Now Mr. Yusa put your seal here, the date is the 16th.”

Kamada began to get impatient, but Kazahaya made a sign to him to keep quiet, and began once more pleadingly :

“ Hazama san ! Wait a moment. Let us talk quietly together. This debt is too heavy a burden for Yusa san, he can hardly find means to pay the interest ; he will be ruined if this keeps on, and we are extremely anxious about him. But as the party with whom he is dealing is our old friend, we hope he may be yet saved. And as we don't wish you to suffer loss, I think our request is a very reasonable one.

“ As I am only Mr. Wanibuchi's clerk, I can't listen to such a request. Now Yusa san, please pay me three yen for to-day and put your seal here. Quick please.”

Yusa nodded feebly not knowing what to do. The anger of Kamada could now be contained no longer and he burst forth :

“ Wait I say, Kazahaya has exhausted all his arguments, he is not a beggar ; there are certain

manners in dealing with people. Give him a suitable answer."

"The request being what it is, there is no suitable answer to give."

"Silence Hazama As you are always counting money, your brain does not seem able to take in anything else. Who asked you to answer his request? You ought to be ashamed to behave so rudely to your friend. If you are a usurer, remember your position and act accordingly. Carrying on a trade which is next door to a thief's you ought to blush to meet your old friends. But you seem to think you are engaged honorably in business and give yourself airs. You are not only not ashamed, but you dare to behave contemptuously towards us. Oh! I wish Josuke Arao could see you now. Only the other day he was lamenting he did not know your whereabouts, and said he loved you more than his own brother. Rouse your conscience; now that two honest men like ourselves have interfered, you may be sure you will not suffer loss. Go home."

"I can't go home without receiving my dues. If you are so interested in Yusa san, won't you do something for him? He shall stamp the promissory note and that will settle that part of the busi-

ness, and you and Kazahaya give me a joint bond for 300 yen."

Kamada had had enough experience to understand this policy.

"Yes, all right," he replied.

"If you will do this, I will manage to settle the case."

"All right!" reiterated Kamada, "But it will be with no interest, and to be repaid in ten years."

"Eh?" said Kwanichi, "This is not a joke."

"Leave joking aside," interposed Kazahaya, "we will talk it over in a few days. Go home quietly now."

"You are too unreasonable," returned Kwanichi, "I will take home the promissory note with me as Yusa san had already consented. I am in a hurry now; put your seal here, Yusa san, have you not already consented? Why do you hesitate now?"

Kamada took up the note and read: "One hundred and seventeen yen! What, one hundred and seventeen yen!!"

"A hundred and seventeen yen!" said Yusa, "It's ninety yen."

"It is written here plainly, one hundred and seventeen yen."

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"It is impossible," said Yusa.

Kwanichi cast a sidelong look at them and explained:

"Ninety yen as principal, and in addition to this twenty-seven yen as thirty per cent discount."

Yusa looked crushed, but made no sign.

Without saying a word, Kamada tore the note in two, while the others looked at him. He tore it again and again, then twisting the pieces together flung them in Kwanichi's face.

"What are you doing?"

"I have settled it for you," was Kamada's answer."

CHAPTER XVII
The Jujutsu Methods.

THERE was a pause. Then Hazama said slowly: "Then you do not mean to give me the note, Mr. Yusa."

Yusa hesitated, for he was secretly afraid of what Hazama might do: "Well, I don't mean that exactly."

Here Kamada, who had been gradually getting nearer to Hazama interposed saying:

"But I mean that."

Hazama turned to him saying:

"You may have settled the promissory note, but if you interfere at all, then deal with the matter like a man. I do not pretend to anything, but I believe you call yourself a Doctor of Law."

"What if I do?"

"Then behave as such. Your conduct does not agree with your profession."

"You rascal! say that once more."

"I will say it as many times as you like. I you are a lawyer, behave like one."

Kamada's arm flew out and he suddenly seized

Hazama by the collar of his coat and turning his face towards him said :

“Hateful as you are now, I can't help seeing you in my mind's eye as the gentle Hazama in our school days sitting by my side round the stove.”

Kazahaya interrupted pityingly :

“It is just as Kamada says. We will think of you as the old Hazama, and see that you suffer no loss ; so for our old friendship's sake agree to what we ask you.”

“Well,” said Kamada, “what do you say ?”

“Friendship is friendship, and money is money. They are quite different things.”

He could say no more, for Kamada pressed his throat so tightly, that he was almost choking.

“Go on,” said Kamada furiously, “speak if you can, but if you speak I will throttle you.”

Hazama struggled in vain to tear himself from Kamada's grasp, but the latter had been well trained in *Jujutsu*, so Hazama thought it wiser to give up struggling, in the hope of Kamada's releasing him.

Kazahaya began to feel uneasy :

“I say Kamada don't be too violent.”

Kamada laughed : “Now you see the superior-

ity of force. I begin to see that International Law is rubbish: it is only by strength of arms that a nation can protect its national interests and keep its prestige. There is no sovereign over all the nations, who can satisfactorily decide questions of right and wrong. There is only one way of judging, War!"

"Let him free now, you have hurt him enough."

"I never heard," continued Kamada, "of a strong nation being insulted. Therefore the diplomatic policy I adopt is the *Kano method."

"If you hurt him too much," said Yusa, "he will revenge himself on me later on, so please let him go for my sake."

Kamada loosened his grasp but still held Hazama, "Well Hazama," he said "what is your reply?"

"You can make me yield to the power of money, but not to force. If you hate me so much then strike my face with a packet of 500 yen notes."

"Gold coins would not do eh?"

"Gold coins! very good."

"All right," said Kamada, and with his open palm he struck him violently on the left cheek. The pain was so sharp, that for a moment Hazama

* *Kano.* The great teacher of *Jujitsu*.

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could not raise his head.

Kamada released him and returned to his seat, saying:

"This fellow won't go away yet, so let us have in the saké."

But this did not please Yusa;

"Saké won't be good here, and if he will not go as long as the matter is not settled, it will be worse after he has drunk saké."

"Oh! I will take him away with me when I go," urged Kamada.

"I say Hazama! Don't you hear me call you?"

"Yes."

"Have you a wife? Oh! Kazahaya," he cried laughing and clapping his hands: "I have it."

"Good gracious, what have you?"

"I've recollected it: It's O Miya, O Miya the girl betrothed to Hazama."

"You are living with her, aren't you Hazama? It is like marrying an angel to a devil. Does she loan money too? It is said that usurers are quite tender to women. Is it true? It is said that they do all these cruelties simply to get money to pander to their lustful pleasures. Is that so Hazama? From our point of view it seems extraordinary that they plan and plot to get money just

for luxury. I can understand people trying to get money for war, or to redeem some treasure belonging to one's lord; but to do such cruel things only for avarice! Now Hazama, as you have adopted such an extraordinary trade, please tell us what your motive was."

The autumn day was closing in, a lamp was brought in, and presently saké and food made their appearance.

"Hurra!" said Kamada "it is beer. I will help myself. And mushrooms too! how delicious! they must be from Kyoto. Now Hazama proceed; what is your aim?"

"Simply, I want money."

"Well, what will you do with the money?"

"Do with it! Money can be converted into anything and everything, because it can be used for everything I want. That is why I urge Yusa to pay me. Now Yusa san, what will you do for me?"

"Drink one cup of saké," said Kazahaya, "and go home quietly."

"I can't drink saké," said Hazama.

"But it is specially offered you," said Kamada.

"I can't indeed," was the reply. But the cup was held out, and as he pushed it aside it fell from

Kamada's hand, hit the tobacco tray, and was broken.

"What the devil are you up to?"

Kwanichi could no longer control himself.

"What's that you are saying?"

But before he could rise to his feet, Kamada dealt him a blow on the chest and he fell back helpless on his back. Taking advantage of this, Kamada seized his satchel, and grabbed as many of the papers in it as possible. Kwanichi hastily rose, and flung himself upon him; but in an instant his right arm was seized and twisted.

"Now Yusa," shouted Kamada, "your bond must be among those papers, take it out quickly."

Yusa turned pale, Kazahaya looked displeased at this violence. Hazama struggled to free himself, but was kept down by Kamada's legs, his arms being meanwhile twisted.

Kamada called excitedly: "Why do you hesitate? what are you all thinking about? I shall be alone responsible, hurry up and take your bond. Do it boldly, quick."

He looked angrily, at his friends, who would not do as he told them.

"No," said Kazahaya "that's too much, it is not right."

"This is no time for right or wrong; do as I say, I am responsible. Yusa, why don't you do it?"

Yusa was trembling, and more inclined to reprove Kamada for his violence.

The latter got angrier at the cowardice, as he considered it, of his friends, and in his rage twisted Hazama's arm as if he intended to break it. He writhed under the pain and called out:

"Kamada san, wait, I will settle the matter somehow."

"Hold your noise. I am not going to rely on those two cowards. I will do it myself."

Saying this, Kamada tried to unfasten his girdle with one hand but, unfortunately, the chain of his watch became entangled in it.

"What are you doing?" said Kazahaya, drawing nearer; for he felt it hard to look on and render no assistance to the impetuous Kamada.

"I am going to bind him, and then I will look for the bond myself."

"Oh! let him go. He has just said he will settle the matter."

"How can one rely on what that fellow says?"

"I will certainly settle the matter," gasped Hazama, "let go my arm please."

“ Will you agree to settle the matter and accept our offer ? ” said Kazahaya.

“ I will accept it, ” was the answer.

Though Kamada felt sure this was a lie, still as the other two did not back him up, he was compelled to agree, and accordingly set Hazama free.

He was no sooner able to rise, than hastily collecting his papers, he thrust them in his satchel, and turning to his adversaries said.

“ I will take leave of you for to-day. ”

He felt that it was risky for him to stay longer, so hiding his resentment, he tried to quit the room quietly when a loud “ Wait Wait ! ” from Kamada made him again pause.

“ Didn't you say you would settle the matter ? until you do so I will not let you leave this house. ”

He drew nearer to him and Hazama hurriedly said, “ I am going to accept your offer ; but as I am feeling ill from the rough handling I have experienced, please let me go for to-day. Good afternoon, I have disturbed you in staying so long a time. Now, Yusa san, I will come again in a few days and have a talk with you. ”

At the change in Hazama's manner, Kamada looked up sharply.

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"Ah! I see you are going to revenge yourself but take care I will get even with you."

"Oh stop!" cried Kazahaya, "you go now Hazama, and I will settle with you in a few days. I will see you out."

Yusa and Kazahaya accompanied him to the door.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Bond.

MRS. Yusa entered from the verandah, overjoyed at the dismissal of the usurer's clerk.

"I am very, very grateful, for your kindness," said she to Kamada, "you can't imagine how glad I am!"

"Don't mention it; rather student-like, wasn't it?"

"It was a splendid scene. Let me give you a little saké."

She busied herself in restoring order, for the foregoing scene had caused a good deal of confusion in the room. The other two returned, and Mrs. Yusa, turning to Kazahaya, began thanking him profusely for his help in getting rid of the hated usurer.

Yusa, in contrast to his wife's delight, sat gloomily by, now and then heaving sighs.

"It was very kind of you to help me," he said, "but what will he do to me now? He will perhaps seize my property to-morrow, and it will be all up with me then."

"I fear Kamada has behaved in too highhanded a

manner," said Kazahaya. "I am a little afraid of what he may do; the Kano method is all very well, but it requires great care in using it."

"Well," replied Kamada, "all I say to you is 'Wait'."

He fumbled in the sleeve of his kimono, and produced two crumpled documents. The other three looked on with interest while Kamada smoothed them out and found that one was a registered bond for 100 yen made out, to Wani-buchi by some unknown person. Astonished at this, they watched him unfold the other, all four heads close to the lamp and waiting with bated breath for the results it might disclose.

It was a bond for 300 yen. As they turned over the pages they discovered the name of Riyokitsu Yusa as one of the debtors.

Kamada jumped up. "It is the bond itself!"

"Hurra! I have got it, Hurra, hurra!!"

Yusa, in his agitation, knocked over the saké bottle, and leaning forward anxiously demanded.

"Is it mine? is it really mine?"

"Here it is! look! it is here!" cried Kamada, literally dancing with joy. Kazahaya tried to seize it to convince himself that the bond was indeed in their possession.

"Ah!" gasped Mrs. Yusa, but the sudden joy was too much for her. She felt choked and could say no more.

Kazahaya now having it in his own hands, they all sat down and began examining it carefully, and found it was reality and not a dream.

"How did you get it?" they presently demanded of Kamada.

Mr. and Mrs. Yusa sat close together, with the bond tenderly spread out on their laps. Kamada, who had just filled his cup with saké, was triumphant as a warrior who had just killed his enemy.

"While I was holding the fellow down, I caught the papers with my legs and managed to slip them into my sleeve. A quick feat, I say."

"Is this the Kano Method?" asked Kazahaya slyly.

"Don't joke. I call it an extra special doctrine of the Kano method."

"How did you know it was Yusa's bond?"

"I did not know; but I thought anything taken from him might prove useful to punish him with. Who could have supposed it was the very bond that the enemy was using against our friend? It is a proof that 'Heaven helps the Good'."

"I don't quite see where the Good come in. But as we have it, can we make it null and void?"

"Well, with a little trickery we can," said Kamada.

"But," interposed Kazahaya, "it is a registered Bond."

"That does not matter;" said Kamada; "there will be a copy of this in the office of the public notary, which would prove something in a case of necessity; but as we have the original in our possession, Kwanichi Hazama may do all he can, but in vain. He has no evidence, so he can't help himself. But it would be too bad to treat him thus; I will soften the blow a little. You need not bother about it. The Minister Resident Kamada, will, with his usual diplomatic skill, negotiate with the enemy; and will establish the House of Yusa as firm as *Tai Shan."

Kamada waved the bond over his head and called out, "Banzai for Yusa san."

"Mrs. Yusa you lead the cheers."

The scrupulous Yusa, still, felt uneasy but was gradually encouraged by Kamada's promise to take the whole responsibility and settle matters

* A mountain in China, used metaphorically to mean solid and firm.

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himself. Now that the weight was lifted from his shoulders he breathed once more, and the whole party congratulated each other on the happy termination and triumph; they began to eat and drink and kept it up till a late hour.

CHAPTER XIX
The Gold Demon.

BEING left alone in the wide, wide world, with no ties of kindred, and without meeting affection, Kwanichi was like a lonely stone in a wilderness not even haunted by beast or bird.' The happiness he experienced, whilst living at the Shigisawa's, from the tender love of Miya, had been the cause of his seeking no other pleasures. His love for Miya was not like the usual love of a youth for a maiden ; Miya was to him what the manifold ties of a family are to others, she represented the love of parents, sisters and brothers ; she was indeed all in all to the poor Kwanichi ; not merely love's young dream, but the substance of what the love of a united family would be. He had regarded her as his wife, and the lonely stone in the wilderness had gradually become warm under her genial influence. We can imagine then, under these conditions, what his feelings were, when he was robbed of his only treasure, when the girl to whom he had poured forth his whole heart, whom he had trusted as himself, to whom he had been faithful even in every thought, was untrue to him,

deserting him and marrying another, leaving him stripped of everything and hopeless for the future.

He had now, not only the old loneliness of having not a tie in the world, but his heart was full of resentment and disappointment. The lonely stone was now covered with frost, the biting wind flew over it, the bitterness of his life had entered into the very marrow of his bones. Since Miya had been taken from him there was nothing left for him to live for.

Why did he not give up his resentment and forget his disappointment? He could not, his heart had been too deeply wounded. The pain which he suffered in carrying out the necessary measures of his cruel trade, seemed to deaden the pain he endured from the loss of his love. One irritant counteracting another. So he gradually learnt to do things so contrary to his character; as he was often deceived he learnt to deceive again, as no one had pity on him, so he would have no pity on others. But often he hated himself and his life, and death would have been welcome; but then death was such an easy thing, he could do that at any time. He thought in time he would grow as hard as polished steel, and that then his feelings of rage and disappointment would also disappear.

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So Kwanichi had a double object in pursuing his nefarious trade, partly to forget his troubles, and partly so to steel his mind that in the future no pain could touch him.

He often thought of Miya, but it was of the Miya of long ago, not Tomiyama's wife ; for he felt the former Miya could never be restored to him. Even if she came to him repentant, he would not take her back. But that last scene on the beach at Atami, and that other lately in Viscount Tazumi's garden, were continually before his eyes, and to forget them he would rush into business and deal with the debtors so unmercifully, that afterwards even he felt qualms of conscience. This miserable state of feeling naturally re-acted on his bodily health : he grew thinner and weaker, his hair, once glossy black, grew prematurely grey, his eyes dull, deep furrows on his brow, and his thoughts were sometimes so confused that he could not collect them.

According to Buddhist belief, he was now turning into a demon, he was already in the World of Avarice, and the clouds protecting him were growing thicker ; the sun was being hid from his sight, he would not know his dearest friends if he met them. He could no more feel affection, he could

not see the joy of spring or taste a pleasure. He could not enjoy happiness if it came to him : mercy did not exist for him, no noble ambition could spur him on ; he had so given himself up to his blind passions that he had already, before death, entered into the World of Demons.

He became more severe and cruel in dealing with his debtors, so that even the other usurers blamed him for his too harsh dealings. Wanibuchi alone praised him, he declared he had done far more unscrupulous things than his clerk, and would often urge him on to greater cruelties by reciting his own experiences. It was indeed true that Wanibuchi had made his fortune by much darker deeds than ever Kwanichi had performed, but with this difference.

Wanibuchi was much afraid of criticism : he was a consummate hypocrite, generous in contributions and charity to a Buddhist sect of which he was a powerful member. He prayed often—for his own safety, and considered that the prosperity of his house and his own personal safety were entirely due to the protection of the deity whom he devoutly served.

Kwanichi, on the contrary, was not so cruel as his master, neither did he pretend to practice any

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religion. He felt he had no reason to fear Heaven, rather he was angry at the way he had been treated by Heaven, for he had walked uprightly and done no wrong, and Heaven had punished him for nothing. The only thing that Kwanichi dreaded were his own thoughts.

CHAPTER XX

An Attack.

KWANICHI was at Mr. Akagashi's house on business; it was late, nearly ten o'clock, and he was about to take leave, when Mitsue, Akagashi's wife, asked him to wait a moment. She left the room, and he waited what seemed to him a long time. He lighted a cigarette and turned to examine the room. It was the customary Japanese room, but the few ornaments on the shelf of the alcove were common and cheap, an imitation cloisonné vase, two small dolls in a glass case, a marble ball set on a cushion, and some cheap so-called gold lacquer. An iron censer palpably artificial and made to look old, a *Kake-mono* (picture) of Fuji, and a hideous water colour sketch 6 ft. long of the Battle of the Yellow Sea.

At last Mitsue returned, she had completely changed her dress and carried a gay shawl on her arm. She apologised for keeping him waiting, and said, as she had a little shopping* to do, she would accompany him.

* Shops are kept open very late in Japan.

Although secretly annoyed, Kwanichi could say nothing, so proposed starting immediately.

The streets were still bright, but as it was a little chilly there were not many people about.

“What a cold night!” exclaimed Mitsue, “Hazama san, why do you walk so far away from me? I can hardly hear you speak.”

So saying, she walked close to his side, and offered to carry his satchel. He refused to give it up, whereupon she begged him to walk more slowly, as she was out of breath.

He modified his pace, and Mitsue began urging him to come and see her, saying she would not again speak of her love to him. As he did not respond she said :

“May I write to you?”

“What about?” was his reply.

“Oh! just to inquire after your health.”

“How absurd! there is no reason to inquire after it.”

“Well! I can't help loving you, and you can't forbid me.”

“But a letter might be seen by others, so please don't write.”

“Well! I must speak to you on business, it is about Wanibuchi san, I must have your advice.”

They came to a corner where he had intended to slip out of her company, so he made no answer to her last remark. He merely said "I must leave you here," and entered the narrow dark street.

But Mitsue did not intend to let him off so easily; so she followed him, arguing the advantage of the other road, till at last he plainly told her it was getting late, and she had better do her shopping and go home.

He turned on his heel, when he was arrested by an exclamation from her.

"Ah! Hazama san, please come here."

"What is the matter now?" said he roughly.

"I have put my foot in some thick mud and I can't get my clog out."

He turned reluctantly: the woman stretched out her hand, which he took and pulled her towards him: she staggered, and would not leave go of his hand. He looked at her in surprise, but she held his hand more tightly, squeezed it, and tried to put it in her sleeve.

"Don't be so foolish," said Kwanichi; but Mitsue would not loose him, and when he impatiently tried to draw his hand away, she only leaned closer. At last he got indignant at her

importunity, and shook himself free, running fast down the hill they were approaching.

The night was cloudy and the crescent moon now and then appearing between the clouds did not give much light. Kwanichi was now walking near the outer fence of the grounds of the Artillery School, rather a lonely part, when he was suddenly stopped by two young men each carrying a heavy stick. They were neither of them as tall as Kwanichi, but strongly built and vigorous looking.

"What do you want?" said he, "My name is Kwanichi Hazama. If you have anything against me, say so openly. If you are robbers, take what I have and let me go."

There was no reply, one of the men, who had his kimono tucked up and a black felt hat pulled down over his eyes, struck Kwanichi on the face with his stick. As Kwanichi had nothing with which to defend himself, he tried to escape, but the other fellow who was dressed as a coolie pursued him and gave him a sounding whack across the shoulders with his weapon. Kwanichi tried to make a stand but stumbled over some railings, and his assailant, pursuing him too closely, stumbled also, and fell about two yards beyond Kwanichi. The first man now attacked him again, just as he

was rising, and a heavy blow on his back made him sink back again. Then Kwanichi seized his clog and threw it in the man's face, using the opportunity to jump up; but hardly had he done so before the second man was after him, aiming a blow at his head. It just missed, however, and fell violently on the hand which held the satchel. The first man who had been hit by the clog, now re-appeared and Kwanichi finding his situation critical, snatched a knife from his satchel and endeavoured to keep them at bay. He was soon overpowered by the two men, who showered blows thick and fast on him, as he lay almost unconscious there.

"What do you say?" said the one dressed as a coolie "Shall we give up now?"

"The fellow threw a clog at my nose," replied the other.

Kwanichi held his knife ready in his right hand, but thought it wiser to feign unconsciousness: so he merely groaned feebly.

After some deliberation, the two men left him, entering a cross street.

Kwanichi raised his head with difficulty, felt pains all over his body, and finally fell back unconscious.

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BOOK II

CHAPTER XXI

The Usurer's Son.

TWO days later the papers reported the attack made upon the usurer at Sakamachi. Some of them incorrectly mentioned Wanibuchi as the sufferer, but the fact, that the wounded man had been taken to the Medical College Hospital, was given correctly in all. Most readers would not give the notice more than a passing glance, dismissing it from their minds as lightly as they would an ordinary bath-house quarrel; others who had had dealings with usurers, perhaps with Wanibuchi himself, would assume that the assailants were some hard-pressed debtors, and would regret that the usurer or his assistant, as the case might be, had not been crippled for life or even killed outright.

Wanibuchi went to the Hospital early the follow-

ing morning, both he and his wife being full of anxiety over the patient's critical condition. The usurer had come to regard Kwanichi as a son, as well as his right hand in business, but it was not wholly the affection he felt for the young man, which prompted him to leave nothing undone which might ensure his complete recovery, or be conducive to his comfort while at the Hospital. The attack he felt was an attack upon himself, and feelings of fury and indignation were stirred within him. He cursed the cowardly assailants, declaring he would show them he was not a man to be daunted by such measures; urging the doctors to try every means in their power to fully restore Kwanichi, that he might show his enemies how unavailing were their efforts to overcome or intimidate him in the way they had tried.

Mrs. Wanibuchi also was filled with conflicting emotions. In her distress at the accident which had befallen Kwanichi was mingled the fear that at any time a similar accident might befall her husband. That Kwanichi had even this time suffered in her husband's stead, she had no doubt, and a feeling of gratitude crept into her heart. This was followed by a sudden shame at the remembrance of the revelation she had made to Kwanichi

but a few days ago—and her conscience, which she had smothered and turned a deaf ear to, now awoke, and began to attack her at all points, upbraiding her for her disloyalty, her suspicion, her jealousy and desire to spy upon her husband, until the clamor of the voice within became well nigh unbearable.

The old cat which had been petted for so many years, and had grown so fat that it might have been mistaken for a small dog, was lying comfortably stretched out on the cat's bord, (a strip of wood in the brazier) snoring evenly, with forepaws buried in the warm ashes—the very antithesis to poor Mrs. Wanibuchi's state of mind. She, poor woman, crouching before the brazier, felt almost dizzy, as she revolved the events and emotions of the last few days in her mind.

Suddenly the door bell rang, startling her in her cogitations, and before she could more than wonder why her husband had returned so soon, the sliding door was pushed aside and a man's figure stood in the opening.

He was perhaps 27 years of age, pale and thin-faced, his thick, disorderly hair almost hidden by the high collar of his dark blue cloak. A stately moustache lent dignity to his face. He held a soft felt hat in his hand. As he entered he put a pair

of tortoiseshell framed pince-nez on his high-bridged nose, and gazed around the room with a repugnance that was distressing to himself.

Mrs. Wanibuchi looked up with a surprise, which at once melted into joy.

"Tadamichi! you are welcome." she cried. The young man wore a shabby black cut-away coat, a pair of loose striped trousers, collar and cuffs of celluloid, not over-clean, and a necktie of grey figured satin. Flinging his blue cloak on the floor and too eager to give even the customary greeting, he at once began:

"What is this I read of an accident? How is father? I have hurried up here as quickly as I could—How is he?"

His mother who was smiling happily as she hung up his cloak, replied:

"You read it in the paper? Fancy that! Nothing is the matter with your father!"

"Nothing? 'Seriously wounded and sent to the Hospital!' Who was it then?"

"It was Hazama! What could have made you suppose it was father?"

"The newspaper said so."

"Then the newspaper was wrong. Father has gone to visit the patient at the Hospital—he will be

back before long." Anxiously, "You will stay will you not?"

Tadamichi, in the sudden revulsion of feeling, could not even express the joy he ought to feel at his father's safety and only murmured dully:

"So it was Hazama—the paper said it was serious—poor Hazama!"

"It is exactly as the paper says," replied his mother, "but the doctors say he will not be a cripple. It may take three months to cure him completely, poor fellow! Your father is very anxious about him; he has got him a first-class room in the Hospital, and he is having the very best treatment, so we need not worry. They say the bone of his left shoulder is bruised and his arm dislocated, and he is covered with bruises and scratches. At first the doctors feared brain disease resulting from the injuries to his head; he was breathing very feebly when he was carried here.—I thought it was all over with him,—but men don't die so easily."

"A terrible accident! he ought to be well cared for. What did father say about it?"

"About what?"

"About Hazama being attacked?"

"He was very angry. He thinks the attack

was in revenge for some loan affair. Hazama is such a quiet fellow, he would not quarrel with anyone, so it must be as your father supposes. We are therefore all the more sorry for him."

"Because he is young," began Tadamichi in a low voice, "Hazama will recover, but if it were father.....you could not expect him to live, dear Mother."

"What a cruel thing to say!" interrupted his Mother; but a glance at his grief-stricken face made her pause.

"Mother dear! Does not father seem inclined to give up this business yet?"

After a good deal of painful hesitation his mother muttered: "Well—nothing indicates that—I'm not sure—....."

"Before long father, too, will be overtaken by righteous punishment."—His voice gained in intensity. "The hand that struck down Hazama was but the human agent of a higher Power... I must...I will speak to my father today" —

"Do not, I pray you, speak to your father in this strain." urged his Mother in an anxious tone. "You know his disposition—he will not listen to advice from another. Think how many times you have been over this ground with him before, and

was he not a'ways vexed? Has he ever listened to your words? Bear with this thing a little longer...it may not be for very long."

"How painful it is for me to sit in judgment on a parent, you must try to realize dear mother; I *have* borne with this thing—this disgraceful business—but I can bear it no longer—I *must* speak. Through many a night have I lain sleepless, sorrowing over our disgrace. It seems to me I could welcome all other griefs, if this sorrow could be taken from me.—I would I were a beggar, begging in the streets with my parents, an honourable calling compared to our present condition."

His voice failed, and hot burning tears filled his eyes.

CHAPTER XXII

The Argument.

THERE was a long silence in the little chamber, broken only by the peaceful snoring of the cat.

The mother felt herself attacked together with her husband, and was searching in her mind for some argument, to justify the trade upon which he was engaged. But nothing occurred to her. She knew usury was a shameful thing, abhorred by all right-minded people; her wifely duty forbade her to remonstrate with her husband, her better feelings told her she should do so. But she had winked at the thing so long; and she was weak. Still anything was preferable to this accusing silence and so she began with difficulty:

“All that you say is quite reasonable my son, but you and your father are of utterly different dispositions. In all things you hold opposite views, so that what appears right to your father appears wrong to you, and what you say and do is not approved of by him. My position between you two is difficult. We have made quite a large sum of

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money, and my great desire is to give up this trade, to retire, to see you with a wife, and have my grandchildren around me. Your father will not hear of this however,—indeed, he was very angry when once I spoke of it,—and so I have to be very guarded in what I say. I am sorry for you, I sympathize with your position, and yet I can do nothing for you. I am worried by it all and can be of no use.....

I can see that it is hard on you, that your father will not take your advice—to press it now would only make bad blood between you. He is naturally very irritated over this attack on Hazama, and you will certainly do no good by speaking now. I beg you to be patient, to wait a while. You are his son and he cannot really be indifferent to your anxiety for his safety and reputation: in the long run he will, I think, agree with you, but also, he has his own views and principles and you can't expect him to act contrary to those, to satisfy you."

Mrs. Wanibuchi felt the weakness of her argument, but it was the best she was capable of, and after all her chief desire was to prevent a rupture between father and son. Tadamichi himself was moved, but would not yield his point. "I have exercised self-restraint so long, mother, just as you

too have done. To-day please let me speak. This attack on Hazama is a punishment sent from Heaven—a warning,—father will not escape the same fate. I must speak, this may be my last chance ; I may be given no other opportunity.”

His manner was vehement and Mrs. Wani-buchi shuddered, but he continued :

“ *My* conduct also has not been good ; my father may have something to say to me likewise. I know it is wrong and unfilial to have left my father’s house to live alone elsewhere because I could not approve of the trade carried on beneath this roof. No child should treat his parents so,—you must both have called me undutiful.....”

“ No, we have not, my son,” his mother hastened to assure him, “ but we have felt how pleasant it would be if we lived together.....”

“ That is what I feel even more than you do. I have been able to live apart and support myself, but that only proves how much I owe you for your parental care, in giving me so good an education. It is painful to me to behave as though I were trampling on the father, who has given me the means of earning my own living ..

I do not wish to disobey him, to live apart

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from my parents, but I hate the mean trade of money lender. To enrich oneself by distressing other people! An abominable trade!"

He was trembling with emotion and his mother grew more and more uneasy and uncomfortable.

"I am ashamed" he continued: "to speak in this bragging way, when I can not support you in comfort by my own efforts, but I am sure I can earn enough to feed you, to give you a lodging even if it were only a shabby cottage. How happy if we three could live together! respected once more, hated by none, doing no wrong—but quietly and in peace! Money is not everything in this world! And money that is made by inhuman means—how can one live happily on that? "Ill-gotten gains stay with no man," says the proverb. A fortune that is come by dishonourably will prove the ruin of the whole generation. It is terrible to see how surely the law of Causation fulfills itself. Give up this trade, I can clearly see the fatal end of it!"

Before Tadamichi's mental eye passed a vision of this fatal end. He saw his father mercilessly murdered; upon his deathface the impress of his shameful trade. Soiled and smeared with mud he would be laid upon the first dirty, tattered

mat, and carried home followed by sneers and gibes.—There would be no pity, no regret.

Overcome by this desolate picture, a sob escaped his tightly clenched teeth. His mother had just risen, herself deeply distressed, when a jinricksha rattled up to the door, and the bell rang.

Thinking it was her husband returned at this unsuitable juncture, she shook Tadamichi by the shoulder and whispered:

“Tadamichi, your father must not see you weeping.....go into the other room quickly, till you have regained your self-possession...and say nothing today.....”

The footsteps sounded nearer, and Mrs. Wanibuchi, with loudly beating heart, hurried to the door. As she reached it, it opened and Tadayuki Wanibuchi's tall, broad figure towered above his wife's shoulder.

CHAPTER XXIII

The world's desire.

"TADAMICHI! You! Quite a stranger! When did you come?" exclaimed his father, smiling, and opening to their fullest extent his little black eyes which shone like two bright beads beneath his broad smooth forehead. His wife was nervously helping him to remove his cloak and fearing Tadamichi might reply sharply, she answered in his stead:

"He came a little while ago. You are back very early. How is Hazama?"

"Well, it is less serious than we thought, the worst is over." Adjusting his silk garment he walked cheerfully to the brazier, and then perceived his son's sombre looks:

"What is the matter with you," he exclaimed, "you look strange!"

Mrs. Wanibuchi, in the background, felt as though her husband were about to tread upon the edge of a sword, and watched her son anxiously, who with eyes averted and folded hands, made answer:

"I read in this morning's paper that you had

been seriously injured and came at once to inquire how you were."

"Now I wonder what that paper is—a mistake for Hazama.—Had it been I, you may be sure I should not have yielded so easily. There were only two of them,—I am a match for five any day."

Mrs. Wanibuchi who had seated herself behind her son, pulled his coat softly, thus warning him not to reply. In consequence he hesitated, looked confused, and his father noticing his look, said again:

"What is the matter with you? You look ill"

"Do I? It is because I am so worried about you, Father."

"About *me*?!"

"Yes father. I have begged you so many times, and I implore you once more, give up this money lending business!"

"At it again!" exclaimed his father irritably: "say no more; when it is time to do so, I shall give it up."

But Tadamichi would not be silenced. The anxiety he had gone through on reading in the newspaper of the attack upon his father, had nerved him to make one more desperate appeal. He

pointed out that if Hazama, who was but a clerk in the usurer's employ, were so hated as to be subjected to so serious an assault, what must be the feelings with which his father was regarded. Some day he would be called to account just as Hazama had been, and would perhaps have to pay the penalty of unfair dealing with his life. For the sake of his mother and himself would he not give up this hateful calling?

Not that he was urging him to give up a trade from motives of fear,—one should be willing to lose one's life for a just cause,—but this cause was shameful,—it brought dishonour upon the family, and hatred and loss of all one should hold dear.

And for what? For money! What does a man need money for? To support himself and his family,—food, clothing, even a little comfort.—they had enough for that, even more. The surplus a father has, he leaves to his children, but *his* father had no child who would touch a penny of this curséd money,—this useless money which made enmity between father and son and was the result and the cause of the despair and misery of others. For the honour of the family, and to remove the sorrow which was embittering his

whole life, would not his father give up this hateful calling?

He bent his head to hide the tears which ran down his cheeks.

Tadayuki was not in the least moved by this appeal: He even smiled a little, but his tone was softer as he replied:

“Your anxiety for my safety does credit to your good heart my son, but this anxiety is unnecessary. Unlike me, you are of a nervous disposition, and—you do not know the world. You are a scholar and as such you are no judge of a business man’s conduct. You speak of the world’s hatred of men of my trade; such hatred springs mostly from jealousy. You can prove this from the fact that a poor man, with little ability for his work, is always pitied; a man who makes money, whatever his trade may be, is ill spoken of. The rich, as a class, are always disliked, that is a wellknown fact. As a scholar you have no idea of the value of money, and it is quite right that scholars should be so; but the object of a man of business is to make money! Money is the world’s desire! Must there not be something good about money, since all men long to possess it? Bah! you do not even understand me!

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“Your point is, that money, except what is needed for mere existence, is useless and undesirable—the scholar’s point of view!

“If men were content to earn no more than the little necessary for food and drink, the whole state would be ruined! There would be no industries, no progress. Men would retire from business young, their powers unused and wasted. Infinite desire for gain is the very life of a nation.

“You ask me what is my object in making money? I confess I have no object. The more money there is, the more pleasure it gives its owner,—in fact the greatest pleasure in life is in making money.

“You find study pleasant—I find it pleasant to make money. I might ask you to give up your studies; you know as much as the average scholar! what would you say to that, eh?

“You have spoken of my trade as unjust and abominable. Can you tell me any money-making trade which can be carried on without the one side taking some advantage of the other? We lend money at high interest, but we have no security, that is why the interest is high. Our debtors know this, and we do not pretend that the interest is low. Where is the injustice? Why is it

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abominable? Those who think the interest unfair had better not borrow at all. If you call money lending unjust you must blame the whole state of society which has produced this calling. There are many difficulties in society which can only be overcome by a loan of money.

“This necessity is our advantage—if it were not so, we could not lend, however much we wanted to do so. This is the soul of our and of every other trade. It is a mutual agreement, and if you call it unfair, you must call trade unfair!”

CHAPTER XXIV

The world's desire

(Continued)

HE paused. His wife had been watching Tadamichi's face the while, and felt sure he must be as convinced by his father's excellent reasoning as she herself was. The danger of a quarrel was, she hoped, averted. Tadamichi shook his head solemnly.

"There are certain laws" he said: "which must be kept by all men, be they merchants or scholars. I am not arguing against money-making, but against making it by unjust means, such as taking advantage of a man's necessity to make him pay abnormally high interest for the money he must borrow. You call *this* the soul of trade?"

"Consider Hazama's case. The assailants were two to one,—they attacked him when he was off his guard. What do you think of such conduct? Was it fair or manly? Do you not regard them as mean cowardly fellows?"

He spoke emphatically and waited for his father to reply.

“ You agree with me ” he continued “ in calling them mean, cowardly and worthless. Still it was their business to avenge a wrong and they carried out their business successfully. They too, used the best means they had, and they must have been quite satisfied with the result. That you feel outraged, is no concern of theirs, especially as you are probably the only person who feels it an injustice. I can see no difference between your trade and their conduct—if you condemn their action, you must expect the world to regard yours in the same light.”

His mother was disturbed. Just as her husband's words had convinced her that he was in the right, so she was now thoroughly persuaded of her son's way of thinking. Who could withstand such excellent reasoning? What could Wanibuchi say in reply to this? She looked at him anxiously. But though he was quite calm, and smiled as though he were proud of his son's sound logic, yet his wife was well aware that he smiled on occasions when others did not do so, that curious, enigmatic smile. She wondered what was passing in his mind.

Tadamichi's pale face had assumed an almost livid hue, he moved his fingers restlessly and his voice became keen and small:

“ My point is too clear to need further explanation, I can only repeat what I have said so often. I am troubled about you, I live in daily dread for your safety, my life is being poisoned, even study is distasteful, and I long to bury myself from sight in some mountain fastness. You say your trade is “ not unjust ”, yet those engaged upon it are known as “ jailors of Hell,”—and I, your son, must hear you called by such a name and know it to be deserved. Those with whom you should associate, will have none of you,—they are ashamed to know you,—your associates can only be the people you yourself despise. What an intolerable position! To be despised and rejected by the world is no disgrace, it may even be an honorable thing, except where the disgrace and dishonour is of our own making, the result of actions mean and unjust.”

Wanibuchi had maintained his composure through all his son's excited speech; he whistled softly through his teeth, but as he saw Tad'amichi preparing to speak again, he interrupted him hastily with :

“ I understand, I understand.”

“ Then you will take my advice? Is that what you mean?”

“I mean I quite understand your point of view—but you are you—and I am I!”

Tadamichi, now pale as death, clenched his fists with suppressed emotion, as his father continued :

“You are young, very young. You have done nothing but read and study. This will not do. It is time you learned to see the world as it is. I sympathize with your anxiety on my behalf,—but I cannot change my principles to please you.”

Rising, he added gently :

“This attack on Hazama has upset you a good deal. I must go out now, stay here as long as you like and make yourself comfortable.”

His wife followed him to the outer door and asked, in a whisper, where he was going.

He told her, he thought it better to go out until Tadamichi should have left, as further discussion was useless. “Send him away with a few kind words” he added.

O, Mine who did not at all enjoy the prospect of being left alone with Tadamichi, for she feared he would begin to reproach her bitterly, rubbed her knees one against the other, as women do from nervousness, and begged her husband to stay at home ;—but he had already slipped on his wooden footgear and was closing the outer gate.

She therefore returned to the little sitting-room, feeling as though were about to tread on the tiger's tail, and found her son sitting with folded arms, immovable as a statue.

"It is time for lunch" she said hesitatingly. "What would you like?" and as he did not even seem to hear her, she cried pleadingly: "Tadamichi!"

He then lifted his miserable, griefstricken face, and in a voice that was half a sob, gasped: "Mother!"

The tone went to her heart, and she yearned towards him, as she had done when, as a child, he lay white and ill upon his bed, and she watched through the dark night beside him. All the mother in her was awakened by that stricken cry, and as he rose suddenly, she felt she could not let him go, and laid a detaining hand upon his sleeve, crying to him to stay. He pulled himself free with unconscious brusqueness and, in a voice trembling with tears, muttered: "Food would choke me. I can't eat— please let me go..." and so passed out of the house.

CHAPTER XXV

Too Late.

LET us leave our hero Kwanichi Hazama to recover from his wounds at the Hospital, and see how Miya has fared, since she parted with him in the moonlight at Atami, on that 17th of January, that she was to remember all her days.

Kwanichi's disappearance had been a great shock to the whole family, and yet it had been something of a relief too, coming like the solution of a difficult problem.

Miya grieved deeply. She had renounced her lover for the sake of gold, but she could not give up her love for him. She spent the days before her marriage watching and waiting for his return, convinced that he would come back to her, wondering where he had gone, and fearful lest, in his penniless condition, he should be in want and misery. Slowly and tediously each day dragged to its close, and her wedding day approached, fast and inexorable as the inflowing tide.

In her distress she consulted a fortune-teller. Till that time she had despised the profession and had laughed at those of her friends who

believed in it. Now, in her anguish of mind she felt there might be something in it. At any rate she would leave no means untried to give her hope, or to assuage the pain that was gnawing at her heart.

The fortune-teller told her that, for the present, all communication between her and her lover would cease....later on, she would meet him again. Strange to say this prophecy only convinced her that Kwanichi would write to her, a long letter, pouring out to her all the resentment he felt at her treatment, and pleading to be taken back.—But the fortune-teller's words proved true, Miya neither saw nor heard from her lover again.

As each new day brought disappointment, the girl realized more and more how she loved him. In the evenings she would steal away to his room, lean upon his desk, the hot tears falling upon her sleeves. She would open his cupboards, take out his clothes, and press her face among their folds, trying to conjure up his presence and believe he was once more beside her. In vain.

Then, if he should write, she thought, a long tender letter, she would leave her parents and join him....if she but knew where to find him she would go to him... nothing should hold her...

And in the midst of this, there arrived one day from Tomiyama the presents for the betrothal, and she sent hers in return, and set about making preparations, for her marriage. So confused was her mind at the time, and so full of day dreams, that she pictured Kwanichi in the place that Tomiyama was to occupy, and derived therefrom some happiness for a while. But this state of things could not continue. The hour came when she demanded of herself what course she was to pursue,—and nights of agony followed. She loved one with all her heart, but she could not reach him. This engagement was hateful to her, but beyond it glittered gold. Thus, within her raged the battle of two great desires,—love's desire,—and desire for gold, and so she drifted, swayed hither and thither, until the 3rd of March stood at her door and it was too late to draw back.

She went through the ceremony, which ought to be the most joyful moment of a woman's life, like one dead. The solemn day dragged on, and it was not until the customary exchange of "bed-cups," which takes place in the bed chamber itself, that it occurred to Miya that Tomiyama Tadatsugu was her husband, that this was reality, and that Kwanichi was lost to her forever. These

thoughts roused her from the half dazed condition she had been in all day, and awakened feelings of great bitterness.

She felt helpless—as the bird within the net, and said to herself:

“From the beginning my heart was given to Kwanichi; that I should give myself to Tadatsugu was the fate ordained for me by the God of Marriage. Therefore I will not forget Kwanichi even though Tadatsugu is my husband.”

In her heart, she knew this thought to be immoral, but believed she could in no wise free herself from this immorality, as it was a part of her pre-ordained fate, and a punishment from Buddha for sins committed in a former life.

Thus Miya became Tadatsugu's wife.

CHAPTER XXVI
Love and Hate.

TADAMICHI loved his wife with his whole heart and did what in him lay to make her happy. To others her lot seemed an enviable one indeed. But Miya was most miserable. As her hopes of seeing Hazama grew fainter, her aversion to her husband increased ; she shuddered at his love for her. He was never weary of contemplating her beauty, her mere presence filled him with joy. His pride and love of her were so thinly veiled as to make the world remark unkindly upon the fact. He was unaware that she was as cold and empty as a lifeless vessel in his bosom.

When a son was born to them the following Spring, his joy and pride knew no bounds. Miya hated herself for giving him a child, and worried herself into a serious illness, from which she did not recover for months. By then her little son, who was weakly, had died of pneumonia.

Miya's beauty had increased, but she had a transparent, delicate look, which made her husband caress and watch over her more than ever, and again neighbours and acquaintances shook their

heads, at the absurdity of so much devotion from a man to his wife. The cause of her heavy spirits he did not inquire, taking them to be a part of her natural character.

Miya had made no attempt to overcome her love for Kwanichi. She never ceased to grieve over what she now called her *crime*, in giving up her lover to marry another. She asked herself why had she married? Could it really be for that gold, which had brought her nothing but unhappiness? The life of plenty, the luxurious home, which had been her desire, had proved as worthless to her as a lump of earth. Was she not like a bird shut in its gilded cage, looking up at a sky for ever beyond its reach?

Like a jewel she was enshrined in her home,—she was of no use,—had been no real wife to her husband. Like a machine she had done what was expected of her,—even to the bearing of a child, which she had hated, and which she believed had died on account of her hatred. After the death of the child, she swore she would not bear another, and for years kept her oath.

Thus four years had passed, during which time she had never ceased to think of Kwanichi; when

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he suddenly stood before her in the garden of Viscount Tazumi.

What were her feelings when she beheld that figure, which never left her even in her dreams? Like a hungry man eating greedily after long abstinence, she tried to satisfy herself in that short glimpse of him. But her passion being unsatisfied, grew the more intense, till she at last resolved to take a bold step—just one step further along the road of that inward sin which, she had declared to herself, was not to be overcome.

Although she had been told by Shizuo that Hazama was living with a certain Wanibuchi, at Gobancho, she was tearful of sending him a letter, lest, in some way, it should come to her husband's ears. She could not walk out alone, either. How should she communicate with him? Everything seemed against her,—she could do nothing unobserved,—custom and etiquette hedged her in on every side.

Weary of doing nothing all day, she conceived the idea of writing a long, long, letter, in which she would tell Hazama everything,—her love, her repentance, her sorrow and this separation from him which was more than she could bear.

Not that she had any intention of sending him the letter, but the writing of it would, perhaps, ease the pain she felt in her heart.

It was the 17th of January four years after
Mik's painful parting with Kwanichi upon the
banks at Atami. It was a day when
The day was always particularly painful one to
her. She had been writing at that letter which she
hoped would bring her a little comfort, until her eyes
were blinded with tears and she was obliged to put
her writing materials away. She went to the window.
The sky had been clear all the morning, but
now a wind sprang up, blowing clouds across the
blue. At the sight of the clouds, Kwanichi's
words rounded food in Mik's eyes.
This night, this month, in all years to come,
when you look at the moon covered with clouds,
remember that it is I clouding the moon with
tears of anger and resentment.
How often since then she had watched the
moon and wondered, as the clouds dimmed her
face, whether Kwanichi still felt the same
anger towards her. Sometimes when the sun
first sign of his tears was absent and the moon
her brightness unimpaired, less higher and higher

CHAPTER XXVII

A Snowy Day.

IT was the 17th of January four years after Miya's painful parting with Kwanichi upon the sands at Atami.

The day was always a particularly painful one to her. She had been writing at that letter which, she hoped, would bring her a little comfort, until her eyes were blinded with tears and she was obliged to put her writing materials away. She went to the window.

The sky had been clear all the morning, but now a wind sprang up, blowing clouds across the blue. At the sight of the clouds, Kwanichi's words sounded loud in Miya's ears :

"This night, this month in all years to come, when you look at the moon overcast with clouds, remember that it is I clouding the moon with tears of anger and resentment."

How often since then she had watched the moon and wondered, as the clouds drifted across her face, whether Kwanichi still felt the same anger towards her. Sometimes when the supposed sign of his tears was absent, and the moon, her brightness undimmed, rose higher and higher

A Snowy Day.

in the heavens, a new grief would befall Miya. If his resentment was at an end might it not be because he had ceased to think of her? And this thought was the more intolerable of the two.

It grew colder. Miya ordered a fire to be lighted in the European room, and when the curtains were drawn, she threw herself into an easy chair, covered with scarlet damask, and gave herself up to thought.

In her husband's absence she was sole mistress of the house, having no parents-in-law to submit to, no sisters or brothers-in-law to be troubled by, no children to take care of. The household duties were performed by her servants; she had nothing to do all day. If she wanted to go out there was her special jinricksha waiting for her; she was fed on dainties; her words were listened to with deference and affection; all she did was approved of. Such a kind husband! the days should be golden for a young wife! Was not everything, that a girl can desire, bestowed lavishly upon her?

Alas! she had desired it, had sacrificed her love for it, and the sacrifice had been in vain. No luxury, no kindness, no pleasures could smother her grief; she had learned that happiness is only

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to be found at the side of the one beloved. If once more the choice between pleasures of the soul and pleasures of the body *could* be offered, she would be wise and know which to choose... ..

It was too late.

She sighed deeply and glanced round the cheerful room.

“What delight to sit here with the man one loves,” she mused—“safe and warm, protected from the outer cold, and talking openly of all that lies near one’s heart.”

She rose and drew aside a curtain. It had begun to snow, and the garden was already covered with a thin white sheet. Miya strained her ears to catch a sound of the falling snow—might it not bring her a message?

So deep was she in thought, that she did not hear the opening of the door, nor see Tadatsugu come in, so she started violently when an ice-cold hand touched her neck, and tried to turn her head. Standing behind her, he held her fast, but his favourite perfume betrayed him, and with a sigh that was partly relief, she said:

“Oh! it is you! How heavily it is snowing. Have you had a hard day?”

She pushed forward the easy chair, and herself

put more fuel on the fire, being the more glad to render her husband these little services, because of her inward infidelity towards him. Her conscience smote her for her thoughts of that afternoon, and she made an effort to forget them.

Her husband stretched out in the easy chair, thoroughly warmed by this time, looked out at the snow, and then at his beautiful wife, and felt happy and at ease.

“Hurrah! for this beautiful snow!” he exclaimed. “Wouldn’t it be nice to have some ‘Yose-nabe’¹ on a cold day like this? Do order some and make me a cup of coffee with plenty of cognac.” Miya was about to go, but he cried: “Don’t go—let them bring the things and we’ll make it here.”

He rang the bell, and then came up to the fire and put Miya’s hand in his arm. She did not smile, neither did she resist. “What is the matter with you? Why are you so lowspirited?” he asked, drawing her closer to himself and looking intently into her face:

“You look ill—have you taken cold? No? What then is the matter? I don’t like to see you so gloomy on my return, it makes me think you

¹ a kind of Irish Stew eaten out of the dish in which it is cooked.

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haven't much affection for me. Am I right?"

The door opened and the maid brought in the things ordered. Miya tried to draw herself from her husband's embrace; she felt it was unseemly in the presence of another, and was disgusted when he would not let her go. The maid put the things on the table and left the room hastily.

Tadatsugu continued:

"It seems to me, that you have been very low-spirited of late. It is not good for you to stay at home so much. You do not go out at all nowadays, and I think that is the reason of your depression. I met Mrs. Yoshida the other day and she said you had not been to see her for weeks. She teased me saying I kept you shut up like some valuable jewel, and she suggested I should take you to the theatre—or show you to people; and give the proceeds to charity! Mr. Fukuzumi has been elected—you know, it is chiefly owing to me he got into Parliament. A big congratulatory dinner is being given, and in a few days time, a dinner "of thanks" to those who helped him during the elections. To the second dinner-party we are asked to bring our wives, and so you must go.

"Mrs. Tomiyama" is talked of a great deal—

and those who have never seen you, know of you. I am proud of you, my dear, and I like you to be exclusive, but you must not shut you self up too much, else your health will suffer. I should like to take you out with me again every Sunday, as I used when we were first married. It was after the boy was born that you gave up going out with me regularly,.....and of late you have given it up altogether.....The coffee is ready? It is very nice and hot! Won't you have some? let me give you half a cup? no? without the cognac then—Has the Yose-nabe come? When it is ready, they will tell us I suppose — we can't eat it in this room, it is only fit to be eaten beside a brazier.....

You must be sure to accept Mr. Fukuzumi's invitation and dress yourself so splendidly as to eclipse every one. What about your dress? If you want a new one, have it made at once, and let it be the best that can be bought. You don't seem to care for dress nowadays.....I always see you in this sleepy-coloured coat. Why don't you put on that double coat—it suits you much better.

The day after to-morrow is Sunday! Let us go somewhere. What do you say to going to Mitsui's to look for that dress? I have it. Mrs.

Kashiwabara wants your photograph—she asks me for one whenever I see her—I am perfectly sick of her persistence. I have to go to her house to-morrow on business, and she is sure to ask me again. You have no photographs of yourself? Not *one*? Then let us go to the photographer on Sunday—we might be taken together just as if we were very young.

“Ah! the Yose-nabe has come—let us go.”

Miya had stepped to the window and was looking out at the fast-falling snow. It had spread all over the garden, it lay heavily upon the trees, and seemed to be falling on her too, crushing her relentlessly beneath its heavy whiteness.

“Why does it snow like that?” she asked irrelevantly.

“What nonsense you are talking!” was the reply, “Come—let us go.”

CHAPTER XXVIII

Miya and her Mother.

THE snow continued to fall all night and the sun rose upon a "silver world." All that day he shone with springlike warmth, until nearly all the snow was melted, and the roads were a sea of mud. But by the next day the sunshine had dried the principal thoroughfares, and people who had been confined to the house on account of the weather, now sallied forth, so that the streets looked unusually busy and crowded.

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, when a tired-out jinricksha man, the wheels of his jinricksha heavy with mud, struggled up the Iigura hill.

The old lady, whom he was drawing, was very handsome; she wore the black silk Azuma overcoat with the hanging sleeve, her head was muffled in a dark blue crêpe covering.

The jinricksha man presently turned into a side street, passed the stone wall of a Shinto shrine, and with shouts and groans of encouragement to himself, panted laboriously up a gentle slope, which, hidden from the sun on the south by a thick row

of trees, was a perfect quagmire of mud. At the top he turned into a gate boasting an electric lamp. High banks of earth rose on either side.

This was Tadatsugu Tomiyama's residence, and the caller was Miya's mother. Tomiyama had long since gone to his office, and Miya's hairdresser had just finished her daily task. With a big *maru-mage* of glossiest black, tied with a piece of pink silk, Miya came out to receive her mother. She had wound a white silk scarf round her throat, and coughed incessantly. A single glance told the mother, that those haggard looks were not to be accounted for by a mere cold.

As Miya had more leisure to do as she pleased than usually falls to the lot of a married woman, she was able to see a great deal of her Mother, and nothing could be happier for the latter than to know her daughter settled in a prosperous, peaceful home, to all intents and purposes successfully and happily married. Whenever she saw Miya, she felt a thrill of pride in having done so well for her, and she often wondered, as she watched other married couples, whether it were only lack of luck, and not also lack of talent on the parents' side in negotiating

these affairs, that had brought *their* daughters less success in their marriages.

Tomiyama's gateway, through which she so often passed, always seemed to her something of a triumphal arch!

Full of surprise and pleasure, Miya conducted her mother in a happy hurry to her sitting-room. Having been confined to the house for some time, she was doubly pleased at the prospect of a long talk, besides there was always the faint hope that her mother might speak of Kwanichi—might have had news of him.

Mrs. Shigizawa put aside for a moment the various topics she had come to discuss with her daughter, and began to question her as to the reason of her poor looks. Recollecting how her husband had pressed her closely for a reason only the day before, Miya cast about in her mind for a plausible reply. She declared she had a cold nothing more; she did not take sufficient exercise; her nerves were out of order and made her lowspirited. But her Mother was not satisfied. Having warned her, that she would do herself harm by neglecting herself, and having advised her to see a doctor, she was suddenly

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struck by a new idea and said in a flurried voice :

“ Is it a child ? ”

Miya smiled sarcastically, and her voice had a note of contempt, as she replied :

“ That is not possible ! ”

“ Not possible ? ” ejaculated the old lady “ and you seem to be proud of the fact ! What does this mean ? Here are your parents-in-law anxiously expecting a grandson, and you say ‘ not possible ’ ! Do you realize that you have no heir ? Your father, too, is not a little vexed, and says continually : “ Good-for-nothing girl ! it is a shame for a woman to have no children ! ” You really make me angry, sitting there at your ease and thinking of nothing but your own pleasure, and the preservation of your youthful looks. A day will come when you will regret it. You used to be so fond of children, what has come to you ? ”

Miya was non-plussed at this sudden attack. “ I did not say I did not wish for a child—but I can’t help it if I am not given any. ”

“ It is your duty to take care of your health and grow stronger. ” was the old lady’s reply in a less severe tone of voice.

“ You call me delicate, but there is nothing really the matter with me ; it would be absurd to

call in a doctor, he would laugh at me..... and yet....." She laughed half hysterically, and her next words came with a rush, as if driven out of her in spite of herself.

"There is something..... for a long time I have wanted to speak to you about it. It worries me all the time, and that is why I feel ill, and have grown thin and haggard."

CHAPTER XXIX

The Real Cause of Miya's
Bad Health.

HER Mother's eyes were round with wonder—she pushed herself a little nearer, and in her heart, she knew not why,—she was afraid.

“What is it?”

“Last Autumn I met Kwanichi.....”

“Yes! Where?”

Both had lowered their voices unconsciously, as though afraid of being overheard.

“Have you heard nothing of him, Mother?” questioned the girl.

“No, dear.”

“Truly, nothing?”

“Nothing.”

“You do not even know what he is doing?”

“No, dear.”

“Perhaps Father knows and keeps it secret?”

“He knows nothing. Where did you meet him?”

Miya recounted the meeting in the garden, and her Mother gave a sigh of relief, for from her daughter's manner she had expected a more serious disclosure. It was fortunate Tomiyama

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had not been present,—and then suddenly it flashed across her mind how the two men had met at Atami in the Plum-Garden. How vehement and excited Kwanichi had been, and how nervous she had felt, lest a quarrel should arise between him and Tomiyama. She remembered how beads of perspiration had stood on her forehead. Was Miya quite safe even now? Might not Kwanichi cross her path again, and might not feelings, she had deemed long since dead, be awakened? How miserable and restless Miya had been before her marriage! Mrs. Shigizawa felt uneasy.

“What did Kwanichi do after that?” she questioned.

“We parted, ignoring each other.....but.....”

“Well!”

“That is all. But it has made me feel wretched. If he had looked successful and been splendidly dressed, I should not have been so moved, but he was wearing old clothes, and he looked so thin. Then I heard that he was employed by a man named Wanibuchi, living at Gobancho, who is an agent for land and houses, and Kwanichi is living with him, so he must be badly off. When I think that this is the man with whom I was brought up, and compare his former with his

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present condition, I can't help feeling miserable." She wiped her eyes with her sleeve and added: "How can I feel happy? It is all my fault you see!"

This was unpleasant news for Mrs. Shigizawa, and she shook her head. "Dear me! Dear me! Is his condition really so bad?"

Miya went on:

"I will not say I never thought of him before that meeting, but since that interview last year he has been in my thoughts daily; and I dream dreadful dreams about him. Whenever I go to call on you and father, I wonder how I can introduce the subject, but each time my tongue is tied and I dare not speak. If my health has suffered it is owing to this *one* thing, the knowledge that Kwanichi is poor and miserable.

"I want to implore you, dear Mother, to grant me *one* request. Do something for Kwanichi! You remember when he first left us, you said something should be done to help him if he could be traced. Let him inherit the Shigizawa property as was originally intended. If not I can never, never forgive myself. Hitherto you could do nothing, as his whereabouts were unknown, but now it will be easy to find him, and it would

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be very wrong to leave things as they are.

“Could you not get father to go and see him and make some arrangement with him? Won't you take him under your care as you used to, that his life may not be spoilt, and that he may be taken back into our family? Then I can exchange the “cup of fraternity” with him, and look upon him as my elder brother, who will help me when I have need of him.”

Miya's words did not deceive even herself, nor were they meant to deceive her Mother. The thought in her mind was, that it would be easier to bear the pangs of love if Kwanichi were restored to his former position, (which brought with it the prospect of meeting,) than to know of him pining away, forever beyond her reach. Mrs. Shigizawa looked grave and doubtful at Miya's proposition.

“This is a question which requires a great deal of consideration” she said. “As to Kwanichi, we have often talked about him, and been anxious as to his fate, but for all that, as your father says, he did not behave well. It was quite natural that he should be angry at the breaking of your engagement with him, but he should not have been unreasonable. From his fourteenth year we had cared for him and done our best for him. It was

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an obligation *your* father owed his, but it was also a benefaction. If he had thought a little, he could not have left us thus abruptly and scornfully.

We did not break the engagement telling him we had no further use for him, and that he might go where he would. No indeed! Your father offered him the whole of the Shigizawa property, and would have sent him abroad to study. He even put the matter to him in the form of a requestit was almost humiliating to have to do so... he told him all his reasons, and begged him to quietly consider the subject. Kwanichi's behaviour was an insult, and you see he is being punished for it. You cannot expect your father and me to feel towards him as we used. I think that to go and seek him out, and try and do something for him would be an undignified proceeding for your father!"

But it was not so much the fear of appearing "undignified" which made Mrs. Shigizawa reluctant to have dealings with Kwanichi. There was something more dangerous than loss of dignity to be guarded against. Perhaps the Mother had read her daughter's mind more clearly than the latter anticipated.

"From your point of view, Mother, that is

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quite reasonable, but from mine it is all wrong. Kwanichi *cannot* be left as he is now, for don't you see, that it is *my* fault that he behaved badly to you, and that you think badly of him. I feel it my duty, to do my utmost to renew the old relationship. Please, for my sake, forgive Kwanichi and take him back as your son. 'Let us cast the past into a running stream,' and then I shall grow strong and be happy once more.

"Put it to father like that. . . say it is a necessity,I am growing weaker and weaker. . . ."

"I will do my best," replied her Mother :

"I will talk it over with your father. But surely you do not mean to attribute your bad health to this?"

"I do indeed. That is the real cause. I grieve over Kwanichi continually—even before I met him last year I was troubled, but since then . . . Oh ! it came upon me suddenly when I saw his poor miserable face ; . . . 'I am the cause of this, and I was filled with dread for the wrong I had done. My one and only hope in this world, is to see him restored to his former position, that he may be a comfort to my parents in their old age. At present I will leave everything to you, but I

will come in a few days and beg my father to do this for me.'

Again grave doubts assailed Mrs. Shigizawa and she shook her head once more. "I think it is too late....."

"Mother!" indignantly, "how *can* you say that. Father will certainly never consent if *you*, on whom I depend, talk like this!"

"I don't say I disagree with you, or"

"Never mind, it does not matter if you agree or not. Father too hates Kwanichi and won't do anything, I know. I will not depend on either of you. I don't care if you agree with me or not!"

Miya spoke wildly and tears of anger stood in her eyes.

"My dear child, listen to me, I think....."

"I don't want to listen to you. I don't care for anything....." she hid her face in her sleeve, and sobs prevented her further utterance.

"What foolishness is this!" exclaimed her Mother, "there is nothing to weep about. I will talk it all over with your father when I go home....."

"Do as you like!" sobbed her daughter: "I have taken my own resolutions and will carry them out."

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"That is very wrong—this is a matter in which you can do nothing.... you must leave this entirely to me. I have told you I will speak to your father when I get home."

"You don't understand me at all," burst out Miya "you are never to be depended on..... that is what I mean."

"Do not speak to your Mother like that!" exclaimed the old lady irritated.

"I shall say what I think!" replied her daughter. The Mother looked up and encountered an angry glance. This was a vexatious and serious business. She struck her little pipe sharply on the edge of the brazier—the bowl, which was loose, dropped off, and fell among the ashes.

CHAPTER XXX.

An Unwelcome Visitor.

THE fracture Kwanichi had received in his head threatened for a while to develop into meningitis, but that danger passed over and after three months at the Hospital, he was well on the way to recovery. His wounds had healed and he was able to sit up and even to stand, though the latter still gave him a good deal of pain. How weary he was of lying in bed, but his weakness prevented his making any great effort to get up. Added to this, he was worried and annoyed at the frequent visits of Mitsue, the celebrated Beauty-Usurer."

Mitsue had called so repeatedly on Hazama at the Hospital, that the doctor-in-charge, the assistant doctor, the nurses, the old woman attendant, the porter, the servants, and some of the patients all began to wag their tongues, and speculate upon the relationship between the young man and his handsome visitor. Reports of her beauty had spread so far, that a certain Professor, celebrated in medical circles, took the trouble of coming over on purpose to see her. It was not known who she was, until

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some of the doctors, who had had dealings with her, allowed the name 'Beauty-Usurer' to leak out; whereupon her visits were regarded with still greater interest. She was stared at more boldly, and Hazama's name was linked with hers in a way, that roused feelings of envy, in the breasts of the younger members of the hospital-staff.

It was not possible for Hazama to know all this, but none the less he was annoyed at her frequent visits which, ostensibly 'visits to the sick,' he could not well refuse. He had asked her once or twice not to come so often, for he had the uncomfortable feeling that the kindness concealed a trap, and he took no pleasure in her society. He disliked her character, and was insensible to her beauty. That she was in love with him was apparent to the dullest eye, but even this did not touch him, he only feared being spoken of as her lover—*she* a married woman!

Whenever she came in, he felt strangely irritable, his faculties seemed paralysed and he scolded himself as weakminded. This feeling he could not overcome.

Formerly he had done his utmost to avoid her, but here in the hospital he could not escape. Like the fish on the chopping-block, he felt, helpless

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and at the mercy of anyone. The climax came, when Wanibuchi, who had seen Mitsue at the Hospital several times, began to suspect a liaison between her and his clerk. His questionings, his suspicious looks, his badly concealed-anger proved to Kwanichi the connection that existed between his Master and the Beauty. In his weak state he was inclined to regard everything from the dark side. A great evil was coming upon him, so ran his thoughts, brought about by this woman. As long as she tormented him he would never recover, she was like a needle hidden in the mattress on which he lay. His broadest hints to her were quite useless.

She had come again and had brought him a present. Her visit had already lasted over an hour and she seemed in no hurry to go. Impatiently he turned over and, closing his eyes, feigned sleep.

The nurse left the room noiselessly and immediately Mitsue drew her chair still closer to his pillow and leaning over him whispered: "Hazama-san! Hazama-san! Please turn round."

Receiving no reply she tiptoed to the other side of the bed, brought her face close to his and again cried: "Hazama!"

An Unwelcome Visitor.

When he would neither open his eyes nor reply she shook him gently by the shoulder. It was useless to feign unconsciousness any longer. Hazama looked at her and almost rudely remarked :

“What ! are you here still.”

“Don't be so cross,” was the reply and the lovely face was laid beside his on the pillow, “I have something to tell you.”

The man's face showed his disgust plainly at this familiarity and he turned the other way again and said : “Sit down here—on the chair !” As she did not move, he took no further notice, but again closed his eyes wearily.

Mitsue was greatly affronted at such disdainful treatment and stood flicking the bedclothes viciously with her little pocket-handkerchief. Half under her breath, yet wishing to be heard, she exclaimed :

“Ah ! I know I am despised by you, and why I do not hate you I cannot tell ! You ! You ! . . .”

There was no answer.

“You are too cruel Hazama ! Will you not answer me ?”

Irritated by the silence she pulled at his pillow.

He frowned and without unclosing his eyes said crossly :

“ I have nothing to say to you except this : Your visits are an annoyance to me.”—

“ What do you say ! ” She gasped.

“—and I positively decline to see you any more.”

“ You—! What ! ”

She leaned over him and raised her delicate eyebrows, feigning an anger she was far from feeling. This was a game after her own heart. This was a man worth winning. And she loved him and enjoyed her love. Her anger was her challenge to him—she knew its efficacy of old.

The ready tears were summoned to her eyes, where they lay like dewdrops on a morning-glory.

“ You have an invalid at home,” came from Hazama in accents of scorn: “ why don't you go and nurse him. Your coming here so often annoys me.”

“ I know it does ! ”

“ And that is not all. There is that other thing I heard of, a few days ago.”

“ Ah ! yes. You mean about Mr. Wanibuchi.”

“ Perhaps I do.”

“ Did I not tell you I wished to speak to you about something ? But you make me angry, by

treating me unkindly, which you have no right to do even if you believe all you hear. Do not think you are the only person who is annoyed, —no indeed! What must *I* feel!

“ Mr. Wanibuchi was *most* unpleasant the other day. Not that I care for that, but I thought if *you* heard of it you might be vexed.”

She spoke tentatively, watching his face for the effect of her words. Hazama made no sign, in fact he hardly seemed to be listening. Ah! she would make him listen, he should know she had him at her mercy.

“ Some days ago I wanted to tell you this, but I hardly liked to speak of so unpleasant a business with my own tongue—(how virtuous the little minx could look) I thought you were better kept in ignorance of it. It is not a recent thing that Mr. Wanibuchi has approached me this way..... he has teased me about it *such* a long *long* time, (a heavy sigh) and I have avoided him, and made excuses and put it off—all for you. As Mr. Wanibuchi did not know that I—that I liked you in this way, there has been no bother, but since I have been visiting you here at the Hospital, and have met him a good many times, he has grown suspicious. So the other day he began about it

and asked me to tell him plainly what my position was in regard to you and I told him ... that...
...I had given myself to you!"

"Oh! Damn!" came from the now thoroughly roused Kwanichi,

"Shame on you! How dared you tell such a lie?"

Mitsue's first look of triumph was rapidly succeeded by a well-assumed air of penitence. Like a bashful, drooping maiden she toyed with the scarlet silk linings of her sleeves, and then lifted timid eyes, which pleaded not to be rebuked. But Hazama was in no mood to notice her coquettries. Angrily he called:

"Let there be an end of this I say—go away—go back to your home immediately." He had half risen, and now cast himself down on his pillows with such violence, that he was unable to restrain a groan of pain. At the sound Mitsue's arms were round him and passing her hands down his breast and side she questioned anxiously:

"What is the matter! Where are you hurt?"

"Go home—go home!"—was the only reply he vouchsafed her.

"Not until you speak some kind word to me..."

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...Hazama, dear Hazama, say something to me ..
..I will not go home like this."

As she stood beside him the door opened, and she turned with a start of surprise, for it was neither the doctor nor the nurse who entered.

CHAPTER XXXI

An old man's Advice.

A fat old gentleman, in a spotted woollen cloak, advanced leisurely. Less practised than Mitsue in the gentle art of deceiving, his face at once showed the anger he felt at finding her here; she on the other hand betrayed no sign of confusion—her smile and bow were charming. "How do you do? You are welcome! Will you sit down?"

"Hum! Thank you for visiting him so often." growled the old man sarcastically; and turning to Kwanichi:

"How are you? Very happy to have such lovely visitors I should think!"

Both Kwanichi and Mitsue felt extremely uncomfortable, and the former racked his weary brain how to explain, or make an end to the hateful situation.

Tadayuki smiled. He felt he had the best of it. He had caught them both and spoiled their pleasant tête-à-tête, and he was not going to let them off easily.

"Ho-ho!" he laughed softly and turned to Mitsue, who, not at all abashed, had seated herself

An old man's advice.

by the small fire-box, and was holding her little white hand over the glowing charcoal.

"You are very kind to put yourself out like this, when I am sure you must be busy at home. I have been quite upset at your giving up so much time to my clerk. But he is so far recovered now that you need not trouble yourself to come any more."

This was an open repulse, but it took more than that to disconcert Mitsue.

"Please do not consider it a trouble. I just run in here on my way to a place where I have business frequently, so you see it does not put me out at all."

Tadayuki's eyes flashed—a dangerous sign, and Kwanichi struck in:

"Yes, tell her not to come—tell her kindly; her visits worry me."

"You see Mitsue-san what he says. It was very kind of you to come—but there is no more need for it now."

"If my visits annoy you so much I shall certainly continue them," exclaimed Mitsue giving Tadayuki an angry look.

"No! no!" cried he, "Don't take it like that! That is not what I mean."

“I don't know what else you can mean. You have spoken to me as though I were a mere schoolgirl, and I am certainly not going to be told by you, what I may, and may not do.”

“Oh! pray don't take my words so amiss—I only spoke in your own interests.”

“I don't understand you. How can my visits to the Hospital injure my interests?”

“You don't know how?” Tadayuki smiled artfully.

“I don't know in the least.”

“That is because you are so young. I may seem rude, but just let me explain matters. You are young and Hazama is young, and when a young woman goes to visit a young man so frequently people are apt to talk. Therefore quite apart from doing Hazama wrong you are injuring yourself, *Mrs. Akagashi!*”

Intensely amused at the virtuous talk of the old humbug, who, when he himself was concerned, had shown no such anxiety for her reputation, Mitsue replied:

Many thanks for your kind advice. Do not trouble yourself about me. As regards Mr. Hazama I should deeply regret if I injured his reputation, especially just now when his prospects

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are so bright and he is looking forward to marrying a beautiful young wife. I will be very careful in future."

"I too must thank you for accepting my bold words of advice so willingly," replied Wanibuchi deceived by the fair lady's conciliatory words. His anger and his jealousy had evaporated for he could see that Kwanichi was sincere in his desire to be relieved of the Beauty Usurer's attentions, and so he was quite ready to be amiable to her once more."

"Hazama must be delighted and proud at having his name coupled with yours in this pretty way." he said blinking wickedly at the invalid. If it were I now, an old man, I am sure Mrs. Akagashi would not visit me even though my disease were fatal."

"Of course I would visit you! How could I help coming!" coquetted the Beauty.

"Would you? But not so often I expect."

"That is just the point! *You* have a wife! If I came to see you so often . . . oh! oh! . . ." and she gave him a charming smile and put on a shocked little look, and held her handkerchief over her mouth to cover her . . . bashfulness!!

Tadayuki was delighted

"Ha Ha Ha! laughed he. "So you can come here in peace of mind because he has no wife, can you? Shall I go and tell Mr. Akagashi that?"

"Yes do! My husband knows I come here often. And now for my reason, for there is a good one, why I, a busy woman, make time to come here so often. Mr. Hazama was wounded on his way home from my house, and moreover it was on my advice that he took the shorter road to Tsuno-kamizaka, instead of the going the usual way by the main road. I, naturally, feel that some blame attaches to me, and my husband insists on my visiting Kwanichi as often as I can. I feel it is my duty to come, and only because of that I am here. That is what Kwanichi does not like. As you see there was no need for your advice . . . nor for your suppositions.

She looked at Tadayuki with an injured expression; he in his turn gazed at her admiringly and his small round eyes were bright.

"I see, I see. You are very kind and Hazama is delighted I'm sure, and we all owe you thanks. I am really glad to hear your reasons for visiting him, but you need not have been so cross about my advice. I spoke in your interest and that is an old man's privilege and his duty. But an old

man is disliked every where. You don't like old men either do you?"

He twisted his red moustache and glanced at her stealthily.

"Old men are very nice, but it is only natural that a young person prefers the society of another young person. They are better suited to each other."

"Isn't Mr. Akagashi an old man?"

"Yes he is, and so captious that I can hardly bear him."

"If he were not captious and disagreeable how would you like him?"

"I shouldn't like him at all!"

"Really now! Do you dislike him as much as all that?"

Mitsue paid no heed to this question. Instead she remarked:

"You can't say it is a general rule that one dislikes some one because he is old, or likes another because he is young. It is no good liking anyone if they are not going to like you."

"Aha! I am certain that if you purposed to like anyone, you would never be met by anything resembling dislike!"

"What nonsense you talk? I know nothing

about it—I have had no experience.” At this would be innocence Tadayuki flung himself back in his chair and laughed till the room fairly shook.

“Haha! Haha! You know nothing about it! Haha! Do you hear that Hazama! Do you believe her? Oh! What a lot you are teaching us Mrs. Akagashi.”

“I know nothing about it,” murmured Hazama as though to himself, “here are two bad ones censuring each other, and one is just as bad as the other; “who can tell the male crow from the female?” says the Chinese proverb, for both are black.”

“*You* don’t know anything either!” roared the delighted Wanihuchi “Ha! ha! Ha!”

“He! he! he!” giggled Mitsue “what *I* don’t know Mr. Hazama certainly will not know.”

And at this sally both of them shook with laughter, and Kwanichi turned away impatiently, disgusted at all he had heard. When they had sufficiently recovered Mitsue gasped:

“I must go home now.”

“So must I,” exclaimed Tadayuki rising from his chair, “let us go together.”

“I have a call to make at Nishikuro-mon-Cho
.... pardon my rudeness, but—”

"That is all right; I will walk with you as far as that."

"No, please not to-day," pleaded Mitsue encouragingly.

"Don't say 'no.' Do you know that affair about the Asahiza stocks is about to be settled. If we don't talk it over now, we may not succeed in getting Kotobuki's money. It is a fine chance for a little conversation."

"You may talk about it to-morrow; I am in a hurry to-day."

"What is your hurry so suddenly? In business there is neither old nor young! And it is no good your pretending to dislike me so much!"

After some further discussion Mitsue was at last persuaded, and they went off together.

Left alone Hazamã heaved a deep sigh. He felt he had awakened from a bad dream. Fixing his eyes on the ceiling, he strove to banish all thoughts, good and bad alike, from his mind.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Law of Ingwa.

THE large hospital garden did not present a very cheerful appearance in the early Spring. The evergreens looked weatherbeaten in the bright sun.

The plum-trees, which here and there were beginning to blossom, had been sadly neglected. The sky was blue, flecked here and there with patches of milky whiteness. The brown bulbuls were singing lustily. Inside the hospital it was very still. Now and then the silence was broken by the slow dragging footsteps of some patient passing down the corridor.

Kwanichi who had been reading, grew drowsy, his book slipped from his hand and he slept.

A strangely, vivid, dream took possession of him. He struggled wildly against it, knowing it to be but a dream—yet fearing it might be true. But sleep held him firmly in her power and he dreamed on.

A call roused him. He opened his eyes and lo! they lighted on the very figure that had tormented him in his sleep. She stood by his bed-

side gazing at him, and he in silence let his glance wander over her face and form again and again, trying to assure himself he were awake, but more persuaded that this was still an unreality. Mitsue, for it was she, looked more beautiful than ever. There was a brightness about her that was dream-like. If she had had a fair young sister Kwanichi would have believed it was she. Whence did she acquire that look of youth and innocence? Who could even *dream* she had a husband more than 60 years old!

She had dressed her glossy hair in the elaborate young women's style, known as Taiwan Ichō, and wore as sole ornament a comb of tortoiseshell and gold lacquer. The lining of her black crêpe coat was gay with a design of spring flowers after the famous artist Kōrin, and beneath her dress of delicate grey, peeped another silken garment, ornamented with figures in tones of gold and brown. Upon her "obi" of purple satin, musical instruments had been worked in gold. Her gaily embroidered collar of pale pink crêpe threw into strong relief the whiteness of her neck and throat.

Again the gold bracelet attracted Kwanichi's attention and increased the disgust and anger with which he regarded her.

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Mitsue stood for some time wearing an air of conscious wrongdoing, infinitely charming. Then she spoke with pretty petulance:

"I ought not to have come to-day, but I had something to tell you—so I made myself brave to come. Will you forgive me for entering while you were asleep?"

"Yes, yes" replied Hazama suppressing with difficulty his inward annoyance.

"It is about Mr. Wanibuchi. Hazama-san I don't know *what* to do It was this"

"Stop! You need not tell me any more, if that is what you have come to talk about."

"Oh! dear, *don't* say that!"

"You must excuse me—my wounds are very painful to-day." and Kwanichi pulled the striped silk bedclothes closer round him.

Mitsue full of solicitude for his health and his comfort hovered about him, then being convinced he was lying comfortably, and also could not help hearing what she said, she returned to the charge, beginning with her favourite formula:

"It is very hard for me to speak about these things to you, but the other day I *had* to go with Mr. Wanibuchi; and then he *made* me dine with him; at a Tea-house, and just as I expected

he talked to me upon the same old dreadful subject.

He nearly drove me mad by harping on my relationship to you ... old as he is he can't be sensible! He talked to me just as if I were..... well, at last I cried from annoyance.

I read him a good lecture too, about not speaking to me in that way again. I think he will come and annoy you too—suspicious old man!—I don't know *what* he can say, but *do* take it quietly, and smooth over things where you can. Of course if you were fond of me you wouldn't mind at all having your name coupled with mine, but as you dislike me, you must find it hard to have people saying you are in love with me. Look upon it in the right way: it is no doubt the fate appointed for you by the Law of Ingwa, (the result of some action in a previous existence) that you should be loved by a person like myself. It is *your* ingwa, and it is *my* Ingwa too—I am the more unfortunate. To seek to escape it, is useless—like me you had better submit, and in your submission my wishes will be partially realized.

Kwanichi lay like a log in his bed, responding neither by word nor look.

“Hazama-san!” continued Mitsue undaunted

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by his silence: "you promised me the other day that you would not forget that I loved you. You seem to have forgotten it already!"

She spoke as if she expected Kwanichi to deny her statement, so when he replied: "I have not forgotten it." she was for a moment non-plussed, and a look of resentment was visible on her face.

At this juncture a voice was heard outside and the door opened. The attendant appeared, trying to usher in the visitor, who looked puzzled and then handed his card, speaking to the woman in a low voice. Mitsue's quick eyes had taken him in at a glance, and she wondered who he might be. A long grey beard, an open, highbred countenance. Of medium height and of a naturally lean figure, looking thinner and frailer by reason of his years. "Like a solitary peak in winter." thought Mitsue. The moderate quality of his dress showed him to be a person of modest character. No, she could not guess who he was but she felt she ought to show him politeness, even deference, and so made ready a seat for him beside the brazier. Kwanichi took the card handed him by the attendant and looked at it thoughtlessly, then, as he read the name "Shigisawa Ryūzo," he started violently and changed colour. A whole army of

emotions rushed in upon him. He held his breath and fixed his eyes, blazing with anger, on the card. Wondering what this might mean, the attendant questioned: "May I lead him in?"

"No."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I don't know the man."

Had no one been there he would have torn the card to pieces. As though it were some pestilent thing he threw it, as far from him as he could, on to the floor.

He closed his eyes and pressed his arms close to his sides to overcome the trembling that was shaking him. No, he would not forget the enmity that was between him and the house of Shigisawa, but he would show no sign of it, not though the blood were boiling within him and words of anger and recrimination were striving for an outlet. To the last he would control himself.

Once more the amazed attendant asked: "Is he a stranger to you?"

"Quite a stranger. He has probably mistaken me for some one else. Send him away."

"But he mentioned your name, and"

"It does not matter. Be quick and send him away please."

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“Very well sir, I will ask him to go.” and the attendant, first picking up the despised visiting card, moved doubtfully to the door.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The olive branch.

MR. Shigizawa refused the card, which the attendant tried to return to him, and looked vexed at the message, of which however, he decided to take no notice.

“Of course he knows me,” he said, “but as it is a long time since we met he may have forgotten me. That does not matter, I will see him. You say this is Mr. Hazama Kwanichi’s room? Very well, there can be no mistake then.”

He advanced deliberately towards the bed, while Mitsue rose, bowed low, and offered him her chair.

“Kwanichi san it is I!” exclaimed the old gentleman, “surely you have not forgotten me.”

Mitsue had crossed over to that corner of the room, where the attendant was making the tea, and undertook the preparation of it herself. Herself she handed it to Mr. Shigizawa so that he might know she was not a casual visitor, but someone with the right of acting as hostess. Mr. Shigizawa looked at her attentively as he took the cup from her hands. The young woman felt convinced

there was some secret here, of which she knew nothing, and she was devoured by curiosity to know what it was. Kwanichi, whose face was turned to the wall, had made no reply, so the old man began again :

“ Kwanichi, it is I. I would have come to see you long ago, but I did not know where you were. Only three days ago was I able to get your address, and I have come to you as soon as I could. How are you ? for I have heard you have been wounded and have been seriously ill.”

Again there was no reply. He turned to Mitsue, with a little frown, and asked: “ Is he asleep ? ”

“ I am not sure ” she replied ; and feeling sorry for the visitor's awkward position, she came close to Kwanichi's pillow and saw that he had pressed his face into the bedclothes, and was trying to suppress his sobs. This puzzled her still more, but she manifested none of her surprise and only said quietly to the invalid :

“ You have a visitor.”

“ He is a stranger to me.” came the muffled reply, “ send him away.”

This was disconcerting but Mitsue was learning to know from experience that a further at-

tempt would be unavailing. She turned towards Mr. Shigizawa and said:

“Don't you think he is the wrong person, for he says he does not know you.”

“That is ridiculous,” replied Shigizawa pulling his long grey beard, and turning again to Kwanichi, “five or six years have not made me so decrepit that I am unrecognizable. But if you declare you don't know me, there is no help for it. I came here to see you, never dreaming of a reception like this, with talk of “wrong persons.” An old man like myself, I thought, could claim a little talk with you, especially when coming for a definite purpose.”

He waited for a while, but no matter how long he waited, Kwanichi would vouchsafe no answer.

Then he continued:

“Ah! I see you have not forgiven us Kwanichi. And yet I want you to think the matter over again. Whatever you may have thought of our conduct to you, yours to-day does not seem kind or peaceable. I do not think you should behave thus to old Shigizawa It is true you have something to complain of, and I have come to-day to hear it; but remember we too, might complain! Perhaps you have never thought of

that! In calling upon you to-day I give way to you. I put myself, as it were, in the wrong ".....The matter, about which I wish to speak to you, is one, that will benefit you. It is about your future. Even when you left us five years ago I did not give you up, and my intentions towards you to-day, are what they were then. At that time you misunderstood me, probably because you were too young to judge calmly and to look at things in their true proportion I felt very, very grieved. That you should *still* misunderstand, I confess, surprises me. Nothing is so painful as to be misunderstood. One plans something for another's benefit—a misunderstanding arises—and one becomes an object of hatred to him, to whom one hoped to do good! One has not expected or wished the other to feel any obligations for benefactions received, but one certainly was not prepared for hatred in return.

We were all one family, full of affection for each other; we hoped to give you our name and all that belonged to us, that you might carry on the family, and then to die in your arms. Can you not guess how painful this severing of all connection between ourselves and you has been. All these things I have often discussed with my

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old wife. We have never ceased to think of restoring you to your position in our family, and of going "inkyo" (retiring) ourselves. As long as your heart was hard towards us, we could do nothing. This latter idea I will put aside and appeal not to your heart but to your understanding and your sense of justice. When I tell you everything, I think you will understand and be softened. If you are not.....well, there is nothing to be done.

I shall then go to your father's tomb and tell his departed spirit, that at his death, I took you under my protection, cared for you, did this and that for you, and intended to do even more, but that circumstances compelled me to give up my intention, and having told him all, I shall openly break with you, declaring why I am obliged to do so. You may think you have already broken with me by your five years of silence, but you are wrong—I have not yet cut you off.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Mitsue's ruse.

“ I think this: supposing I, old Shigizawa had done you a wrong, could you not have forgiven an old man *once*? If you could not forgive, you might have treated me more gently. This is the complaint I spoke of, and it is the only complaint I make against you. We have done you a wrong and I have come to apologize, and to tell you we feel the same towards you as we have always done.

You old friend has come to see you Kwanichisan are you not going to forgive him?”

He spoke gently, and waited for the reply that was to bring reconciliation. In vain. Hazama kept his obstinate silence. Losing patience the old man rose suddenly from his chair and stepped to the bed to look at Kwanichi's face. He drew his eyebrows together and was about to speak again, when Mitsue interrupted him.

She had listened to all Shigizawa said, with the keenest interest, and though she could by no means guess to what it referred, still the visitor's reasoning seemed plausible, and it seemed a pity

that Kwanichi should, through his foolish silence, forego the benefit referred to. Kwanichi must have had some very strong reason for behaving in this way, she thought, if she could help him she would; and her nimble mind quickly conceived a plan.

Turning to Mr. Shigizawa she said:

“I am nursing him. I don't know who you are, but the patient is suffering from a fever and is often delirious, talking nonsense, or crying, or seized with sudden fits of anger.” Shigizawa's face immediately softened and he looked at the invalid with tender pity. Mitsue went on: “From what you have said, I conclude you are an intimate friend, and he has rudely declared he does not know you. That is only because of his fever—he is quite delirious and you must not mind what he has said. I hope the fever will leave him soon and then perhaps you will call again. If you will give me your card, I will give it to him when he recovers, and tell him about your visit.”

“Ah! indeed!” murmured the visitor wondering who the lady was.

“Yesterday he had a visitor to whom he said many strange things—I was really in an awkward position between the two; and to-day he

behaves in just the opposite way and cannot be induced to say a word. But it is really more comfortable to have him silent like this than saying things he should leave unsaid."

If that was her idea of comfort, thought the old man, it was not his, but he turned and smiled and received a brilliant smile in return. Mitsue rejoiced that she had so easily deceived him.

She called the attendant, ordered hot water, made some fresh tea, and insisted that the visitor should resume his seat and take another cup.

"If he is delirious, he has not understood what I have been talking about;" said the visitor, "I will call again. My name is Shigizawa Ryūzō—I will give you my card—my address is on it. May I ask you if you are related to Mr. Wanibuchi?"

"No, I am no relation of his, but my father is one of his intimate friends and we live very near; so I often come here and help nurse Mr. Hazama."

"I have not seen Hazama for five years. I was told he was married last year—do you know if it is true?"

This question was invented with the hope of eliciting who the beautiful nurse was, for Shigizawa had his doubts as to her being a mere

acquaintance or coming to the Hospital to nurse a *friend*.

From her manner, he could not guess if she was married or not. Her gay, handsome attire inclined him to believe her a lady of questionable character, but her phraseology and etiquette, on the other hand, were those of gentlewoman.

He argued that she was no mere acquaintance, certainly not an unmarried girl, and she had just said herself, she had never heard that Kwanichi was married, therefore she was not his wife. Who was she? There was, no doubt, some secret connection between the two, and, if so, that meant ruin for Kwanichi, for in that case he would be unworthy of being restored to his position as heir in the Shigizawa family. People of this sort could not be admitted to his house.....such things always ended disastrously for the family.

The old man decided to take leave now and to come again, when he had made some inquiries and considered the case carefully. He was glad to have had even this little information.....he would be careful.....Rising he excused himself for the trouble he had given, promised to return another day, and finally asked Mitsue's name.

She extracted from her purple brocaded bag a

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small card and handed to it to him, excusing herself for not having done so before.

"Mrs. Mitsue Akagashi," he read, and his suspicions increased. Having a husband, she had no business with a special card of her own, nor was it at all womanly to have the name in Romaji (European letters) on the back. Her pretty manners, her exquisite dress made him consider a moment whether she might not be a lady of independent means, having a profession, according to the European custom. That would account for the visiting card. But no, she was far too pretty for that.

It was a riddle. The old gentleman left the Hospital sorely puzzled, and the question as to who the beautiful girl might be, so engrossed his thoughts, that he quite forgot his vexation over Kwanichi.

Him, Mitsue, on her return from the outer door found, sitting up in bed, shaking both his fists at the departed visitor.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Lunatic.

FOR some days, just about dusk, an old woman had begun to call at the Wanibuchi's house. No one knew whence she came, nor what her name was. She might be sixty years of age, and her short hair showed her to be a widow. There was something peculiar about her however, not only in her manner, but also in her attire, for although she wore the dress of a descendant of a noble family, and a coat of delicately tinted crêpe, yet she had, strapped diagonally across her back, a small bundle done up in oil-cloth and had on her feet a pair of dirty "geta" of the commonest kind.

She wished to see Mr. Wanibuchi upon important business and, upon hearing that he was out, she would go away without appearing to be disappointed, and return again the following day at precisely the same hour.

Mrs. Wanibuchi thought this behaviour strange. She also noticed that the woman had a wild look in her eyes, could stare unpleasantly, and also smiled to herself, apparently for no reason. Being a nervous woman, she begged her husband to come

home earlier one day, that, whatever the business was, it might be quickly despatched, so that the woman might cease to haunt the house.

"I believe," said Mrs. Wanibuchi on the day that her husband reached home at four o'clock, "I believe she is a lunatic! She has the fiercest eyes I ever saw and a strange voice. Whenever I hear her now outside the door, calling out: "Hallo! I have called to see you, hallo!" I shudder.—It is surely some evil omen that she haunts us like this."

Tadayuki Wanibuchi frowned. I was annoying to have to come home at this hour with half his business undone. He could not imagine who she could be, for no client of his answered to this description.

"Didn't she give her name?" he asked his wife, "will she come this evening?"

"I should say she did not know her own name. It is a little early for her yet, she usually appears just when the lamps are lighted. I am so afraid of her that I hope you will be severe with her and tell her not to come again."

"If she is a lunatic, as you seem to imagine, it won't be much good telling her anything."

Mrs. Wanibuchi was quite upset at this, and begged her husband to give the woman up to the

The Lunatic.

Police, but Tadayuki only laughed: "Well, you need not be so agitated about it." He said, and then, both relapsed into silence, waiting for the arrival of their strange visitor.

The day had been dark and cloudy, not a ray of sunlight had pierced the gloom. At five o'clock, although the western sky was still light, people were closing their shutters and lighting their lamps, a protest against the dreariness outside. A sudden gust of wind sprang up raising a cloud of dust; and, as if blown there by the wind, the strange, old woman appeared in the middle of the road, which led to the usurer's house.

Her hair was in wild confusion. Her skirts and her long sleeves waved wildly. Over the spear-heads, on the stone wall, that enclosed Wani-buchi's house, projected the branch of a plum tree, in full bloom. The light of the street lamp fell full upon the delicate blossoms and upon the wild figure that, for a few moments, paused beneath. White petals floated down and rested on her hair. Then, in the manner of a person returning to their own house, she walked up to the door and tried to open it. As it refused to yield, she called out slowly, in a deep voice, "Hallo! I have called to

see you—hallo! “ Within, Mrs. Wanibuchi started, —her husband too, thought it a disagreeable voice. Putting down his cup of tea on the corner of the firebox, he called to the maid to bring a light and then went to the entrance.

From within he cried :

“ Who are you ? ”

“ Is Mr. Wanibuchi at home ? ”

“ Yes, but who are you ? ”

There was no reply, but Wanibuchi heard a confused sound of rapid whispers outside, and again asked :

“ Who are you ? What is your name ? ”

“ You will see who I am, when you look at me ah ! the beautiful plum blossoms ! they would look well for to-day’s decoration in the alcove Please walk in don’t hesitate, just walk in ”

This weird speech was accompanied by violent knockings at the door, and followed by loud cries for admittance.

Tadayuki felt quite convinced she was a lunatic, and felt extremely loth to let her in ; but, arguing that she would probably not go away without seeing him, he reluctantly opened the door and admitted her, saying :

“My name is Wanibuchi, what do you want with me?”

Instead of replying the old woman came close up to him, fixed her deepset, piercing eyes upon him, and then covering her face with both her hands, began to cry like a child. Dumbfounded at this behaviour Tadayuki knew not what to say. For a while he watched her, noticing how she seemed to shrink and wither, like some old tree, beneath her sobs; then he spoke: “What is the matter with you? What is it you have to say to me.”

At the sound of his voice the sobs ceased. The old woman drew herself up and, in a threatening voice, exclaimed:

“You know, you rascal!”

“What!”

“You great scoundrel! *You* it is, who should, have gone to prison instead of our Masayuki—such a dutiful son! Who was our ancestor? A dweller in the Province of Kai Shingen Takeda, a monk as well as a knight? Daizen no Dayu by office! Who will marry a man, whose family is sure to be ruined because he has been deceived by a scoundrel? If Su-chan of the Kashiwais would marry him, how happy I should be! How happy Masayuki would be! Parents may leave:

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their children to die in a wood, but what parents would send a child to prison? Twenty-seven years old was Masayuki; he had no experience of the world, and you dared to deceive him! Let me take my revenge at once. Prepare yourself Wanibuchi!" She showed her fanglike teeth, and moved about Tadayuki restlessly.

"My only child, entrusted to my care by my departed husband, as the most valuable treasure of our house, has been sent to prison through your fault. You thought an old woman was not a thing to be feared. But I can wield a woman's spear! Do you believe me?" She laughed a ghastly laugh.

"You must believe me and I will forgive you. At home Su-chan is dressed in her best. How beautiful she looks! I have no time now to tell you of her beauty, her character, her accomplishments—reading, writing and sewing—for she is waiting for you.

"Do not delay. A carriage is ready for you. Here are your shoes."

While speaking she had taken off her shoes and untied the cord of her bundle. Spreading the oil-paper before Tadayuki, she continued:

"This is to fold your head in, when you have

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chopped it off. It will come off quite easily,—chop it off quickly !”

She chuckled quietly to herself; it had an unearthly sound.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Traps of the Money-lenders.

THE words "prison" and "Masayuki" gave Wanibuchi the clue as to who the woman was. One of his debtors, Masayuki Okura, had some weeks ago been charged with forgery, and sentenced to a fine of ten *yen*, and a year's "major imprisonment." So this was his mother, whom grief and worry probably, had driven to distraction. Wanibuchi would not allow his thoughts to dwell on this subject, longer than he could help, for he could not disguise from himself the fact that, he had driven the young man to destruction.

For this is one of the usurers' many wicked plots. In case a debtor finds it difficult to get a surety, the usurer induces him to make a private contract with him, through the single seal of the debtor himself. After this he persuades him to put down the name of a friend or relation, and to affix any seal he has handy, pretending that this is a mere form, but that without it, a bond is not considered valid. He assures him that, as it is quite a private contract, no friend ever minds use being made of his name. He treats the whole

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matter very lightly, but, is careful the document contains all the correct legal terms—"a mere form" he assures his victim.

The latter is usually aware, that it is wrong to do such a thing, but he falls into the snare in spite of this; first, because his need of money is urgent, secondly, because he feels sure he can return the loan within the term agreed upon, and that thus no harm can be done.

If the loan is not repaid on the expiration of the term, the usurer shows his fangs and claws. He extorts all he can, and the debtor unable to give any more—"his flesh wasted, his bones dry" he threatens to make the matter public, to bring it into court. Alarmed, confused, agitated, his victim endeavors to raise a fresh loan on *any* terms, this failing, the usurer suddenly comes down on the amazed surety with distraint.

Masayuki had been caught in just such a trap, and had forged the name of the father of one of his schoolmates. At the appointed date he was unable to pay, and Wanibuchi brought the matter into court. His schoolmate was abroad, and as he did not know the father, no understanding could be effected, and he was condemned under Article 210 of the Criminal code.

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The iron arme of the Law had seized Masayuki, regardless of the helpless condition of his old mother, left alone, trembling and in tears. How she loved her son! How gentle he had been with her. A lovely girl named Suzu Kashiwai was to have been married to him in the Autum. A good situation in a newly opened railway company had been promised him. Now all this was at an end. He was reduced to the rank of a common criminal, with whom no one could wish to associate.

Shame, anger, grief and sorrow had made his mother mad.

Tadayuki Wanibuchi thought it best to humour his visitor, hoping thus to get rid of her more easily.

"You want my head" he said "very well. But I cannot give it to you here, let us go into the street."

"No, no," cried the poor lunatic shaking her head, "you want to deceive me, just as you deceived poor Masayuki. Here is the very document which proves it, and did you not then send him to prison, when you had taken all his money. And yet you pretend you are innocent!"

So saying she held the oilpaper right before

his eyes. It had a strange odour which sickened Tadayuki—he thought it was the smell of blood, and he turned his head away. At this she leaped around him, still holding the oil-paper, as close as she could, to his face, and crying :

“Ha ha! your head is getting smaller—soon it will come right off. Ha ha!” Suddenly Tadayuki seized her by the arm and tried to push her outside, but she clung to the door and struggled violently, crying :

“What the devil do you mean by trying to knock me headlong down the cliff?” and sprung upon her assailant with such force, that he slipped and fell upon the floor at which she laughed boisterously.

Up he sprang, and seized her by the collar of her dress, pushing her on to the stone step outside the door. The door, which he tried hastily to close, stuck in its groove, and the old woman rushed back, her face distorted with rage, and tried to push past Wanibuchi. He, at the sight of that terrible face, forgot himself, and struck her—she recoiled, and in that moment he closed the door.

For a minute there was silence, inside and out—and then began a battering upon the door, which all but broke it, and the voice cried :

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“Rascal! Hand me your head! You have robbed me of my document and my shoes too! Shoe-robber! Knave! Hand me your head! hand me your head!”

Tadayuki stood still and watched. His wife joined him, nervous and trembling, and begged him to come with her into the back room, where they were beyond the range of that dreadful voice.

Forawhile the knocking and shouting went on without interruption, and Tadayuki came out from time to time, to see if she was still there. Presently the noise ceased, and husband and wife looking out, saw that she had gone, and heard the wind sweeping down the street, scattering the plum-blossoms like snow-flakes.

At the usual hour, the next day the lunatic came again. She was very quiet, and when the maid returned to her the shoes and the oil-paper, she went away without a word.

Lest she should appear again the following day, O'Mine begged her husband to stay at home. She came; and the maid was sent to the door to say the master was out. This time she would not go away, but declared she would wait for his return, as he had something to give her; she did not mind waiting there a few days. The maid

did her best to persuade her to go home, but she was like a stone Buddha, deaf to all voices. So they left her, and some hours later, she had gone.

O'Mine, who found these visitations very troublesome, begged her husband to send for the Police. He refused. Why should they trouble the Police with their affairs. She begged he would write out a paper, declaring she was a lunatic and should be placed under restraint; but also this he refused to do, saying she ought not to mind a woman, who was only like some harmless, masterless dog lying outside a stranger's door.

O'Mine was vexed that Tadayuki would not grant her request. She felt he despised her as "only a woman," never consulting her in anything and regarding her as unworthy of his society. In her loneliness she had begun to turn to religion to find the solace (her husband denied her) in a myriad gods without distinction.

The newly established Shinto sect, called "Tenson," especially attracted her. Its chief deity was the star with the purple light, known as "Ōmiakari-no-mikoto"—God of Great Light. He had appeared when Heaven and Earth were in chaos and the Sun and Moon were yet invisible. He was the Ruler of the Universe, and was

gracious to all, supplying his people with what they needed.

She had, early, professed her faith in this Deity, and had chosen him as the Patron-god of herself and family. When anything unusual happend, she would pray to him for special protection.

On the evening of that day, she cleansed herself specially, and lighted a number of candles at the shrine, praying to the god to turn away the evil from the house, and drive off the hated enemy.

But the next day in spite of her prayers, the enemy came again. It was dusk, and her husband had not yet returned. O'Mine sent the maid to the door and herself rushed to the shrine, cast herself down, and began to chant her prayers.

The lunatic sat down, as usual, saying she would await Wanibuchi's return. O'Mine and the maid locked the doors securely and prayed she might go away.

For a while she was quiet, but presently she began to shout, and to curse, and repeat the story of how Wanibuchi had caused her son to be sent to prison.

This state of affairs went on for more than a week, and to the neighbours, the old woman in the crêpe dress, crouching there in wind or rain, laugh-

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ing, crying, shouting, outside the door, was soon a familiar figure.

Talayuki did not know what to do. He had no wish—for obvious reasons—to consult the Police; she could do him no real harm, he argued, and so he let her be.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The Fire.

O'MINE meanwhile, puzzled over the lunatic woman's hatred of herself and her husband.

She was unaware of her husband's complicity in the Masayuki affair, and very naturally, wondered why the young man's Mother, should feel so intense a hatred, when through his own fault he had brought the trouble on himself. *They* might just as well hate the lunatic and her son, for the latter had not repaid the money he had borrowed.

These things happened in every business, sometimes the borrower paid the penalty, sometimes the lender, sometimes both.

What love that Mother must have for her son, to be driven mad by reason of his suffering—she thought of her own son—and felt full of sympathy for the poor woman.

These thoughts however did not allay her uneasiness. Her prayers to Oniakashi-no-Mikoto increased in length and frequency, and while the lunatic was outside the door she remained in front of the shrine, chanting fervently. Sometimes her mind would wander, the light of the candles

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would grow dim, and the image of the god seemed to fade from her sight ; then she would pull herself together, fearing that he was withdrawing his help from her, and pray even more enthusiastically, till the perspiration broke out all over her.

The ninth day, since Wanibuchi's encounter with the lunatic, was drawing to a close. The wind howled angrily, tearing at the trees and shaking the houses. The glass-panes of the Wanibuchi's gate-lamp had been smashed by a violent gust of wind, which had also extinguished the light.

The cold was extreme; one felt as though the frost had been planted all over one's skin with a needle.

The Wanibuchi's had finished their evening meal, and sat close beside the brazier, on which the kettle was boiling cheerily. The first bottle of saké had already been replaced by a second, and yet there was no sign of the Lunatic—it was long past her usual time.

Said Mrs. Wanibuchi: "Madam Lunatic seems to be too weak to struggle against this wind—she will get blown away if she tries to come to-night. It is past her time already. This is "Tenson sama" our patron-god helping us." Her husband offering her the saké cup, she continued:

"Shall we exchange cups? It is certainly very

pleasant to have a little on a saké cold evening—it warms one up. No, I can't drink so many in succession—you had better have some now. Listen! it is striking seven o'clock! Depend upon it, she won't come to-night; I'll have all the shutters put up at once. This is the nicest evening we have had for a long time—that woman was really shortening our life. I will say a prayer to Tenson-Sama, that she may stay away for ever Yes, I will help myself, saké is a good drink It isn't that I am afraid of the old woman, dear me! no. It is, that I feel a shudder run all down my legs and up to my hair. Don't you sometimes dream that you are being pursued by some dreadful man, and can't run away, or cry for help, and you wonder whatever will happen to you if he gets you? Well, it is just like this that I feel when she comes. Oh! don't let us talk about it any more. I think I am a little drunk with all this saké."

The maid brought in a third bottle.

"Kin! has she not come to-night? I mean Madam Lunatic!"

"No, and I am very glad she has not."

"I will give you a cake by and by, as a reward for all the trouble you have had with her. You

must be quite a friend of hers by now !”

“ I don't like you to make such remarks about me, Mistress.” the maid replied plaintively.

Some more charcoal was added to the fire and fresh water put in the kettle. Husband and wife crouched as near to the warmth as they could, but there was, as it were, an iron plate of cold at their back, which prevented them from getting quite intoxicated, in spite of their deep potations. O'Mine's naturally red face shone, as though it had been painted with red lacquer.

The lunatic never came, and at ten o'clock the maid with her piece of cake, Mrs. Wanibuchi fairly intoxicated, and Wanibuchi absolutely drunk, retired to bed.

The wind howled dismally, the tops of the trees bent beneath its onset, like brushwood, and the few stars visible seemed to be blown wildly across the sky.

Suddenly the darkness was pierced by a line of light, which sprang up from the kitchen door of the Wanibuchi's house—It rose a little, and made visible, for a moment, the outline of the house and the office—then all was dark as before.

A little later, another thin flame sprang up—flickering here and there, it neither spread, nor

went out. In a momentary lull, it stealthily climbed along the wooden kitchen door, and shone brightly.

Beside the board fence, a figure moved—it was too dark to make it out distinctly.

The flame now spread quickly. It seized the main building, and the office, and in a few moments they were wrapped in thick, whirling, black smoke, through which the red glow of the fire showed imperfectly. Columns of flame shot up, as if striving to reach the sky, but the crackling and noise of the falling timber was drowned by the howling of the storm.

No one heard, no one saw the conflagration.

Right under the dancing smoke, her face exposed to the glare, stood the lunatic.

A slight smile played about her mouth, as she watched her handy-work, and when she heard agonised cries from out the chaos, she gave a loud laugh of pleasure.

It was not until the buildings on either side of the Wanibuchi's caught fire, that the alarm was given, and people streamed from all sides, assisting those, whose houses were doomed, to save themselves and their most valuable possessions. The fire raged till two o'clock in the morning, but so boldly did the firemen do their work, that in spite of the high wind, only thirty houses were burned

The Fire.

down. In the midst of the confusion and excitement, the lunatic woman was arrested and led away.

Of the Wanibuchi's house, nothing but ashes remained; the Police Authorities at once began to inquire what had become of its inmates. After some search, the frightened maid was discovered, and she related how she had awakened, to find her room full of smoke, and had called to her master and mistress to save themselves, after which, she had run out, for the fire spread rapidly.

Inquiries for Mr. and Mrs. Wanibuchi proving fruitless, some policemen were told off to search among the ruins. Under the glowing ashes, a terribly burnt corpse was found, which, upon examination, proved to be Mrs. Wanibuchi. For a while, no trace of her husband could be discovered; but some days later, a totally burnt skeleton was dug out from beneath the office. Whether they were too intoxicated to find their way out, or whether their love of money, had induced them to go to the safe, to rescue their gold from the flames, will never be known. They had paid the penalty for their greed, with their lives. Of Wanibuchi's property nothing was left, but the safe, which stood in the midst of the desolation, little flames playing around its blackened sides.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Kwanichi Mourns.

TADAMICHI, the usurer's son, who had gone on a journey, had not yet returned, but Kwanichi arrived on the scene of the disaster the morning following, just as poor O'Mine's remains were discovered. He was, in any case, to have been dismissed from the Hospital as cured in two or three days, and there being, in Tadamichi's absence, no responsible person, he undertook the management of affairs, and though still very weak from his long illness, was able to direct, and see the necessary arrangements made.

The shock to Kwanichi was greater than he had thought possible, and coming upon him in his present enfeebled condition, he felt it the more keenly.

It seemed like a mystery to him, that he, who had been so near death's door, should be alive, while Wanibuchi, the embodiment of sturdy strength, who had visited him in his sickness, had consoled with him, and helped him to bear his trials, should have been snatched away by the hand of Death, and be beyond the reach of help and comfort.

Kwanichi Mourns.

All men know that all men have to die, but rarely realize that those, with whom they are in constant association must die too. These two people, with whom he had lived five years, were no more, and with them had vanished their house, their possessions, in fact, all that might recall them to the outward senses. Nothing was left to prove they had once existed. Kwanichi, bewildered by the suddenness and completeness of the disaster, fancied himself the victim of an evil dream. His friends *could* not be dead, surely this was unreality and soon he would awake, and this nightmare end.

Weary of his dull days in the Hospital, he had looked forward to coming home, and now he was told that nothing of that, towards which his thoughts had turned, was left to him. Leaving the Refuge (for sufferers in a fire) at Ichigaya, he tottered along, supported by his stick, to the place where Wani-buchi's house had been. As he started, the idea again came to him, that he might find everything as it had been before, and that the events of the last two days, were the invention of a malicious spirit.

After so many cold and windy days, the weather had suddenly turned mild; the cloudy moon looked warm, and in the mist the street slept quietly.

A disagreeable odour of smoke filled the air. Charred timber and burnt and broken tiles were piled up in great mounds, where the Wanibuchi's house had been. As it was here the fire had originated, the place was not even enclosed with roughly constructed board fences, like the other ruined houses.

The huge mound, beside a row of charred trees, was the site of the old office. Kwánichi walked across to it, and stood a while, supporting himself heavily on his stick, and gazing at the desolation around him. The moon looked mournfully down upon the red-burnt tiles, which lay scattered about, like pieces of human flesh. Everything within sight had fallen and was in ruins. By a cruel contrast there appeared to his mental gaze the house as it had been. The shining verandah floor, the spotless mats, the lights within, O'Mine's red face and the bitter looking mouth of her husband. Tears rushed to his eyes. What a dreary thing was this life. Everyone he had ever known and cared for, had deserted him. He had not forgotten his resentment at his first loss, and behold! he was forsaken again. What was the good of Life - there was no pleasure in it. Sorrow and grief were the portion of the living; the

dead had gone to their grave in torment. Which was worse, such a life or so cruel a death!

Walking slowly up and down Kwanichi was lost in mournful meditation.

"My life," he thought, "is as worthy of pity as their shocking death; I alone, who know what mental anguish is, can properly sympathize for what they must have suffered in the flesh. Their flesh was torn, their bones were burned! *My* heart has been broken, *my* bowels are torn asunder! It seems to me as though my spirit were trying to tear itself from my body, in horror at the sights it has seen, and the sorrow it must bear.

Is *this* Retribution for cruel deeds? Their house and property consumed by fire! but this was not enough. *They* must die too. No ordinary death was sufficient punishment; in the most terrible way, to such as not even the worst criminals are condemned, nay not even dogs or cats, they had to pay the penalty. Can it really be the will of Heaven? If it is so, why should Fate have singled out Tadayuki, who was no worse a man than many, on whom to pour the vials of her wrath. It is the way of men to wield a sword in the dark; the way of the world to dig pitfalls everywhere.

Everybody does evil: some openly, others in

The Gold Demon.

secret. If Ta layuki paid the price, who will go free? There are many more wicked than he, yet Heaven does not hate them, Fortune does not forsake them, Retribution does not overtake them. Heaven can have had no hand in this, therefore let us not call it a judgment, rather, say it is their Fate, which they could in no way escape.

In this way Kwanichi mourned the loss of the two people, with whom he had been so intimately connected. In their son's place he worshipped at the spot, where the man's skeleton had been found, and where poor disfigured O'Miné had lain.

As he was about to leave, he felt a new, strange emotion in himself, as though the souls of the departed pair, were clinging to his, begging him to stay a little longer, whispering that they were miserable in the invisible world, since no worship had been offered, no prayers had ascended to them.

Kwanichi turned back and dropped down on the mound. Here, he thought, was the best place in which to put himself in communication with them, here, perhaps, he might obtain some knowledge as to their will. In the Refuge whither their remains had been carried, he could not lose himself so utterly. Here, too, the Spirit of the departed couple would linger, and they would see him grop-

Kwan'chi Mourns.

ing in the darkness of his mind, as it were, to discover the thoughts, they had carried with them into the other world.

As he sat there in the gloom, his head resting on his stick, and the hot tears coursing down his cheeks, the silence was broken by the rattle of a jinricksha. It advanced rapidly and stopped in front of what had been the house. A figure alighted and walked toward the spot where Kwanichi sat. He lifted his head, and in spite of the darkness, recognized Tadamichi, the son, whose return he had impatiently awaited.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Tadamichi's request.

THE two men advanced toward each other, and for a moment or so, neither spoke, then Hazama stammered out:

"It was so unexpected and terrible, I have no words to speak to you about it."

"Yes, yes," gasped the other, "and that it should have happened in my absence..... I am grateful to you for all you have done"

"The night it happened, I was in the hospital and knew nothing about it—I heard the following morning and came at once.

"How I wish I had been here, for I can't help thinking, that if I had been on the spot, it would not have happened. I cannot understand it at all. They were neither of them people who easily lose their heads. The maid escaped, why not they?"

"It has strengthened my belief that there is a Fate, preordained for each of us, which, try as we may, we are unable to escape Thus, *they* were doomed to this sudden, terrible death."

Lifting his grief-stricken face, Tadamichi asked:

Tadamichi's Request.

"Is everything burnt?"

"Everything, except the safe."

"The safe? What was in it?"

"I think it contained some money, but chiefly account books and deeds."

"In connection with loans?"

"Yes."

"I wish they had been burnt!"

The regret he felt was visible on his face. Kwanichi knew that it was owing to a difference of opinion with his father, on the subject of usury, that Tadamichi had, for a number of years, lived apart from his parents, and he understood at once, why instead of rejoicing that something had been saved, he should regret that the hated documents had escaped the flames.

"It is well that the house and the office were burnt to the ground, it was right they should be burnt, it is a good thing the world is rid of them." said Tadamichi. "You and I alone will mourn the death of my poor, poor parents no one else in all the world, but will be glad to hear of their unhappy end. So you see, I am bowed beneath a double woe."

As he spoke, the tears flowed down his face, token of his filial love. The father who had avoid-

ed him, the mother who had feared him, had never ceased to love him as their son. In spite of differences of opinion, and hard words at times, he had received more love than many a son, who showed more filial piety than he. It was easy to argue against a living father . . . but against the dead, all his arguments melted. It mattered no more that his counsel had passed unheeded, for his heart was filled with the bitter regret, that he had been no dutiful son to his parents. He had failed in many ways.

A little gust of wind caught the sleeve of his coat. Ah ! his dead mother had given him that coat. He had not been specially grateful for the gift, and now he suddenly felt a pang, that her many kindnesses had received no acknowledgment from him.

Among the millions of people, in the world, he believed there was not *one*, who would think of bestowing, even so mean a gift, as a sheet of paper upon him.

Here he was, just back from the place where he had been employed as surveyor. Who was it had given him an education enabling him to take up such a position? And had it not been given without a thought of recompense? None else but a father and mother could do that.

Tadamichi's Request.

And now he could seek them no where, for hand in hand they had found their way to that invisible world, beyond the reach of the son whom they had loved so well.

Must they not have called for help from the midst of the fiercely raging flames, with shrieks of pain and groans of agony? To whom had they called? As Tadamichi thought of it, sobs shook his frame, as though his whole body had been turned into tears. Kwanichi strove to comfort him.

"Let other people be glad if they like," said he, "your parents will be satisfied if *you* mourn for them. Do not think me impertinent if I say that I have envied you on one point above all others, namely that you had parents. No love is truer or better than the love between parents and children. I was an orphan at fifteen, just the age when one needs one's parents most.

"Thus I became a dependent—a despised position, under which I chafed. Impatient to free myself and assert my right to respect and consideration, I lost sight of what true manliness really is, namely to keep untarnished one's sense of honour. My misfortunes have been my own fault, but I may say, they originated when I lost my parents. However old one may be, to lose one's parents is a great

misfortune. Compared with so unhappy a man as myself, you must regard yourself as one, who has been favoured."

It was quite unprecedented that Kwanichi should speak to Tadamichi in this friendly way. Not so much *what* he had said, as that he should speak at all, to the man, who, he knew, hated him, and considered him the assistant, and may be, even the instigator in many of his father's heartless deeds.

Tadamichi was suddenly struck by the fact that there might be some humanity in the man he had always considered nothing but a brutal fellow.

"You say you failed to preserve your sense of honour?" he questioned.

"Yes sir."

"Am I to understand you do not consider yourself an honourable man now?"

"Of course I am not."

Tadamichi bowed his head, and for a while, was silent, then he said:

"Forgive me, for the words of despair I uttered to one, so much more unhappy than myself. Let us go."

But neither moved. It was past midnight; the silence was unbroken, save when a piece of charred wood cracked beneath Tadamichi's feet.

Tadamichi's Request.

In that scene of ruin and desolation, dimly illuminated by the pale moon, the two silent figures, bowed with grief, looked like the impersonation of sorrow

CHAPTER XL

Tadamichi's request.

(Continued.)

AFTER a while Tadamichi spoke, and a note of affection was mingled with the sorrow in his voice.

“My friend, would you care to learn now what it is to be a man of honour?”

“Thank you,” replied Kwanichi, understanding what was about to be offered him.

“Does that mean you accept?”

“It means that I thank you for your kindly intention, but pray you, to leave me as I am.”

“But why should you remain what you are?”

“Because I see no use in striving, at the eleventh hour, for what I cannot attain. There is no necessity for me to do so.”

“There may be no necessity, nor would I urge you from the point of view of necessity, but I will ask you to consider what I say, and to give me your answer later on.”

“Pardon me if I hurt your feelings. As I have until this moment never had anything to do with you, you may not know what sort of man I am. But I know very well what *you* are, from all I have heard about you. You are a pure man, without the

Tadamichi's Request.

blemishes resulting from a too fierce contact with the world. You and I can have nothing in common. Every word and thought of mine is crooked, unfit for honest ears and contrary to upright thought. A pure man like you, and a crooked man like me, must, from the outset, misunderstand each other—whatever I say tonight, you will do well to forget.”

“I understand perfectly what you mean.”

“I am glad you asked me to become a man of honour. You consider, that it must be painful for me, to carry on such a trade, knowing it to be dishonourable, and you wonder why I should be content to bear the pain?”

“It is something that cannot be explained in words; “it is ineffable,” as a Confucianist has it. You must look upon it as the result of an action done in a former life—my “ingwa.” If I had had the habit of drinking, I might easily have put an end to my existence by drinking desperately. As I could neither drink, nor had sufficient courage to resort to the noble “harakiri,” I found myself reduced to my present condition, and that, out of sheer cowardice.”

Tadamichi, the pure minded, was not a little touched by this frank confession. “From what

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you say," he replied, "I infer that circumstances of great seriousness brought you down to this. Could you not tell me your story in detail, that I may know how to help you most effectually?"

"It is so foolish a tale that it is not worth repeating. I have firmly resolved never to speak of it to any one, so I cannot grant your request—however, I will say this, I was deceived by somebody and the deception has spoilt my life."

"Very well, we will not speak about it any more. Now, *you* are perfectly aware that your trade is dishonourable; my father, on the other hand, declared, it was a trade one need not be ashamed of. This I thought very terrible and I had made up my mind, when all my supplications had failed, to commit suicide before his eyes, as the only way of making him repent. No arguments of mine would persuade him that he was doing wrong, and as I dared not let him go on, adding one bad deed to another, I determined to try my last and most powerful argument—suicide! Before I could do this, a terrible death overtook him, and now my life-long grief must be, that he died unrepentant. To lose both one's parents at once, not to be there to close their dying eyes, to know their death to have been indescribably terrible—is there anything

Tadamichi's Request.

sadder than this for a son? Think of it! Would that my father had repented ere he died. That he did not, doubles my grief. If he had repented in time, this accident would never have happened, of that I am persuaded. Now it is too late, and he cannot help himself, therefore I beg of *you* to repent in my father's place, nay, I must insist upon it. For if you repent, my father's sins will be wiped out, my grief will be lessend, and you will find peace, and will prosper in this world by walking uprightly.

Through your own fault you have brought yourself low. Now is your opportunity to do good, for *your* righteous acts, done for the sake of a departed soul, will bring my father forgiveness for his sins, and lessen his punishment for his unrepentance. Give up this miserable business of money-lender. Start some other trade which will benefit the world; let us even suppose that the children begging in the streets were my father's orphans, and you were bound to provide for them. To do this I will make over to you the whole of my father's property. This will make me happier than anything else. My father loved you, and I think you loved him too. If it is so, I pray you, repent in his stead.

Kwanichi's head had drooped like grass heavy with aorning dew. When Tadamichi had ended his talk he did not look up; though he was implored to reply, he still would not raise his head.

Suddenly a light shone on the road. It was a policemen going his rounds and as he passed the burnt-out grounds, he turned the full glaze of his lantern upon the two immovable figures.

With surprise he noted the marks of tears on their grief stricken faces.

"A curious place to come and weep," thought he and passed on.

The hour was half past two in the morning.

The Gold Demon.

BOOK III

CHAPTER XLI

At the End of the Year.

TO find out the money value of time we may start with the calculation that one second is worth a "mō," (100th part of a farthing) and that therefore the value of a working day of 16 hours is 5 *yen* 76 *sen*, (eleven shillings and six pence farthing) which in a year amounts to as large a sum as 2102 *yen* and 40 *sen*. (Two hundred and ten pounds, four shillings and tenpence).

Hence the bustle in our cities on the twenty-seventh of December! It is the trumpet blast announcing the end of the year!

Those who are in the habit of sitting still begin to bestir themselves, those who usually walk begin to run, the runners rush about wildly, heedless of knocks and bruises from shoulders they

hit in their headlong career, or of the wheels they break as they are whirled along. For all these people are suddenly conscious that the twelfth month is drawing to a close, and that somehow eleven months have been wasted, and with them are lost two thousand *yen* and more—precious seconds which might have been converted into gold. They are making their last desperate effort to find the lost treasure; with blood-shot eyes turning each blade of grass aside, digging up each inch of soil they should have cultivated during the year. Impatiently they hurry past, their minds burdened by the many things they had meant to do, and had put off from day to day, and which must be done now, at the earliest opportunity, or left undone for ever. Time at this juncture, though it increases a hundred and even a thousand-fold in value, will not abate one fraction of the rapidity of its flight, and every moment that passes, serves to increase the panic.

Heaven, which has not neglected its duties, shows no change that day. The sky is as blue as ever, as grand as ever, as serene as ever. It covers the earth as it has always done, and blows down the North wind all day. The sun shines and keeps himself bright high above the whirling December

dust, and at the appointed hour he sets in flood of red and golden glory.

In most of the streets the New Year decorations have been put up. Before each door the pinetrees sway gently in the wind. Like the garland of plaited straw above them, they typify Divine Blessings, which each inmate hopes will be showered before his gate.

Perhaps it is these tributes to the new, which have frightened the soul of the waning year, that it seems to fly so fast.

In the midst of those who rush along to try and make good their loss of two thousand and odd *y'en*, whose child is it that walks abroad carrying a branch of blossoming plum? Whose is that child with a gun over his shoulder, and whose the child that rides in a carriage with a geisha, and that one, in fine clothes of silk, his tooth brush in his hand? (rising *so late* and on his way to the bath when most people are so busy).

Some people there are who drive out in a carriage drawn by two horses and others who carry wedding gifts. There are some who walk along the road reading the latest magazine and yet others who are taking a troop of children to the Bazaars. These must be the people who have made use of

their time and are satisfied with the result.

Thus there are those who have lost little and are glad at that, and those who have lost much and are sorrowful. A few there are who have lost nothing, and they may well be content. And all of them are anxious to keep what they have, make good what they have lost, and strive to get more and more. This seems the object of all, even from earliest childhood, even in the midst of nature's beauties—whether beneath the blossoming trees or under the golden moon—the desire for gain has become a passion.

.....There was one man, who apparently disregarded the crisis of the year. His bare legs were exposed to the cold air, for his silk *hakama* (divided skirt), had shrunk and wrinkled till it looked like a piece of baked seaweed. His flannel shirt was almost threadbare and the stripes of his *kimono* were undistinguishable, so worn was it. His cloak had probably been given him a good many years ago, for it looked old and was very short for so tall a man. He looked about thirty-six years of age. Though not very lean, he had somewhat the appearance of a solitary tree stripped of its leaves, so high did he tower above his fellow-men. He had a cheerful countenance, perhaps a

little haughty, but not unpleasantly so, and a fine luxuriant black beard hung over his breast and spread sidewise as far as his ears.

At the moment he was slightly intoxicated, and was crossing from a side street to the main road with gay insouciance, sauntering down the very centre of it as though it were a meadow, and the season Spring.

And as he went he sang the well-known song :

“ The wine-gourd is empty,

The night is still,

I come to the fine, high house.

They bring in the Saké,

The curtains they draw,

Inviting the moonlight to enter.

But I have caroused

And the spirit of wine

Still holds me clasped in her arms.

Then draw I my sword,

And behold ! on the blade

Is reflected the light of the moon.”

Farther and farther over the sky spread the glory of the setting sun, which itself glowed like a ruby. The north wind grew sharper, pricking eyes and mouths, like polished needles driven into the flesh. The singer tottered on, swaying now to the

right, now to the left, the wind stinging his face, hot and red from his late carouse, and making him pause at moments to draw in his breath with great gasps.

“Often do I sing a sorrowful song and shed tears alone.

“Would that I could cut Mt. Kune asunder and make the river Sho flow straight;

“Would that I could chop off the “Katsura” (an imaginary tree in the moon) to make the moon shine brighter!

“Having ambition I.....”

Here a troop of the Imperial Cavalry crossed his path at a gallop and stopped his song. He leaned for support on his iron stick and watched the fine men in their gay uniforms, apparently filled with hearty admiration for them. When they had quite disappeared he resumed his song in a low deep voice:

“Having ambition I wandered about far and wide but failed to realise my ambition; Feigning madness, I sold medicine in the city of Seito.”

The eyes of all the passers-by, busy as they were, were attracted to the strange figure which comported itself as though lord of all the world—a world, which to those harrassed passers-by had

become as dismal as hell itself.

Was he a cheerful soul or one who easily despaired? Was he an unknown hero, or a sage or just a drunkard? Many cast curious glances at him, some approached and stared in his face wondering who he was. Others, as they went by, gave a few moments thought to his circumstances. He was too intoxicated to take notice of any one, and stood undecided in the midst of the traffic, unable to make up his befuddled mind where he would go. It was not the first time he had been in this street, in fact he came there very often, but never as drunk as today. The policeman in his box who had often watched him, thought it strange he should have drunk so much more than usual, but otherwise took no further notice of him.

Presently he turned to the right and had walked down the road a distance of two blocks, dragging his heavy iron stick behind him, when a jinricksha, rushing down a narrow incline at right-angles to the main road, ran into him and sent him flying a distance of about four yards, where he fell on his face and grazed his cheek considerably.

Strange to say the jinricksha man kept his balance and stopped for a moment to consider whether he ought to apologize or not, but decid-

ing that the gentleman would not be easy to deal with, he started off again; leaving the victim of the accident to scramble to his feet as best he could. The lady in the *kuruma* was however differently minded. She pushed aside the silk rug and called impatiently to the jinricksha man to stop. At first he disregarded the call and increased his speed, but a loud cry of: "Hallo there! Wait!" made him pull up.

CHAPTER XLII

A Strange Encounter.

AS is usual a crowd collected, and voices were heard reproving the jinricksha man for his cruelty in leaving a wounded man to his fate. The lady in the meanwhile had descended and was retracing her steps, hurriedly pulling off her headgear as she went, intent on showing all politeness to the man her servant had unintentionally injured.

Around him a number of people had assembled, clustering as thickly as ants who have found something sweet. They seemed to have forgotten their urgent business and many came forward and surrounded the lady clamouring for the punishment of her careless servant.

She, poor lady, felt like a frail flower in the storm. How she wished she could have kept on her silken hood and hidden her face in it. She flushed deeply as she advanced and hardly dared look up so shy and terrified did she feel.

The crowd seeing an elegantly dressed woman, her hair put up in *marumagē* style, tied with silk, and decorated with hairpins of gold cloisonné and

a comb of gold lacquer, stopped their chatter and made way for her to pass. The intoxicated man, leaving his hat, stick, book and clogs to take care of themselves, half rose, and covering his wounded cheek with his hand, stared at the approaching lady.

She stopped in front of him, and summoning all her courage bowed politely and said :

“ I don't know how to apologize to you, I have been most rude and careless! Oh! dear! your face! Is your eye injured? What can I.....”

“ It is not very serious.”

He tried to rise but was unable to do so, and the lady continued anxiously :

“ I fear you have been seriously injured,” and begged to know what she could do.

Her servant now appeared behind her and with many low bows and expressions of regret, apologized for what he had done.

Turning his eyes on him, his victim said in a solemn tone of voice :

“ You are a nice rascal! If you thought you had been rude why did you not stop? I called to you, but you tried to run away, and now because of your ill-conduct your mistress has the unpleasantness of coming to me to apologize for you.”

A Strange Encounter.

“Oh! sir, I am very sorry.”

“I hope you forgive us.” added the lady still further humbling herself.

“Be more careful in future.” was the reply, and he added to the crowd: “Off with you all, and quickly.”

The spectators were sorry the affair was so quickly concluded and went away murmuring that it had ended very tamely and that it was like a drama one sees only through a curtain.

The lady was relieved to see them go and her servant helped the gentleman to rise, handed him his clogs and his stick while his mistress cleaned the hat and picked up his book. She then gave her man her silk hood and ordered him to wipe the mud off the gentleman's cloak and *hakama* with it.

Although he had accepted the apologizes which had been offered, a certain look of annoyance was still visible on his face and the lady who had not taken her sympathetic eyes off him was strangely fascinated by it. Somewhere she had seen that look before, and the thrill of sadness she felt, told her it was connected with some painful memory. The pity in her eyes gave way to a keenly questioning look, but while she was still in doubt, the man

bowed and tottered slowly down the road. He had not gone very far when she suddenly remembered who it was and hurrying after him called to him to stop. He turned and waited leaning on his stick.

"Excuse me," exclaimed she, as she hastened up, "if I mistake you for someone else—but are you not Mr. Arao?"

He fixed his dull eyes upon her and wondered if he were dreaming. With a frantic effort he strove to clear his muddled brain and disperse the cloud which dimmed his vision. She was very beautiful and she knew him, surely he ought to know her, but memory refused her aid.

"Are you not Mr. Arao?"

"Yes, I am Arao."

"A friend of Kwanichi Hazama!"

"Oh! Hazama! he *was* an old friend of mine."

"I am Miya of the Shigizawas."

"Shigizawa—let me see—your name is Miya!"

"Yes the Shigizawas with whom Hazama used to live."

"Oh! Miya San!"

The surprise at this unexpected meeting cleared his brain for the moment. He could not take his eyes off her, trying to recognize in the elegant woman, the girl he had known in former days.

A Strange Encounter.

With what different eyes they now regarded each other. A moment ago she was a beauty riding in a *kuruma*, a world apart from him, now she was the friend of old days with whom he had laughed and talked, and in whom he had confided with an affection rare even in brother and sister.

To her he was no longer a drunkard, but the friend of the man she loved. He had been to Hazama like an elder brother in those days, and as such she had loved him sincerely.

How their conditions had changed! Here was she, exquisitely dressed, riding proudly in her *kuruma*, about her all the signs of wealth and luxury. He, poor, badly dressed, was drunken in the street!

Who could have foretold such a meeting?

Who would have dreamed of so great a difference in their fortunes?

The same thought occurred to both of them and the tears rushed to Miya's eyes.

"How very much you have changed."

"You too have changed."

The wound on his face was bleeding profusely and Miya gave him her handkerchief to staunch the blood.

"It must hurt you very much," and she whisper-

ed an order to her jinrikisha man and continued :

“ A doctor I know lives quite near, please come with me to his house. I have ordered a *kuruma* for you.”

“ Why do you trouble, there is nothing really the matter with me.”

“ Oh! there is! Pray be careful or you will fall,” for Arao began to stagger “ you seem to be under the influence of saké so please take a jinricksha at any rate.”

“ No, no, I am all right. By the way what has become of Hazama ?”

Miya felt as if a sword had pierced her heart. Controlling herself she replied :

“ As to that, I have many things to discuss with you.”

“ But you can tell me what has become of him. Is he all right ?”

“ Well.....”

“ That sounds as though something were wrong.”

Crimson with shame Miya was about to reply, when her servant, bringing up a less than usually shabby jinricksha and man, spared her the necessity of answering. To her intense annoyance she saw that a small crowd had again collected and

A Strange Encounter.

was curiously watching her and her companion, and that a policeman was approaching to discover the cause.

(Continued.)

OSCAR ARAB, with a light on his thick
A. Arab was seated at foot of a table
was smoking a pipe the door had opened
his head tilted and looked toward the door
and gave a gasp to him on a chair over which
had been thrown a bedsheet and after dropping
and would a few moments in upper room in the
of the house. He looked in doorway and had
having said like an ordinary Japanese and
the two seated there had been talking for some
time. "I received a letter from Haruo," Arab was
saying, "and he was going to the bank and
to the bank to see the manager of his bank."
"When I read the letter I was very angry,"
thought of seeing you and asking you to
think the matter over. I am very anxious to
tell you my story and the result of it."
was determined to tell you the whole story
while Haruo being out of the room you de-

CHAPTER XLIII

A Strange Encounter.

(Continued.)

JŌSUKE ARAO with a plaster on his thickly bearded face, was seated in front of a bright lamp, smoking a cigar the doctor had offered him. His intoxication had passed leaving his face pale and grave. Opposite to him on a chair, over which had been thrown a bearskin, sat Miya, drooping and wistful. The room was an upper room in the doctor's house, furnished in European style, but having mats like an ordinary Japanese one, and the two seated there had been talking for some time.

“I received a letter from Hazama,” Arao was saying, “when he was about to hide himself, and in it he confided to me the whole of his story. When I read the letter I was very angry. I thought of seeing you at once and advising you to think the matter over.....In case you refused to follow my advice, and do the only right thing, I was determined to treat you no longer as a reasonable human being, but to beat you as you de-

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served so thoroughly that you might be crippled and made unfit for marriage the whole of your life. With this determination, I stood up ready to go to you.

“But I did not go. I thought it over again and came to the conclusion that where Hazama had failed to persuade you, I too would fail, that you were merely a piece of merchandize willing to be sold to Tomiyama and that it is not right to injure another’s merchandise. I restrained myself, pressing both hands upon my breast to hinder it from bursting with the anger that was pent within.

“Miya San! Never, never would I have thought you were that sort of girl. No wonder I was deceived, just as you deceived Hazama with whom you were once as much in love as he with you. As for me, it does not satisfy me that I despise you on my own account, no, I will also hate you for Hazama’s sake—surely I will do this now and throughout the seven lives I shall live in the future.”

Miya’s face had been hidden in her sleeve and she had tried to stifle her sobs, now she could restrain herself no longer and she wept aloud.

“Hazama has been a failure through your fault,” continued Arao, “but I blame him for having

thrown away his chances and allowed himself to sink, simply because a woman gave him up. Still, however foolishly Hazama has behaved, your fault remains, for you caused his fall, and in that your behaviour as a woman was not chaste, it is set against you as though you had stabbed your husband to death. Don't you realize this yourself? It is good that you have repented, for it is a thing you must continue to repent or to the utmost extent of your human power. I am sorry for you that it is too late for your repentance to do any good.

"As to Hazama, he is like one dead.....and you have lived six years with your husband. 'The milk is spilt and the tray is broken' and since it is so, not even Divine power can mend it. I wish I could find a word of consolation for you; it is hard to find, for the fault is entirely yours and consequently it is only proper you should suffer for it."

Miya lifted her wet eyes and encountering Arai's glance, shuddered, for she seemed to behold Kwanichi's hatred of herself gazing at her from the eyes of his friend.

"Alas! my own fault!" thought she, "though at the time I knew not how great a wrong I was

A Strange Encounter.

doing. It must be great indeed in this man who has *not* suffered for it should feel such hatred and resentment. If so, how can the man who said, in time I should realize the consequences of my deed, ever forgive me. Alas! I shall never be forgiven, I shall never see the man I love again!"

She bowed her head and sobs shook her slight flower-like form.

Arao, though fancying he read in Miya's eyes more self-interest than true love and despising her accordingly, could not fail to be moved by a grief he saw was sincere.

"You have indeed repented," he said more gently, "and that must bring you forgiveness from yourself, even though Hazama and I may be unable to forgive."

But Miya, signifying that she would not listen to even so poor consolation as this, shook her head vehemently and continued to sob.

"It is better," went on Arao, "to forgive oneself than not be forgiven at all. For in order to do the former one must have repented very bitterly and suffered much, which, being observed by the other person, may lead him to forgive the wrong. I cannot yet forgive you, although in spite of despising you, I feel sorry for you in your grief.

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My chief sympathy is for my friend Hazama though you are both to be pitied. Ah! I can well imagine the bitterness that was mingled with *his* despair.

“These are my feelings and as long as I feel so, I can do nothing for you but look on in silence.

“Unexpectedly I met you to-day, the only woman of whom I ever made a friend. How many kindnesses you did me in past days! How often my heart was filled with gratitude towards you! Thus, when I recognized you after so long a separation, I ought to have felt full of affection towards you. But I observed your “*marumage*” hair and your splendid garments and I could not love you. It was a happy chance, I thought, when you said you had something to say to me, for at last the time had come when I could avenge the wrong done to Hazama. As you had deceived Hazama, I felt convinced you would try and deceive me, but I was willing to hear what you had to say and punish you after that. Contrary to my expectation, you spoke of sorrow and repentance and to this I have listened with secret joy. You are still my friend as of old, Miya-San! How ceaselessly you have repented your wrong! Had you not, I would have inflicted ten times as many wounds

upon your face as you see here on my cheek. I said, when one could with justice forgive oneself, it sometimes lead to being forgiven by another.....

Do you understand?

“Now you ask me to plead your cause with Hazama, to apologize and beg forgiveness in your place. This request I cannot grant. I cannot do so because it would appear that I was taking your side against him, and as I know you to be the offender, I cannot reasonably take your part. Besides, if I were Hazama I would not forgive you either.

“You must take it, please, as a sign of the goodwill I bear you, that I can thus meet my friend’s enemy and part from her without doing her an injury. I have said many hard words to you, but please forgive me and let me say goodbye to you, for I must be going.”

Arao bowed and was about to rise when Miya, brushing the tears off her heavy eyelids, stopped him:

“A few more moments, please.....Then however earnestly I beg you, you refuse to take my message to Hazama—and you say you will not forgive me either.”

“Yes, that is what I said,” replied Arao and half rose.

"Please wait," cried Miya desperately, "some dinner will be served in a moment."

"No, thank you, I do not want any," was the reply.

"Oh! Arao-san, *do* sit down, I must finish what I have to say to you."

"Whatever else you may say to me will be quite in vain, however much you may plead."

"Need you speak to me in that tone?" Miya replied reproachfully, "can't you be patient with me a few moments longer?"

Holding his hand over the glowing charcoal in the brazier, Arao turned his gaze to the ceiling as though pondering deeply and made no reply. Miya went on:

"Arao-san I am quite convinced of the hopelessness of persuading you to apologize for me to Hazama and of being forgiven by either of you, and I am not going to ask you to do either..... I want to see Hazama once and for all and honestly confess my wrong. To confess in his presence is all I desire. I do not ask for forgiveness and I do not think he will forgive. No, I don't even want to be forgiven, for I have made up my mind....."

Sobs choked her utterance for a while and then

in spite of Arao's astonished gaze she said beseechingly :

“ Please, please take me with you. If *you* take me, Kwanichi will be sure to see me. I only want to see him and then let him kill me—when you and he have rebuked me for what I have done, let him kill me—for it is my desire to die by Kwanichi's hand”

Arao, who had listened immovable as a pine-tree covered with frost, now shook his great beard and said :

“ Well, well, what a fine idea ! To see Hazama and then be killed by him ! It certainly *ought* to be so ! But—but—but you are Mrs. Tomiyama—Tadatsugu is your husband and you can't do just as you like.”

“ I don't care ! ”

“ Don't care ? That won't do. Your resolution to shun not even death is, as a sign of your repentance, quite right, but in any other way it means that you recognize a duty to Hazama and not to your husband. What about your husband ? Would that be the right way to treat him ? I want you to think that over. It means this. You deceived Hazama for Tomiyama's sake and now you want to deceive Tomiyama for the sake of

Hazama—to deceive not one, but *two* men! If you repent on the one hand and commit a sin on the other, all the merit of your repentance is annulled.”

Biting her lip viciously, Miya replied :

“I don't care in the least about all that.”

“Your “don't care ” will bring you to grief.”

“Really, I don't care.”

“That won't do!”

“I tell you I don't care! I don't care what becomes of me for I gave myself up as useless long ago. My only desire is to see Kwanichi-san once more, to make confession to him, and to die. As for Tomiyama, I don't..... I should like to die as I have said.”

“What foolish talk! How can you expect me to take the part of so thoughtless and unreasonable a person as yourself. I think you gave up Hazama because your disposition is bad and perverted. It is wicked to talk as you do. What do you mean by saying that you, a wife, *don't care* if you deceive your husband? If that is really your belief, I shall be inclined to give my sympathies to Mr. Tomiyama for having so unfaithful a wife..... poor Tomiyama! It is hateful to hear you talk like that!”

"Do not be so cruel," cried Miya, "but tell me how to prove that I repent.....I implore you, tell me what to do."

"Instead of asking me what to do, you had far better think it out for yourself."

"There has not been a single day these last three or four years that I have not thought about it—and because of it I am ill and wasted as by disease. How often have I said to myself I should be far happier dead than living like this. But I dared not die without seeing, if only once, Kwan-ichi-san again."

"Well, think it over again!"

"Arao-san you are *too* cruel!"

Then as though the burden of her grief were too heavy for her to bear alone, Miya seized the man's sleeve and wept.

Arao, who in spite of his harsh words was very much moved, dared not shake himself free, and looking down at her he noticed for the first time how emaciated she was and he realized that her words were true and that grief had wrought a terrible change in her:

"Do you not believe I am penitent," she cried. "For the sake of our old friendship please help me—tell me what to do."

CHAPTER XL

At Supper.

The clatter of china and the running to and fro downstairs warned the two that a meal was in preparation, and it was not long before the servants appeared and began to prepare the table for the two guests. During this time both Miya and Arao sat in an indescribably wretched silence.

As soon as the meal was ready, the servants departed and Arao took up the thread of the discourse.

“I understand very well what you feel, Miya-san, and don't think it unreasonable. I wish I could help you and show you a way by which you might attain peace of mind.....If I were you I would.....no, I can't tell, you, really I cannot. If it would do you any good I would tell you, but it won't. It is not a thing one person should tell another of—it would not be right, for after all it is only a fancy of mine—my innermost private thought and if I told it to you, it might lead you into a mistake and one should avoid suggesting things which might lead another into an error,

especially when the suggestion is fancy—not fact. I don't say I will not tell you at all but I cannot do so now. If I think it over and perhaps find a way of showing you what I mean, I will try and impart my idea to you. I certainly hope to have another opportunity of meeting you.

“You want to know where I live? I do not think I had better tell you just now, “a homeless wanderer am I,” as the poem has it. No, there is no particular reason why I should not tell you where I live, except this one, for you to come and call upon me would get you into trouble. You are surprised at my style of dress! Not more than I am, I assure you, but it can't be helped. I too have a history I might tell you some day.”

In this way Arao strove to divert Miya's mind from her grief as they sat at supper together and he was not unsuccessful. Her tears ceased to flow and she began to look more cheerful and to take an interest in the doings of her old friend. Seeing him pour out a cup of wine, she was reminded of the intoxicated condition in which she had found him. She begged him to be careful, not to drink too much and gave him advice on his conduct in this respect, all of which he listened to good-humouredly, promising to be careful in the future

and assuring her he rarely drank as much as he had that day.

After a while they reverted to the topic of Hazama. Miya wanted to know if Arao had ever seen him since that letter he had written and when Arao said he had not, she wished to know why and wherefore and whether he would go to see him and when and how. The man promised to do his best, but declared he was unable to go to-morrow, as he was too busy. Miya had finished her dinner and with a gesture of weariness she sighed :

“I am so weary of the world !”

“Are you?” exclaimed Arao, well, so am I. One makes a mistake in this world and what a chain of trouble comes of it. At the present moment I find no use in living in the world, but also no special reason for dying. It seems a pity to die for nothing and so live on. It is certainly better to die than to live in pain. What is there to love in life? The more I think on that subject the gloomier is the outlook.”

He had finished, too, and put down his *hashi*, saying with a smile to Miya, who had been attending to his wants :

“How many years it is since you waited on me like this !”

The recollection was too much for Miya; the ready tears sprang to her eyes, seeing which, Arao suddenly stood up and prepared to go. He had witnessed enough tears for one day.

"Well, thank you for all your kindness, Miya san," he said cheerfully, "and Goodbye."

"No, no," cried the girl, "can't you.....what shall I do?"

"There is only one thing," replied Arao, "resolution," and as though to show her what resolution meant, he pushed her gently on one side and went to the door. But she clung to him, crying:

"What do you mean by resolution?"

"I mean what I say," was the reply. He freed himself from her clasp and was gone.

CHAPTER XLI.

Concerning Tadatsugu Tomiyama.

THE New Year's pines had been removed some eight days ago, but Tomiyama Tadatsugu had not yet laid aside his festive humour and was still in search of fresh amusement, day after day, night after night. Miya made no complaint, allowing him to come and go as he pleased, and performing her wifely duty of receiving him on his return and seeing him off when he went out, just as the proprietress of a hotel does for her guests, as a matter of course and without asking any questions. This state of things had been going on for some time and Tomiyama had grown accustomed to his wife's passiveness, looking upon it as her natural disposition and requiring no more of her than to see her on his return home. This cold passivity on Miya's part did not make her husband's home a cheerful one. The result was he sought his pleasures elsewhere and though at first these had been harmless amusements, a gradual change had come over Tadatsugu, and he fell more and more into evil habits, until now he

Concerning Tadatsugu Tomiyama.

was leading a positively dissolute life, taking advantage where he could of Miya's indifference to his doings, to go unmolested where he pleased. She had noticed the change which first had seemed merely like ripples on shallow water, and she knew by this time of the habits into which he had fallen, but she said no word. It was her duty as a wife to admonish him, yet she would not speak.

He had not lost any of his affection for her, for though emaciated by constant grief, her beauty had not suffered, and as long as this was so, Tadatsugu's love for her would in all probability not decrease. No, he loved her still, but she was cold and unresponsive, and when he had satisfied himself by gazing at her beauty, he would become conscious of the chilly atmosphere of his home, and could not but feel that the time he spent there was like sitting before a stove in which no fire burned.

Money can buy much. Flattery and caresses, smiles and tears, gay looks and happy laughter, all can be had for money. Tadatsugu was rich and since he could not find these things in his own home he sought them elsewhere, taking refuge from the cheerlessness of his house in temporary pleasures, and realizing how empty

they were, just in the same way that he rejoiced in being able to call his own, so great a beauty as Miya, without realizing how empty that beauty was. Thus, unconsciously, he was suffering pain, though had he been told so, he would have unhesitatingly denied it, being satisfied with himself as a man of the world, who knew how to take his pleasure at home and abroad, and was wealthy enough to do both.

Now Miya, whose love of Hazama intensified her dislike of her husband, tried to see as little of him as she could, and was glad to see him go out early and return late, and though she guessed where he went and how his time was spent, she never reproached him or even looked angry. When the evening was chilly, she would, like a thoughtful wife, bring out a warm waist-coat lest he should take cold, and he, touched by the attention, would congratulate himself on having so good a wife, one he could so thoroughly rely on, a splendid mistress in her house, and to him a valuable possession. And so it appeared outwardly, not only to her husband but also to her parents-in-law (who did not live with her as is customary), to her relatives and her acquaintances. All pitied her on account of her delicate health

and regarded her as a model wife. She did not go into society as much as Mr. So-and-so's wife; she was not wayward like Madam X, nor as fond of gaiety as some other ladies, nor was she a gossip, nor jealous, nor importunate. No, she stayed at home, serving her husband faithfully and quietly, in spite of the fact that she was more beautiful and more talented than the other ladies and therefore more worthy of admiration. Nobody knew the secret that was hidden in her breast and she never did anything by which that secret might be betrayed, so that the indifferent and cold manner to her husband was only regarded as the behaviour of a gentle and reserved nature and not as the outward expression of the false heart within. Outwardly, she was fortunate and happy and envied by many, inwardly, all was darkness and misery.

Miya was now in her twenty-fifth year. Her days were passed in dreaming of the past and sighing over the present. The New Year had brought only remorse keener than ever, disappointment and sorrow. It had added another year to her age—years, as she said to herself, for which she had no desire since life to her was a useless gift.

She had spent the last days hoping for a word from Arao, like a prisoner who hopes for, but expects no acquittal. Each day had brought fresh disappointment to her and she longed to retire to her bed and weep there alone, but having no actual illness or pain she could not do so and was obliged to dress herself as her husband liked to see her, in the silken garments which best showed up her beauty.

Miya was sitting beside the brazier opposite to her husband, who was drinking saké to warm himself before going out into the cold.

The sun shone brightly on the two blossoming plum-trees placed on the southern verandah, on the paper doors and upon the "fukujuso" (adonis amuraisis) standing on the alcove shelf. Tada-tsubu was scarcely less shining in his new triple suit of silk holding in his right hand a white silk wrapper of a delicate and transparent weave, while in his left he held the cup into which Miya was at that moment pouring wine.

"Why! that is a very awkward way to pour out wine....." he exclaimed, "it is overflowing! Very bad manners! Miya san! I might almost say I'd rather go out to have my

wine poured out for me, if you are going to do it like this!"

"Go out to drink as much as you like, dear," replied Miya smiling.

"All right! You have said it is all right! I shall be *very* late to-night then!"

"About what time will you be back?"

"I shall be late!"

"But if you do not say what time you will return, it is tiresome for those who have to sit up and wait for you."

"I shall be late."

"Very well, then every one will go to bed at ten o'clock."

"I shall be late."

Miya was too bored by this foolishness to give a reply.

"I shall be late," said Tadatsugu teasingly. Silence on Miya's part.

"I shall be so late as to surprise you!"

Miya turned away her head.

"Come, look here!"

And when she still kept silent he said in surprise, half laughing:

"Why, I believe you are angry! You need not be angry, dear!"

He pulled Miya's sleeve to make her turn.

"Why do you do that?" she asked in her even voice.

"Because you do not answer me!"

"I know you will be late, so what more can I say?"

"I shall not really be late, so don't be cross."

"It is perfectly right to be late if you have to be late, and....." her voice had a sharp ring suddenly.

"I have just told you I shall not be late. You are very easily offended nowadays. What is the reason?"

"Partly owing to the weak state of my health and partly....."

"And partly owing to my infatuation for some one else.....eh?—I stand corrected!"

Tadatsugu paused to see what effect his last remark would produce in Miya. He was disappointed that she made no sign; not even a frown disturbed the serenity of her brow.

"Won't you take a cup of wine?" he asked.

"No, thank you."

"I will take half and you can drink the rest."

"No, no, I don't care for any."

"Oh! Nonsense! let me pour out just a little

for you—next to nothing.”

“You give me what I don’t want, dear.”

“Well, never mind. Pouring wine should be done like this.....do you see?.....Aiko style.” He mentioned the name of the *geisha* who was known to be his mistress and waited for his wife’s answer, sending her a half-mischievous, half lover-like glance. Miya feigned not to have recognized the name and only made a little grimace at the taste of the wine of which she had taken a sip.

“You don’t like it?” queried her husband, “well, give me the cup—and now fill it up to the brim for me.”

Miya did as she was requested and apologized for not having emptied the cup her husband had poured out for her. She then once more urged him to hurry as it was long past ten o’clock. Tadatsugu, that morning, was in no mood to go. He declared he had no important business that day and lingered, sometimes caressing, sometimes teasing her. Finally he again referred to the probability of his being late that night and Miya regarding him questioningly, he added:

“But not for the reason you attach to my late home-coming! On the 28th the “*Denden ku ai*” (an association for the purpose of dramatic song-

singing="Jōruri") are giving their Concert and I am going to call on *Itogawa* at five o'clock this afternoon for a rehearsal. I am singing my favorite :

"Being persuaded by my parents, I sailed from the harbour of *Naniwa* ;

"Alas ! what pain it was to me, I ceased not to weep until I came to *Akashi*.

"Though I found him there, a great storm parted us,

"And I returned again to my native place. My parents had found me a husband ; They wished to give me to an unknown man."

At the beginning of the song *Miya* had turned her face away—she hated her husband to sing and as his voice grew louder and more and more artificial the line between her delicate eyebrows deepened.

Suddenly she interrupted him :

"You had better stop now—that is a good passage to break off at—and you *must* go, it is getting so late."

"Please listen to me a little more.....‘that I might break my avowed love with ’—

"Another time I will listen to you," *Miya* interrupted him impatiently.

"But isn't it good, Miya?" cried her husband delighted at his own performance. "Worth hearing, isn't it?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know? Good gracious! It is a pity you don't! Won't you try and understand this dramatic singing a little?"

"What does it matter whether I understand it or not?"

"It does matter. • People who know nothing of the "*jōruri*" style of singing lose a great deal. You are naturally very cold and that is why you don't care about *jōruri*; I am sure that is the reason."

"No, you are wrong."

"No, I am right. You are *very* cold!"

"What about Aiko?" said Miya, startling her husband by the suddenness of the question.

"Aiko! *she* is not cold."

"Ah! then I understand!"

"Understand what?"

"I say, I understand!"

"Well, I certainly *don't* understand."

"It is time you went—go, go.....and come home soon."

"I see! you are not cold after all, and you tell

me to come home quickly." Tadatsugu's voice was eager. "Shall you be waiting for me?"

"Am I not waiting for you always?" she replied gently.

"You are not cold?" questioned the man, but Miya made no reply.

She assisted him with his coat and then gave him her hands. This did not prove that she was not cold, for it was a custom Tadatsugu had taught her from the beginning of their married life, that at parting and at meeting they should thus shake hands.

CHAPTER XLII

How Miya Spends her Morning.

HAVING watched her husband out of sight, Miya returned to her own room moving wearily and shuddering a little, as though she had been forced to enter some cave of ice. Although her husband's presence was irksome to her and she was relieved to see him go, yet to be alone in the big house was melancholy. Left to herself and free from all restraints, for in her husband's presence she was on her guard to give no indication of her real feelings, Miya when alone would suddenly find herself very tired in body, and a hundred harassing thoughts would creep into her mind, until within all seemed confusion and disorder and beyond her power to disentangle.

Leaning over her brazier that morning she looked sorely perplexed. How could she extricate herself from all this sorrow and grief? Was she to pay the penalty all her life long for that one false step? Would there never be sunshine again; never anything but this blank darkness? Ah! how oppressive it was! She rose and pushing aside the sliding door, stepped into the verandah.

The winter sky looked clear and cold, with here and there a kite or hawk soaring past, far away into the blue. The garden indeed was brown and withered and would have looked dreary, had not the sun been shining with such dazzling brightness. A noisy brown-eared bul-bul stopped singing as she came out, and then flew into a more distant treetop. From the next garden came the sharp click-click of a shuttlecock and Miya paused for a few minutes counting the taps and looking up longingly at the sun. But her restlessness drove her indoors and she wandered aimlessly about the house until, reaching her bedroom, she flung herself down upon her couch.

What a charming picture she made as she lay there in so unconsciously graceful an attitude. Upon a pile of thick quilts of white silk, the slender, dainty figure in its flowing dress of delicately tinted crêpe looked like some lovely vision borne ashore on the white crest of the waves. The sun poured his mild rays upon her, as, with her face supported on one white hand, she gazed before her with unseeing eyes.

The clock ticked evenly in the corner and the room was very still and peaceful. Miya's head drooped, her eyes closed, and then for a little

while at least, time moved imperceptibly to her. The shadow of a bird flashing across her face awoke her. She sat up lazily, lifting one hand to her disordered hair, and gazing through the window into the garden, allowed her mind to continue the vain imaginings of her sleeping and waking dreams.

Presently she rose from her bed and glided into her sitting room. Here she kneeled before a chest and opening it, took out a soft crêpe sash from which she drew a roll, which looked like a very long letter. With this she went into her husband's study and sat down at his desk. The roll was not the letter written to her by Kwanichi before he left the Shigizawas, but was her own secret manuscript intended for him and was a detailed record of her thoughts and feelings since her separation from him so many years ago.

Since she had seen Kwanichi in Viscount Tazumi's garden some years ago, her grief had become more acute, her lot harder to bear. Having no one to whom she dared confide her sorrow, she sought relief by writing down what she might never speak. At first she thought of sending what she wrote to Kwanichi, to show him that she too suffered, and suffered more even than he had told

her she would, but prudence forbade such a course. The letter might never reach him: it might be opened and read by other eyes. Or, in his anger he might return it to her, thus exposing it to her servants, or her husband, which meant ruin to her. Not that she would greatly care for that, she said to herself, but..... Yes, to send it would be as risky as when some insect flies into the flame; to destroy it would be a pity. Some day by good luck she might be able to see it placed safely in his hands, till then she would keep it as a solace for sad and lonely hours.

When she looked at the closely written lengths she felt almost as if she had seen her beloved. When she wrote down her thoughts and dreams of him, she felt as if she were talking to him, and could thus talk more freely, more intimately than if he stood before her. Thus, when overcome with her secret grief, she would take her brush and correct or add to what she had written before, and when one long better was finished, she would rewrite it from beginning to end, beautifying and improving it, and burning the first copy, put the new letter safely away in the folds of her sash. In this way she kept only one letter, which had now been rewritten many times. Miya improved

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greatly in penmanship.

When she met Arao she was overjoyed and filled with hope. No more need to comfort herself with writing letters she could never send. Arao would be the mediator between her and Kwanichi and they would at last be reconciled. She waited and waited for Arao's answer; but alas! he, too, disappointed her.

Miya had become desperate and as she unfolded the letter in her husband's room, decided that to-day it should be sent at whatever cost.

With great care she prepared her ink, chose her finest brush and her best paper and then with carefully selected characters, she began to re-write her letter for the last time.

But her hand trembled and she had not written ten lines when she impatiently tore it off and threw it on the charcoal in the brazier. The flames sprang up and at that moment the door opened, and the maid, alarmed at the disturbed face of her mistress, and amazed at the sight of the flame, muttered somewhat incoherently, "Mistress, your mother-in-law has come!"

CHAPTER XLIII

The Wanibuchi Inheritance.

AFTER Mr. and Mrs. Wanibuchi's terrible death, Kwanichi had rebuilt the house, somewhat smaller than the original and on a more economical principle, but still very much on the old lines. He had put up a porcelain doorplate, on which could be read in large clear characters the name "Hazama Kwanichi," and he was now master of the entire property.

But what had become of Tadamichi, the real heir?

From the very beginning he had vowed he would not touch a "rin" of so unjust an inheritance and had bequeathed it all to Kwanichi, with the hope that he would use it to start some honest trade, that he might be converted into a right-minded man and that with the profits, fairly earned, he would embark on some good work to atone for some of the evil he had done. But Kwanichi, when he became master, refused to give up his old trade, and carried on that avaricious business more energetically than ever. Those who knew the two men were puzzled as to the relation-

ship in which they stood to each other, and many conjectures were made as to why Kwanichi should have inherited everything and the real heir should show no resentment. There are many cases like this one: some mystery or secret lies at the root which will never be explained to the world. Wise are they who do not pry into their neighbour's business; fortunate are they who may pursue their calling, unmolested by an inquisitive world.

Tadamichi and Kwanichi never divulged their secret.

Hazama was now no longer a clerk, but an independent usurer and he soon became influential among his fellow traders. He was successful in all his undertakings and might have lived in grand style, had he so desired. But no, he kept to his old "disappointed student" way, lived frugally, abhorred luxury and indulgence and kept but one elderly woman servant, so that he need not cook for himself. Thus he gained the reputation of being eccentric.

Formerly, when Kwanichi came home tired after a long day's work, he felt as though he were resting beneath a wayside tree on a tiresome journey—now he felt restless and lonely, and as the even-

ing drew on, the pall of sadness hung heavily over him.

One evening, as he paced restlessly up and down his room his old servant entered and told him that a visitor had called that afternoon and said he would come at the same hour on the morrow, trusting to find Kwanichi at home.

"When I asked for his name, he said 'a school-mate,' and went away," added the servant.

Kwanichi wondered who it might be—which of his schoolmates had reason to look him up after so many years.

"What sort of a man was he?" he asked.

"Let me see. A man of about forty with a big bushy head, tall, and very fierce looking—altogether very like a *sōshi*." (political rough).

After a pause she added:

"And he was very haughty."

"What time did he say he would come to-morrow?" demanded Kwanichi.

"At three o'clock, sir."

"Who can he be?"

"He seemed to be a man of bad manners," ventured the old woman, "shall I let him in when he comes?"

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"He did not say what he wanted to see me for?"

"No, sir."

"All right. I will try and see him."

"Yes, sir." The old woman was about to rise from her knees, then bent herself to the ground again and said nervously, "and after a little while Mrs. Akagashi came."

Kwanichi's only response was a frown.

"She brought three fine pieces of Kobe *Kama-boko* (a preparation made from fish) and some "Yōkan" (a sweet) made by Fujimura—she also gave me a present."

Kwanichi looked still more displeased and made an impatient movement. The servant continued very meekly:

"And she left word she would be here at five o'clock to-morrow, as she had various matters to ask you about."

At this announcement Kwanichi's face became dark with displeasure and he sharply told the woman she had said enough. The poor old thing scrambled to her feet in haste and went out, leaving her master to brood alone over the messages she had brought him.

CHAPTER XLIV

The First Visitor.

THE visitor who had given no other name than 'a schoolmate' arrived at the appointed hour. Kwanichi was so amazed when he saw who it was, that he was as one who has been dazed by a great clap of thunder, and he could not easily recover from the stupor into which he had fallen.

Arao Jōsuke, for it was he, stroked his long beard as he settled himself on the cushion, and stared openly at his long forgotten friend, trying to read in those features what manner of man he had grown.

Arao was the first to break the long silence.

"It is nearly ten years since we last met," he said, "therefore there is much to be said, but before we go any further I have a question to put to you: Do you consider me your friend?"

Kwanichi's mind was still too confused to answer readily and Arao, mistaking his hesitation, exclaimed:

"There is no need to think over so simple a question. If you do, then say you do, if you do not, then say you don't—there is only one word

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you have to say, "yes" or "no."

"Well," Kwanichi stammered out uncertainly, "you were a friend of mine."

"I *was* a friend?"

"But not now."

"Why not?"

"Because not having seen each other for a good many years we can hardly call either of us the other's friend."

"Meaning, I suppose," rejoined Arao with a sarcastic smile, "that some years ago you did not choose to treat me as a friend," and as Kwanichi looked at him questioningly, he continued: "allow me to remind you. In that critical moment when you had to decide whether you would become a university student or go to the..... or become a usurer, you not only did not consult me, but you hid your whereabouts from me. Do you consider that treating me as a friend?"

Not a word dared Kwanichi answer but he felt as if his wounds had been torn open anew, for this was a matter over which he had suffered shame and remorse—he was conscious that in his anger at Miya's faithlessness he had made all his friends suffer.

"The girl you loved may have given you up,"

added Arao, "but your friend never turned from you. Why did you give me up? To hear this I have come to see you to-day. I have a right to an answer—for, understand, I have by no means given you up."

In this way Arao pleaded for a long time with Kwanichi. He begged to know the reason of the indifference he thought he saw in Kwanichi's face. He recalled the past to him—the days of a great friendship, which on one side had never been broken. If Kwanichi did in truth no longer desire his friendship, let him say so openly and they would part with some words of farewell and candidly say to each other that they neither desired to see the other any more. To all this Kwanichi listened, his head bent low in shame, and many thoughts rushed through his bewildered brain. He saw Arao again as a student—then as councillor of the prefecture, full of dignity and importance! and now, here in his house was Arao again—miserably poor! In spite of these changes in position, Kwanichi recognized that the man himself had never changed. There was the same haughty independent bearing, the same frank, almost reckless way of speech, the quick but always generous temper and the little tricks of manner which brought back to him so vividly the old days—now all vanished like a

dream. He tried, but was unable, to make any answer.

“We are to part then,” began Arao, again having vainly waited for a reply. “We are to part and I am to give you up, whom till this very day I still regarded as my friend. Before I go, I must say to you a little of that which is on my mind.

“Now, Hazama, what are you making all this money for? Is it to take the place of the love of which you have been robbed? Granted that is so, and there is no wrong in that, why make money in this unjust way? You consider you have been made to suffer by one, should you not therefore be careful not to cause suffering to others, knowing what pain it is—and yet what is your trade but a torment to all who have to do with you. You take advantage of misfortune, you suck the people’s blood; does the money you make by these means console you for your own loss? It is said in these days that money can do every thing—it is almighty—has it been able to give you peace and quiet—*you* who know you are doing an evil thing! Are you happy? When you go out dunning or distraining, do you feel as if you were going to see the cherries in bloom on a sunshiny day in spring?.....Probably in all these years

you have not had a really happy day—you have forgotten what happiness is! Why! look at your face! You look like.....a criminal—such faces are found in prisons!”

Arao, as he said these words and gazed into the miserable and emaciated face before him, burst into tears.

“Hazama,” he cried in a loud voice, “why do I weep—do you know? The Hazama I see before me to-day does not understand—you are a different being. You are drinking poison to cure a disease—are you as ignorant of medicine as all that. Money gained by robbery will never comfort you, however much you may acquire. My *friend* Hazama was not such a fool; he must have gone mad when he became what he is now. A madman is not accountable for the foolish things he does—but I, as your friend, had to bear the shame of having loved the soul which was small and weak enough to succumb on account of a girl!”

He spoke vehemently. “Now, Hazama, show your spirit—you have been called by me a thief, a criminal and lunatic! Be angry! By all the gods, be angry and give me blow for blow—or kick me out!”

“I am not angry,” came the answer very low.

“Not angry.....!! Then you regard yourself as a thief, a criminal.....”

“And a lunatic too,” added Hazama. “I have ‘no face to turn to you’ (I am ashamed) that I should have gone mad for a faithless woman. There is no help for it now, for you see I am mad—I thank you, Arao—but you had better leave me.”

“I see. Then you do get some comfort out of your unjust money?”

“No, not yet.”

“Do you think you will?”

“I don’t know.”

“Are you married?”

“No.”

“Why not? Bachelor life must be very inconvenient since you live in a house like this.”

“Not necessarily.”

“What do you think of her now?”

“Do you mean Miya? She is a brute.”

“But you are a brute too. No usurer can have a human heart and one who has not a human heart is a brute.”

“I dare say—and nearly all men are brutes.”

“Am I a brute too?”

Hazama made no reply and Arao continued:

“Did you, Hazama, become a brute, being maddened by her behaving brutally? Then in case she repents and is softened and sorry you must cease to be a brute—do you not think so?”

“*She* become womanly and penitent! Impossible! I am a brute in that I covet money, but I have never deceived any one. I could not do so cruel a thing as receive love and affection and then betray it. At the outset I call my bussiness usury and money *lending* and those who borrow have to pay; I do not force my money on anyone who does not want to borrow it. Pah! how can such a creature as Miya become the owner of a human heart?!”

“Why should she not?”

“Then you really think she can?”

“You seem to hope she will not be able.”

“It is not a question of hoping.....I have nothing to do with such a person,” and Kwanichi looked as though he would be capable of spitting in her face.

“You may wish to have nothing to do with her but for your own sake I ought to tell you this:

“Miya has repented—she has deeply, very deeply repented her sin against you.....she cannot forgive herself for the wrong she has done.”

The First Visitor.

Kwanichi laughed contemptuously—he scorned the idea. It was absurd, ridiculous, he cried, and he laughed again; striving to recover himself he laughed the more and the contemptuous laughter rang all over the house.

CHAPTER XLV

The Parting of two Friends.

WHEN Hazama was quiet once more, Arao, remembering his promise to Miya, returned to the duty of pleading with him for her forgiveness.

“Since she is repenting, you would do well to relent—I think it is time you relented!”

“Her repentance has not the least effect upon my feelings towards her. She behaved like a brute and now she seems to realize a little what her action has cost. That perhaps is a good thing!”

“I met her the other day unexpectedly,” said Arao in his deep voice, ignoring Hazama’s scornful manner. “She shed bitter tears. She implored me to plead with you for your forgiveness or else to beg you to allow her to come and see you just once more. I declined the office of mediator—I had my own reason for not granting her request—and therefore I do not intend to persuade you into forgiving her because she is sorry for what she has done—that point lies outside my

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intention. What I say to you is this. She is suffering because she is repenting, or in other words she is now being punished herself—and had you seen her, you would realize that the punishment is adequate to the fault.—For this reason I would have you bury your hatred and in doing so—here is the point—you would become once more the old Hazama we loved and respected. You say yourself you are not happy and do not know when you will be happy again—well, does not this news, that Miya is repenting and thinking of you with love, comfort you a little? It ought to do so. The money you have spent all these years in acquiring—I don't know how much it is, but I fancy it is not a little—has it brought you much comfort?—Not as much as this one piece of news—Miya's repentance—has brought you! Is it not so?"

“The repentance you speak of is not so much a comfort to me as a torment to Miya. That she realizes her fault does not in any way restore to me what I have lost—consequently, why should I feel comforted by it? I shall hate her to the last—but do not imagine that this hatred is the cause of the sadness and weariness I feel within. Also do not fancy that I shall in any way revenge

myself on her—bah! she is not worth the thought even!”

He paused a few moments and then said half to himself and very bitterly :

“So she has repented at last! I wish I could even say ‘that was well done’—but it is nothing but a matter of course. If she had not committed the fault she would not have had to repent! It was a fault—a grave fault!”

“I am not here to plead for Miya,” resumed Arao, “I merely speak of her because I want to get at your reasons—at your point of view—and I quite agree with you that her repentance cannot restore to you what you have lost—no, indeed it cannot,” he added with a deep sigh as he compared the Hazama of the past with the man before him. “You have therefore no reason to feel consoled that she is sorry—your point seems to be this: nothing will satisfy you but to regain what you have lost—and for this purpose you are making money. Am I right in my supposition? I know you have lost much and I sympathize with you deeply on that account. I would rejoice to see you happy once more.

“You think that money can give you back what you have lost—love, position, happiness—and you

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are building all your hopes for future contentment upon that money! That I absolutely disagree with that way of thinking is a detail—as long as you are convinced it is so, well and good, and granting it is right to make money, I hope you will in time become a very wealthy man.

“What I do object to is an unjust, dishonourable trade. Wealth is not made by covetous accumulation only; there are many *ways* of becoming rich besides those of the usurer. I am not advising you to change the *aim* but the *means*! You remember what the Buddhists say about truth—the saying can be applied to many things: “By different roads, you may reach the peak from whence you can see the moon, immeasurably high above it.”

“Thank you,” said Hazama sadly, “but I have not yet waked from my delusion—leave me as I am and regard me, if you like, as a madman.”

Arao looked at him a few minutes in silence, and then said in a voice that was cold—almost harsh—“I see—you accept nothing of what I have said.”

“Forgive me,” exclaimed Hazama.

“For what, pray?” returned the other, “you have given me up, and I have.....given.....you.....up.....there is nothing for either of us to forgive.”

There was a pause, then Hazama said:

"Since we are going to part and are giving up each other, I have one more thing to ask you..... about your present circumstances. How are things with *you*?"

"I should think you might tell that by looking at me."

"That does not give me sufficient information."

"I am badly off."

"That is quite evident."

"That is all."

"That cannot be all. Why did you resign your government appointment? Why are you so impoverished? There must be reasons for this!"

"The things I have to tell would not be understood by a madman," said Arao with a sarcastic intonation and preparing to rise.

"Yes, tell them to me," begged Hazama, "even if I do not understand."

"What can you do if you have heard them?" replied Arao, "ah! I see, you will offer to lend me money! for that—no thank you—even if I am poor—I am happy—with a great happiness."

"I am the more anxious to hear you relate the causes of your poverty—and of the happiness you say is yours."

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“What is the use of telling such a bloodless worm as you are? I even hate to hear you speak the same language that human beings use!” replied Arao fiercely.

Hazama remained unmoved.

“I am so thoroughly corrupt,” he said, “that even when I am insulted like this I am unable to reply.”

“You speak the truth,” was the cutting answer. Hazama continued: “There can be on earth no one more corrupt than mine! But *you*—with your University degree, *you*, once a Councillor of the Prefecture—what has been done to you? I always expected your advance in the world and prayed for it secretly—yes, the brute, the madman, the thief as you call me, has still a heart—and the thought of you has never left it. I have had no friend but you. The year before last I was told of your appointment to the government office at Shidzuoka. Guess what joy the news caused me, and what sorrow too when I reflected upon my own condition. I could eat nothing all day. I wanted to congratulate you myself; I wanted to see you again after that long separation—I wanted to see you in the glory of your young success—I could not do so because of my position—but I

went to the station at Shinbashi where I might look on without being seen and I saw you—I remember how the tears rushed to my eyes.

“Now, imagine what my feelings were when I saw you come in to-day—noted the signs of poverty about you and compared you with the last time I had seen you in the flush of victory.

“Considering my own condition and position, I have no right to speak to you about yours—but I have given myself up altogether. I despise myself and hate myself as a fool who was unable to become master of himself, and allowed a woman’s falseness and the anger that he felt, to ruin his whole career. I shall become rotten like a tree and as a tree I shall wither away. Look upon me no longer as your old friend Hazama for he is dead, but listen to my words as words spoken by some other friend who is full of warm sympathy for you. I do not know what the causes of your present condition are, for you will not tell me, but I am certain the land has need of men like you and that you are not forgotten. I should like to see you using your powerful energies and brain for the good of the State—I should like to see you a power in society. A certain friend of yours is anxious to help you so that your talents may

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not remain unused, but may benefit the people and the land."

Kwanichi's face became illumined as if the disease of his mind has been miraculously cured, and he looked almost like the Hazama of old whose thoughts were noble, whose ideals high.

Arao replied: "Then you think it is a pity to see me in a poor and miserable condition."

"I am not such a brute as you think me," was the reproachful answer.

"Ah! that is the point Hazama. Because there are usurers such as you, many talented men who ought to be of use in the world, are being ruined, defamed, driven from their proper place in society and languishing in prisons. I am grateful to you for your argument, that I should have a care of myself for the sake of the state, and by a similar argument I ask you to give up your unjust trade—for the benefit of society. What are the things that are ruining talented men nowadays? They are profligacy and usury! If you feel sorry for my miserable condition, have a little pity on the men on whom the nation rests her hope, who are being ruined by you and your like.

You are suffering because of an unfortunate love-affair, others because they have been unlucky in

money matters. The suffering is the same though the case be different. I, myself, am in the latter strait. Would that I had a friend, such as the Hazama of old, with whom I could share my griefs. What pleasure it would be to be helped by such a one; to regain through his aid the position one has lost, and be enabled to do that work in the world for which one feels most fitted. The best thing in the world is a friend; the most hateful thing is a usurer! The more I see of the wickedness of usurers, the more I think of how much it means to a man to have a trusted friend. *My* old friend is now a usurer—that hateful usurer!”

Arao cast a wrathful glance at Hazama who neither by word nor sign betrayed what he felt. His voice was quite calm and steady when he replied:

“Thank you for your *warm* advice. What you have said I shall consider carefully; for to restore my rotten and corrupt soul to its former goodness and purity, as you suggest, would.....give me much happiness. As to yourself, I pray you take care of yourself. Though you have given me up I still wish to see you sometimes and help you where I can. I want to be made use of. A man

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like you should be playing his part in the world; and more than pity for the unlucky man himself, I feel regret that his talents are lying unused and that the State is not employing him.

My affection towards you is great. Let me come and see you sometimes. Where do you live?

“I cannot have usurers coming to call on me.” said Arao haughtily.

“Then I will call upon you as a friend.”

“I have no friend among usurers.” was the icy answer.

But who was this gently pushing aside the screen. Mitsué! How could she have got in? Hazama was astonished, but his wonder was nothing as compared to the amazement of Arao when he perceived her. He pulled himself up very straight and violently twisted his long black beard—then regretting that he had so plainly betrayed his feelings he folded his arms high across his chest and pretended to be as “unmoved as a mountain.” But he overdid his part. Mitsue bowed low first to Hazama and then even more deferentially to Arao. In all her gestures and in the motion of her eyes her behaviour was that of a perfect lady; she did not even soften her counte-

nance with a smile; and conforming to all the rules prescribed by etiquette, she did not speak. Arao was too impatient to keep silence.

"I never expected to see *you* here—are you acquainted with Hazama?"

"Then you know her too!" exclaimed Hazama looking from one to the other."

"I know her slightly," rejoined Arao in his haughtiest manner. "I fear I disturb you by remaining—excuse me—goodbye."

"Mr. Arao," called Mitsue intent on keeping him there, "it may not be correct to speak to you on that matter here, but —,"

"No, most certainly it is not a matter to be discussed here."

"But as you are never at home, I am at a loss how to deal with you."

"Even had I been at home I could not have settled the matter yet." Proudly, "I am not going to flee or hide myself—and you must wait until, at the proper time, I settle with you."

"If I must wait, I must," said Mitsue putting on a plaintive air, "but I cannot really afford to do just what suits your convenience—please sympathize with me in that!"

"How cruel you are to make me sympathize

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with you on such a point." said Arao sarcastically.

"I shall call on you in a day or so, and I hope I may be welcome." smiled the beauty.

"I am afraid you may not be welcome!"

"Is it true," she asked: "that the other day when I sent my man to you on business you were very angry with him, because you considered him lacking in politeness, and drew your sword on him?"

"Yes, it is true!"

"Dear me," would you really do such a thing?" laughed Mitsue trying to abash him. Arao assumed a mock-serious look and replied:

"Yes, certainly. I intended to run my sword through him."

"But you must have thought of the consequences."

"Perhaps I did. He was neither dog nor cat; he could not be killed so easily."

"What a dreadful thing to say! I shall hardly be safe if I call on you." The coquette was uppermost again.

Arao threw back his head and laughed a long jeering laugh—he then looked at her with contemptuous eyes and said insolently:

"Do you think I should—*kill*—a beauty?"

Do you fancy I shall let your eyes kill *me*? Let me go home and wipe my sword clean."

"Arao-san, they told me dinner was ready, won't you have some before you go."

"Thanks, I do not drink from a thief's well!"

"*Do* sit down," cried Mitsue persuasively, bringing a cushion and placing it in front of Arao. Hazama said not a word. "I will wait on you myself," she said.

"You are exactly like husband and wife," scoffed Arao, taking Hazama's silence as proof of his guiltiness, "a well-matched pair!"

"Believe what you will, and sit here please," replied Mitsue rejoicing secretly.

But Arao had reached the door. Anger, sorrow and disgust were written on his face, for his suspicions as to the relation between Hazama and Mitsue were confirmed by the beauty's words.

"Hazama! Anata!" (thou) was all he said; but the words he left unsaid and the look of scorn pierced Hazama to the heart.

CHAPTER L.

An Unreasonable man.

THE old Servant having slid the outside wooden shutters with a loud rattle into their place, brought in the lamp, and still Hazama sat with bowed head, crushed by the blow of those unspoken words. Mitsue had taken a seat near the low table and as the lamp light fell on her it seemed to add to her charm, as if she had put on an extra flower, or a jewel, so that she looked like some lovely peony in full bloom, bending gracefully from its delicate stem.

“What is the matter with you Hazama-san? You seem very depressed.”

Hazama lifted his head slightly to look at her, and then asked wonderingly :

“How on earth did *you* come to know Araō?”

“I am still more surprised to find him a friend of *yours*.” replied Mitsue evasively.

“How did you come to know him?” persisted Hazama.

Finding she could not evade the question, Mitsue answered with evident reluctance :

"Well, he is in a way one of my guarantees."

"Guarantee! Araō? *Your* guarantee?"

"Only indirectly. *He* did not contract the debt with me."

"Ah! and what is the sum?"

"It is about 3,000 yen."

"Three...thou...sand yen! And who was the direct creditor?"

He turned on his cushion and pushed himself nearer in his eagerness. Mitsue smiled a little disdainfully:

"How earnest and how eager you are when you want something of me. You never answer any question I put to *you*—but *now* you don't mind making use of me."

"That is quite right."

"No, that is *not* right."

"Was there a direct creditor?"

"Don't know!" said Mitsue shortly in the voice that means 'I shall not tell.'

Hazama changed his tone.

"Please, tell me," he begged, "so that I may redeem the money according to the conditions agreed on."

"I should not accept the money from you."

"It is not a matter of accepting, but of redeeming," argued Hazama.

"This is not a case for you to interfere in," said the beauty, and then looking searchingly into the man's face she exclaimed: "but if you have made up your mind to redeem it, I will give up my claim for the money."

"Why will you do so?" asked Hazama, not a little astounded and suspecting some hidden and dangerous motive.

"You need not know why. If you want to redeem the pledge of 3,000 yen, you have but to *command* me to give up my claim.....and I shall...give it up...gladly."

"What is your reason?" persisted he obstinately and densely.

"Yes, what *is* my reason?" cried Mitsue almost despairingly.

"You are quite *unreasonable*, are you not?"

"Of course I am unreasonable for.....I don't know the reason!" Mitsue felt sudden anger against this man who would not see. "But *you* Hazama san, what a.....yes, *very* unreasonable man you are!"

"No, I am quite reasonable," replied Hazama calmly.

"Pretend what you like, but for goodness' sake let one of us be honest," cried Mitsue

striking her gold pipe viciously on the brim of the firebox and casting a glance of wrath mingled with despair at Hazama. He took not the least notice of this sudden ebullition of anger, except to say :

“Don't talk nonsense, but let me hear the story.”

“You think of nothing but yourself and what you want,” cried the woman.

“Tell me the story please.”

“I am going to do so,” sullenly. She took out her pipe slowly and deliberately, lighted it and puffed at it for a while ignoring Hazama's presence altogether.

“I never expected to find him one of your guarantees,” remarked Hazama, impatient for Mitsue to begin. She made no reply, so he continued in a tone, calculated to rouse her into a response of some sort :

“I hardly believe it is true !”

Mitsue examined the stem of her pipe with great intentness.

“Three thousand yen ! what did Araō contract a debt of 3,000 yen for ? It is not possible but . . .”

Looking up he saw that Mitsue was still holding her pipe in her hand, and he exclaimed irritably :

"I wish you would tell me the history of that 3,000 yen!"

"You are very impatient, or else I am very slow," said the beauty sending up a delicate little puff of smoke.

"You can see that I am impatient!"

"Impatience is not a happy humour!"

"You are only talking."

"You are right, I stand corrected. I will tell you the story in a moment."

She tapped the tiny bowl of her pipe gently on the rim of the brazier, and having refilled it with tobacco from a pouch of gold brocade, she related as follows:

"You may have known Sagisaka who used to live with us. He is now at Shidzuoka and doing very well there. Mr. Araō was Councillor at Shidzuoka, was he not? and it was there that Sagisaka let him have the money. The authorities hearing of the affair ordered him to send in a petition for his dismissal—and there was nothing for him to do but return to Tokio. Sagisaka then put the matter into our hands and entrusted us to get the money from him here. Last autumn it passed entirely into our hands. You can imagine what a difficult thing it is to get money out of Araō. He

has nothing to do, except a little translation at which he is working; one cannot expect any large sum for that, so very little can be done about the debt at present."

"But whatever did he borrow 3,000 yen for?"

"It is this: he was a joint guarantee."

"Ah! and who was the debtor?"

"It was a Democrat at Gifu called Ōdachi Sakurō. They say he failed at the Election and the debt was in consequence of electioneering expenses."

"Ōdachi Sakurō! Sure enough! Then it *must* be true." exclaimed Hazama.

"Do you know him?"

"He was the man who paid all Araō's school expenses and of whom the latter always spoke as "my benefactor."

And now Hazama understood why Araō had said his poverty made him not sad but happy, "with a great happiness." For the man who had been kind to him, he had risked his fame and his honour, and in losing both had felt no regret, for was it not his honour to give largely where he had received such generosity?

"Noble friend!" mused Hazama, "his poverty

is better than another's wealth. Truly the Fates must be blind thus to reward such nobility of purpose."

CHAPTER LI.

Faithful Love.

RECEIVING a sudden summon to go to Chiba, a small town to the north of Tokio, Kwanichi hurried into a jinrikisha hoping to catch the five o'clock train at Honjo, but alas ! he arrived a minute after the train had left the station and found to his disgust that he would have to wait two hours for the next. He accordingly walked over to the Tea-house which faced the station, entered a room at the back and seated on one of the red blankets which are in vogue at most teahouses in Japan, he sipped a cup of lukewarm tea brought in by one of the "ne' sans." (waitress) The three unopened letters which he had thrown into his handbag, he now took out. The first words that met his eye were : M. Shigis. upon the back of the topmost envelope.

"For shame ! another one from her !" he exclaimed. This letter he did not unseal, but threw it back into his bag with the two others, when he had read them through carefully. Shutting up the bag, he placed it under his head as a pillow and

lay down on his back closing his eyes drowsily. But he could not sleep.—The words, “M. Shigis.” danced before his eyes and the thought of Miya possessed his brain. He had sworn to himself that he would care no more for her—neither in love, nor in hate—and yet she robbed him of his peace.

This was the second written appeal Miya had made. The first, Kwanichi had received a fortnight ago. He had opened it and read it with surprise, but it had in no way altered his opinion of her; he was still of the same mind as when he had replied to Araō. This second letter he concluded was probably a repetition of the first and he saw no reason to “defile his eyes” with it, as he said to himself.

Poor Miya! how miserable she must have been to go to the extremity of writing to Hazama. In these two letters she poured out all her heart—her grief at what she had done—her sincere penitence. She bid him observe that the writing and sending of them was proof of her earnest desire to be forgiven, seeing that she risked much in doing so.

She did not expect to soften Kwanichi’s heart by one appeal, so after waiting a fortnight she had sent her second letter. If this one had no effect and elicited no response she would write a third and

so on until he was conquered.

She could not know that Kwanichi did not even trouble to open her second letter and was firmly resolved to read no more "foolish confessions," even if she should write to him three, or five or seven or a hundred times.

Unable to sleep Kwanichi got up took the letter out of the bag and then looked for a match. With it he set fire to the letter holding it over the little brazier. The hot white flames sprang up. Were they like Miya's thoughts? The black ashes which fell, did they resemble Miya's mind?

The record of her sorrow is in her lover's hand—how glad that would make her—but alas! it has vanished like smoke, and no more stable than smoke is the impression it has made on Hazama.

Kwanichi lay down again, the bag beneath his head.

After a short interval he heard the noisy welcome,—the "Irashai" of the tea-house women—guests were conducted into the room next to his. From their voices he knew them to be a man and a woman. They took their seats quietly, unlike young people. Hazama concluded they were an old couple.

"We have plenty of time," said the man, "we

have plenty of time," said the man, "we need not hurry. Come, Su-san, take a cup of tea, *please*."

"Will you really come back next summer?" came a woman's voice, imploringly.

"Yes, I promise to return after the feast of Departed Souls." (in July) replied her companion. "But it is no good hoping that your parents will change their mind, Su-san, I can see they are quite determined and so we may as well resign ourselves and bear it as best we can."

"You may do so if you like Masa-san, you are a man, but I am a woman, and I have not given up hope. Though you deny it I am sure you are angry at the way my parents have treated you, and so you hate them, and me too.....yes you *do*.....I don't care what becomes of me..... if you will not have me, I will not marry all my life." The woman's words here became unintelligible. Hazama decided they were quite young and most unhappy.

"However willing I may be," rejoined the man, "how can I marry you if your parents are unwilling? No one is to blame but I, myself—one can not expect a father or mother to give a daughter they love, to a man whose reputation is not clean. I

should be the first to justify them and say they are right."

"If my parents will not give me to you whyshould you not.....take me?" cried the girl.

"Ah! Su-san do not be unreasonable! You know how I wish that that were possible! Through my own folly I have brought this sorrow on myself. I fell into the usurer's trap, and the weeks I spent in prison, like a common criminal—have left a life-long blot upon me. It killed my mother,my betrothed was torn from me! Would that I had died in prison rather than suffer all these miseries."

Both wept. After a while the man continued:

"My mental wounds were cured the day that I heard my mother had set fire to the wretch's house, and that he and his wife were burnt to death; but the injury done to myself can never be cured!

"My poor Mother! how she looked forward to your coming. Morning and evening she talked of nothing else but "next month" and the "marriage" and "Su-san" and.....ah! I do not want to break our engagement.....but I have no right to marry you.....forgive me.....forgive me!"

"No.....no.....no! it must not be broken off!" cried Su-san desperately.

"If you marry me Su-san," said her lover more quietly, "your shoulders will be straitened to bear my shame, and people will sneer at you all your life. I could not bear to see you suffer, and so I must leave you and we must not meet again..... but the love you have given me Su-san I shall never, never forget."

Kwanichi who had lain very still now rose quietly and tried to get a glimpse of the man through the sliding doors, which showed a crack here and there, but he was unsuccessful. However he felt sure he recognized the voice and from what he had heard, he knew it must be the son of the lunatic woman who had set fire to Wanibuchi's house, and who had been imprisoned for a year on the charge of having forged a private document. Besides the girl had called him "Masa" and the lunatic's son was called Akura Masayuki. Hazama nodded to himself, sat down again and listened with great attention.

"If, as you say, you will never forget me, then marry me according to the old promise. If I had been minded to consent to the breaking of my promise, would I have abstained from eating salt

for a whole year? (a means of asking a god for something) What happened may be partly your fault, but it was sheer misfortune which caused you to be imprisoned on a usurer's false accusation. I am very very very sorry for myself and for you but I will not give you up on that account I am not such a woman Masa-san not such a woman ! ”

She wept and lamented, poor girl, and if Masayuki did not understand all her emotion, Kwanichi did. He lay prone on the mats, his cigarette had gone out and he had not observed it.

“ You, Masa-san, do not know what sort of woman I am. I was ill for three months after after you were imprisoned. If my parents have made up their minds that I shall not marry you, I have made up my mind to keep my promise. The more so now that your shoulders will be bent by shame and that you are unfortunate. I am willing to bear all with you, if I were *not* how could I be faithful to your mother's spirit—your mother who loved me from my childhood. It may be undutiful for a child to set up her will against her parents, but I am not going to leave you Masa-san. Do you care for me? Are you willing to take me with you? ”

Kwanichi was deeply impressed. The girl's strong will moved him more than her sorrow or the man's misfortune, of which he, Kwanichi, was the cause. That there *did* exist faithful love and truth caused his head to burn and his heart to beat more quickly.

Masayuki replied:

“Need I tell you how much I want you? How happy we should be if I had not been so unfortunate—you and I and my mother living together. My parting with you to-day is indescribably painful to me for yet another reason. You are the only one in all the world who will speak kindly to me, now that I am an outcast of society. Nothing could make me happier than to be linked with so tenderhearted a woman as you. But were I in your parent's place I also would decide as they have... any parent would do the same. So there is no hope. To cause grief and trouble to one's parents is an evil.....almost a crime! I caused my Mother much grief and she suffered through my fault! It is as if I had killed her with my own hand. If I married you I should grieve your parents terribly. Am I to kill your parents as well as mine? Therefore we must part. I shall strive hard to regain my place in society. It will

The Gold Demon.

be a hard fight; and life without you will be like living in that dark prison once more."

"You are so full of thought for my parents, Masa-san—don't you at all think of me?.....I don't care what becomes of me!" cried Susan passionately. He tried to soothe her; he pleaded with her to be brave and resigned, that he dared not marry her—he, with a stain on his reputation, but he achieved nothing. She broke down all his arguments and declared that if he loved her she would not leave him.

"Sympathize a little more with me," she cried, "and forget my parents and yourself. It was settled that I should marry you.....all the wedding clothes have been bought.....how can I marry another? Think of it! If I have to die, I will marry to one but you. And I am right! I am right!" Then Masayuki gave way.

"How wildly you speak!" he said "What is it you want me to do?"

CHAPTER XLVIII

Questionings.

THERE was a silence. Kwanichi crept closer to the door but he heard no more. The two lovers were whispering in tones too low to penetrate even the thin screen which divided them from the next room.

Just once he caught a word: "Sure, are you quite sure?" and the answer, "if *you* are, *I* am satisfied," and then the whispers continued. Kwanichi felt certain their wills were now in harmony, and he secretly blessed the girl for her perseverance, and reflected how happy Masayuki must be. As for himself he felt as if he had overheard a strain of lovely music and for a while he forgot himself and his sorrow.

As he settled down in a corner of the compartment of the train that was to take him to Chiba, his mind was still occupied with what he had overheard in the tea house.

"If that girl were Miya and I were Masayuki, what would have been the result then?" he mused. "There was a time when Miya was as true to me

The Gold Demon.

as that girl is to her lover. If she had not seen the Diamond's brightness would she have loved me faithfully to the end, even had I been a criminal as he has? If Tadatsugu with all his wealth had tempted *that* girl, would she have forsaken Masayuki? Which has the greater power to divert love, the abominable record of a crime or the love of money?

Would that girl, who is willing to link her life to that of a man with a prison record, who swears she will follow him to the ends of the earth, who has forgotten even her obedience to her parents, continue faithful, if she, by deserting him, might greatly enrich herself?

Would she not sell the love she once gave to Masayuki if she could make a profitable bargain?

Which would make *him* hate her most, her love overcome by the love of gold, or her love given for love to another man?

Over the highest love the Gold Demon has no power; there is nothing that can tempt it to an exchange—through good and ill it remains unchanged, unmoved. If it moves, it proves that it is not the highest love. Can a woman be as true as a man? or was Miya specially unfaithful to me? I believe she was. Because I was angry at her

injustice and lack of chastity I doubted *all* love—I rejected it altogether. I ceased to believe in the existence of love and in its place I planted anger and grief; and the grief has grown and has eaten up my soul, and torments me like an evil spirit which is intent on slowly putting an end to my life. Why was it, I wonder, that my mind which is unable to enjoy anything, felt glad at the sight of two lovers' happiness.....as if it had been chasing the shadow of joy. Is it that, having lost Miya's love my mind rejoices at the sight of what might have been my own happiness?

Miya has repented, she writes me, and is willing to do anything I shall command, in order to prove the sincerity of her repentance. Ought I to conquer my resentment? Well, her repentance can not restore my love to life. Her repentance remains her own affair and my hatred remains my hatred. Can wealth many times as great as that of Tomiyama wipe out my hateful feelings; or can the pursuit of Gold be absorbing enough to cause one to forget his wrongs?"

He sighed bitterly.

"It was Tadatsugu who tore my love from me. Who tried to tear the loves of Su-san and Masayuki? Was it not I? I, who am now going to

Chiba to tear again and yet again? And what is the result? Money! Can it cure my madness, or heal my diseased heart like some beneficial medicine? "Broken love is like a broken mirror," (bronze) so says the proverb. But for them the mirror is mended and restored to its former perfection. *My* love was torn as a flower is torn, whose delicate petals can never be restored to their stem. Now shall I continue this road of corruption? or fly up through the wind, or flow out upon the stream to the ocean?"

The train rattled over the Funa Bridge and Kwanichi gazing out into the night saw the lights of the town reflected in the river.

CHAPTER XLIX

The Suppliant.

FIVE days after he returned from Chiba, another letter came, signed "M. Shigis." As often as Kwanichi saw Miya's handwriting there rose before his inward eye the plumgarden at Atami and Tadatsugu standing beside Miya in that never-to-be-forgotten interview; and each time his anger arose new-born. He therefore destroyed the cruel reminder as soon as he received it, scorning the idea of her winning back his love through the power of her pen, and comparing her attempt to that of the fabulous bird who tried to drink up the ocean.

Miya, unconscious of the fate accorded to her letters, would sit for hours trying to picture their effect on her lover. The thought, that if even a thousandth part of the affection she had poured into them reached Kwanichi's heart, it would pave the way to success, cheered her greatly; and whenever she was alone and unobserved, she took the opportunity of writing again. She expected

no answer, but she made sure that the letters reached him.

Tadatsugu, hearing that his wife was training herself in penmanship, was filled with admiration and would buy her good ink, fine brushes, pretty inkstands and the latest books on writing, in order to encourage her. But none of these things would Miya use, she even gave up sitting at her husband's desk, so abhorrent to her mind was the idea of using anything of his.

A fourth letter was sent to Kwanichi, which he again ruthlessly reduced to ashes; and two days later the fifth was put into his hands. Kwanichi, who had vowed to himself that all missives from Miya's hand, though they should be a hundred in number, should be consigned to the flames unread, now began to wonder at this excessive perseverance and tenacity, the like which he had never before observed in her of and did not immediately burn the fifth appeal. He turned it over in his hands and was about to unseal it.

"But no," he said to himself and held it out toward the flame. However, the letter was not burned; instead, Kwanichi, keeping it in his hand, mused thus:

"It is to ask for my pardon of course, and that is

The Suppliant.

probably the whole gist of the letter. If there is anything else it is no doubt unwise for me to see it. If she asks for pardon I will pardon her, since her penitence has in any case won her pardon. Pardon and Penitence! What good can they do me or her now. They alter nothing in our relation to each other. Can penitence heal the wound made by her broken vows, or pardon restore her to the purity and perfection that were hers before she knew Tomiyama?

I, Kwanichi am the same Kwanichi that I was ten years ago, but you, Miya, are Miya defiled as long as you live. I loved you in your purity, and I hated you when you sold yourself; and once defiled, though you practice ten times the virtue you had before, you can never blot out the spot that has caused your corruption. And what did I? Did I not humble myself before you that night on the sands of Atami, imploring you to return to me, and swearing that I would have no other for my wife but you. I regarded you as my wife, and I have kept my vow; but you turned from me, and now prate of repentance!"

He trembled with anger and twisted the letter like a rope in his hands.

From that day Miya's letters came every week.

Kwanichi kept them, but did not open them. Their arrival insensibly influenced his mind. Angry and sore as he was, his anger weakened at the sight of them and at the thought of a contrite Miya. As each letter came, she was recalled to his mind, sometimes as the girl he had loved and who had forsaken him and repented of it, sometimes as the woman who had deceived him and whom he could never pardon. These two conflicting ideas swayed Kwanichi hither and thither, bringing no relief, but rather adding to his grief.

As he looked at the letters—he now had ten of them—he would conjure up their contents, and to his morbid mind they were ten times more sorrowful than what Miya had actually written. A new sort of anger, a new resentment awoke in his mind, displacing the old. The world seemed a miserable place, he, a helpless wretched man. He grew uneasy and restless, and the arrival of a new letter would even cause him to neglect his business and make him forget that such neglect and loss of time would also cause him to lose—that which he most desired—Money!

One night he had tossed ceaselessly to and fro on his bed, but just before dawn he slept heavily. The spring rain pattered softly on the shutters

and Hazama moaned in his sleep. At seven o'clock the aged servant came in to call him, and finding he paid no heed, she shook him by the shoulder, crying in her shrill, cracked voice:

“You have a visitor Sir!”

Hazama awoke with a start.

“A visitor! who is it?”

“Araō-san is the name.”

Kwanichi jumped out of bed in haste: “Show the visitor in and say that I am getting up—make my apologies and beg Araō san to wait.”

Kwanichi had called three times on Araō since their last interview in Kwanichi's house, but he had each time been turned from the door with: “Araō is out.” He had written twice and received no answer, and upon inquiring of Mitsue if she knew where Araō was, he had been assured that he was still in the house in which Kwanichi had called upon him. From this he concluded that his old friend had spoken in all seriousness when he said a usurer could be no friend of his.

How welcome then was the news that he had come to see him. What a long talk they would have. He would order a good dinner and plenty of saké and would keep him with him all the day. As he dressed, he wondered a little why

after having been so unfriendly he should have called suddenly, but he put it down to a careless disposition, and was pleased to think that Araō could not quite dispense with his friendship.

Hastily tying the cords of his coat, he opened the sliding doors of the drawing-room, but what he saw with amazement was not Araō Josūke, but a beautifully dressed lady, her head bent low. Hazama hesitated and waited for the lady to raise her head. He noticed that a mild rain was falling and that the trees in the garden cast long shadows in the room.

“Is your name Araō-san?” he asked at length, entering and taking a seat. The lady, still intent on hiding her identity, bowed low in silence, keeping her hands on the mats. Kwanichi watched her for a moment in bewilderment, and then something in her manner seemed familiar. His eyes wandered over her figure like one seeking something in haste.

“You want to see me on business?” he asked, his eyes never leaving her. Like a lily, heavy with dew, sways in the gentle breeze, she wavered—then half raised her head, and in that moment Kwanichi knew. In a voice that seemed torn from his very vitals he gasped:

“Miya!”

She, overcome with joy, and grief, and fear, bowed her graceful head down to the very floor, incapable of answering.

In Kwanichi, too, arose conflicting emotions. Was he glad or was it anger he felt? Did he hate her? Should he humiliate her and rebuke her, or should he weep for the irretrievable? His voice was harsh when he spoke:

“Why are you here?” and Miya, just able to raise her face and gasp out a word for pardon, shrank back at the sight of his eyes, which shot flame, and were terrible in their anguish.

“Go!” he exclaimed, and then, as though overcome by the sight of her, he added: “Miya,” in the voice she had loved and had yearned to hear. She thought he was relenting, for was not his voice a caress, his eyes filled with tears. By a great effort he controlled himself, and all the tenderness had faded from his voice, as he said sternly:

“You should not have come to see me—are you not ashamed to meet me? As for all those letters you have written me, I have not read them;—they were burned, unopened, and I must beg you to cease troubling me with them in the future.....
.....And now you must go.....I am ill.....I cannot

sit before you like this.....it is too much.....go quickly.....” He called to his servant :

“The lady is going, tell her *Jinrickisha* man to come round.”

Summoning up all her courage, Miya exclaimed wildly :

“Kwanichi san! I have come here to die—punish me as I deserve, but forgive me.....I implore you to wait and hear what I have to say.....I have repented oh! how bitterly! You do not know what I have suffered, for you would not read my letters.....it is all written there.....Would that you had read them, for I have not the courage to say to you, what I would, and, though my written words are too weak to express to you all I feel, they would have touched you a little, and melted your anger.....I want to ask your forgiveness for so much, and now, when you are before me, I have no words. Shame strikes me to the ground and ties my tongue.....I know I have done very wrong to come here, but I have come here only to die.”

“What has that to do with me?”

“Kwanichi, Kwanichi you *must* hear my story.” implored Miya, prostrating herself at his feet. He turned from her;

“The 17th January, six years ago, do you

The Suppliants.

remember what happened then?" . He waited for a reply; none came.

"Answer me!"

"I have not forgotten it." was the miserable girl's answer.

"Well" said the man, and each word fell like a lash upon her bruised heart, "you are now experiencing what I felt that night."

"Forgive me," cried Miya writhing. But he had sprung to his feet, and the screens closed behind him like an iron wall. Miya, all her hopes shattered, fell half-fainting to the ground.

CHAPTER LIV

Desperation.

“**K**URUMAYA! Kurumaya!” sounded the servant’s voice outside, summoning the jinricksha man. There was a sound of running feet and then, of wheels, as the jinricksha was drawn up to the door. All being in readiness, the servant came in to tell Miya so. The latter had partly recovered, but traces of tears were still visible on her face, and she sat limply on her cushion. The old woman wondered what could have distressed so lovely a lady, and noted with admiration how fashionably her hair was dressed, how graceful was the slope of her shoulders and the bend of her pretty neck. She must be wealthy, indeed, for was she not dressed in a double robe of the heaviest silk, of a pale and tender green—while the sash, that was fastened high at the back, was of tea-coloured brocade. On the hand, that held her little silk handkerchief, flashed a brilliant gem—a large diamond.

“Madam, my master, who has been ill has suddenly grown worse and was therefore obliged to

Desperation.

leave you. He begs you to excuse him and to go home, pardoning his impoliteness."

"Yes," murmured Miya, feeling she must make some reply and furtively wiping away her tears.

"It seems too bad, you should have to go, when you have come all this way on purpose to see my master," continued the old woman, garrulously.

"Yes, yes," was the hasty reply: "I will get ready to go—you can tell my man to wait a few minutes"

"Certainly, don't hurry! it is raining, and very cold today."

Miya was left alone again. She made no attempt to get ready, but let her gaze wander round the room, vacantly, as she pondered what she should do. Half an hour passed, then, the woman returned. Miya rose, adjusted the folds of her dress, and said:

"I am going, now, but I must bid Mr. Hazama good bye first—where is he?"

"Pray, do not trouble about that, Madam."

"Lead me to him, I must take leave of him!"

"Please, come this way." The maid, though it was against her master's express commands, led the lady to a room, which was detached from the house, and was reached through the verandah.

This was Kwanichi's room.

The bed had not yet been rolled up and put away for the day, and Hazama, when he left Miya had thrown off his garments, and flung himself down upon the quilts. Miya entered his room, suddenly, and quickly, and before he could rise, she had flung herself onto the bed, into his arms, clinging to him, weeping and murmuring inarticulate words.

"For shame!" cried the enraged man, trying to free himself, "what is this you are doing."

"Kwanichi san, hear me! I did wrong, forgive me."

"Be quiet!" he commanded sternly, "and let go of my hands;" when she only clung the closer crying: "Kwanichi, Kwanichi!" he repeated: "You *shall* let go, you shameless creature!" For some moments they struggled, and the woman with a strength born of desperation, and beside herself with excitement, retained her hold. Her breath fanned his cheeks, her face was close to his. How pale she was this Miya, whom he had vowed never to see again. What a delicate flower-like form this Miya's, who was the old Miya but outwardly. He sank back. How came she here in his arms—was it all a dream?

Desperation.

Miya, her eyes shining, her teeth set, swore to herself she would never let him go, no, not for a diamond as large as a head. What were diamonds to her now? She had learnt, that the largest diamond on earth, was not so great a treasure as human faith and truth. *She* had flung away the priceless treasures (where were they now?) for a worthless gem.

“Go, go, go,” moaned Hazama.

“I shall not see you again,” said Miya, pressing close to him, “so be patient with me today; beat or strike me, if you like, but listen to my reasons for seeking you out.”

“Do you think that beating *you* will do *me* any good? why, even if I were to kill you, it would not satisfy me.”

“Ah! I am willing to be killed. I long to die; and death at your hands would be sweet. Put an end to my misery, Kwanichi, for life is at an end for me!”

“Kill yourself,” returned he harshly, and Miya, then knowing that he so despised her, that he did not consider her worthy of death at his hands, burst into tears.

“Die! yes, die!” jeered Hazama “better that than a life of deceit, or this shameless behaviour

towards me, whom you once forsook."

"I did not mean to forsake you, that is why I am here—to tell you so. As to death, there is no need for me to think of that—I am as one dead, for I ceased to live six long years ago."

"I do not want to hear what you have to say, I have told you to leave me—*now go!*"

"I will *not* go!" cried the excited woman, "nothing on earth will make me go, as long as you speak to me and treat me with such cruelty." She clung to his hands. In her excited state of mind, she cared neither for husband, nor for the world; she only felt she would rather give her life than loosen her hold on Kwanichi's hand.

At this juncture footsteps approached the room, nearer and nearer.

"Some one is coming," whispered Kwanichi, striving to rise, unsuccessfully, for Miya held him as in a vice.

The maid appeared at the opening, and then stepped quickly back, that she might not be seen, and announced:

"Mrs. Akagashi has come."

Consternation was to be read in every line of Kwanichi's countenance.

"Very well," he replied, struggling to appear

calm, "I will come in a moment." Then to Miya in a furious whisper, "You see I have a visitor—will nothing induce you to go? Don't you hear what I say? You *must* go now?"

"No, I shall be waiting for you here. Infuriated, Kwanichi shook her off. Like a lily, that is bruised, she fell, and before she could rise, he had gone.

CHAPTER LV

The Rivals.

THE Azuma coat, with its mauve silk lining, had not escaped Mitsue's sharp eyes on entering. Another woman visiting Hazama indeed! She looked at the coat, carefully, and then summoned old Toyo. The latter, who had been very generously treated by Mitsue, in the matter of gifts, was not loath to relate all she knew, and all she had seen. Mitsue was furious. Her heart felt on fire, with jealousy. She waited, expectantly, for this woman, who had supplanted her, to come out, relishing the idea of throwing scornful glances at her. For a long time she waited and listened. Kwanichi did not appear; not a sound came from the detached room. Mitsue concluded that they were keeping thus silent because of her, so that she might not overhear what they whispered to each other, and the thought fretted and angered her. At last she called impatiently for the servant:

“Ōtoyo san, tell your master that I am in a hurry today, and must see him for a moment.

Toyo hesitated, knowing Kwanichi would be annoyed if she presented herself at his door, a second time; She made excuses, but in vain. Mitsue assured her, she would bear the responsibility and take blame.

Advancing cautiously, and taking care that Kwanichi did not see her, Toyo called, softly, outside his door:

“Master, Master!”

“He is not here!” came in Miya’s soft accents. The servant came forward and looked in. No, sure enough, he was not there. The lady was still sitting beside his pillow, looking very sad. Her hair was slightly dishevelled, her left sleeve showed a rent.

“He went out a little while ago—into another room, I think, to see a visitor in there.”

“No Madam, he is not there, and the lady says she is in a hurry, so I came to tell him so. Where can he have gone!”

She left hurriedly and went in to Mitsue.

“Did he not come in here?”

“Who?”

“He is not in there either?”

“Ah! your master! where is he then?”

“The lady says he must have come in here?”

"That is a lie!" said Mitsue rudely.

"But, she is there, all alone."

"I don't believe it."

"I assure you, she is alone. I, too, thought he was with her, but ——"

"He is hidden somewhere," replied Mitsue with conviction, "you must go and find him."

Toyo rose to do as she was bid, and Mitsue waited, ill at ease, on her cushions, trying to master her indignation and jealousy.

Miya, had lost all hope of carrying out the purpose for which she had come. She felt that it would be useless to await Kwanichi's return. Everything had gone against her; yet, she could not make up her mind to go away unsatisfied. She heaved deep sighs and gazed out of the window at the sky, which grew darker every minute.

In the meanwhile, Toyo had made careful search for her master, but he was nowhere to be found. It was with a suspicious look that she returned to the detached room, and while she talked, her eyes wandered searchingly around. She felt sure Kwanichi was hidden.

"I cannot find him anywhere, Madam."

"No? has he not gone out perhaps?" replied Miya, with well-assumed calmness.

“That may be, but why?—leaving his visitors like this, one in this room, one in the next! He can't have gone out, but as he can't be found anywhere, he *must* have gone out. Excuse me, I will look once more.”

She hurried away to Mitsue, to tell her the result of her search, adding that she had looked most carefully all about the detached room, and that he, certainly, was not in there. Suddenly, she recollected the foot-gear and hurried to the verandah to examine them. Mitsue followed—paused a moment to reflect, and then stepped lightly into the garden and appeared with great suddenness in front of the room, in which Miya sat.

The latter looked, up, in surprise, and at once changed her drooping posture to assume a more correct attitude. She looked somewhat shy, like a graceful flower, that hides among its green leaves. Mitsue, on the contrary, appeared like the cool looking winter moon. She advanced. The two women exchanged the formal greeting. Mitsue found the “enemy” younger than herself, lovelier than herself, and with that air of nobility which she herself lacked. Against her will she was filled with admiration. Jealousy and hatred

of her rival took possession of her. If Kwan-ichi loved this woman, what hope was there for her. She recognized that it was useless for her to enter the lists against a loveliness, that so greatly surpassed her own. She longed to fling herself on Miya and stab her to death. Since she could not do that, she determined to tease and wound her in every way she could.

"This is the first time I see you," she said sweetly, "are you a relation of Mr. Hazama's?"

"Yes, I am a *kind* of relation," replied Miya hesitatingly.

"Indeed! My name is Mitsue Akagashi and I have been an intimate friend of Mr. Hazama's for many years; in fact almost like a *real* relation. We help each other, and do business together. Being at his house so much, I wonder how it is, that I have never seen you, all these years?"

"I have only just returned to Tokio from a distant province."

"May I ask where you have been living?"

"Oh! yes! it was ...at... Hiroshima."

"And where do you live now!"

"I live at Ikenohata." lied Miya boldly.

"Ikenohata? that is a very pretty place. How curious that Mr. Hazama should have told me he

had no relatives, and that there was no one with whom he cared to be on terms of friendship,—of *intimate* friendship, except me,—who am more to him than any *real* relatives. So I always fancied he had no relations. I wonder what could have been his motive in saying so, considering he has so charming a relative as you. What *could* have been his reason for hiding the fact from me—Do you think it is like him, to do so cold-blooded a thing?”

A wave of anger swept over Miya, as she listened to this impertinent speech. “This must be the woman my father saw, at the hospital;” she thought, “what was it he said about her? That she was not an ordinary visitor, but had some closer connection with Kwanichi. Perhaps she is his wife, secretly, who is trying to keep him from me. Perhaps he has sent her here to punish me.” She bit her lip “He wants me to see the woman he loves! I will go—but no! when I am gone he may come out of his hiding-place, and they will laugh at me, and abuse me together. He will take her hand and put his face close to hers.” She clenched her teeth, to hide the quivering of her lip, and Mitsue, delighted at the effect of her words, continued in a tone of insufferable patronage:

"I am full of regret that Hazama should have been called off on urgent business, when you have come all this way to visit him. The place to which he has gone, is some way off, so I hardly expect to see him back before night. You had better come some other day, when you are at liberty, for your talk with him."

"I have stayed here too long already," said Miya with some haughtiness, "I am very sorry to have detained him so long, since you, too, came totalk with him."

"It does not matter in the least, I am here so often, and can see him at any time ; it is for yourself you must be most sorry," Mitsue smiled wickedly.

"I am *very* sorry," said Miya boldly, "I have not seen him for four or five years, so of course we had much to talk about. I contemplated spending the day here."

"Most disappointing for you."

"I am going," she bowed.

"Must you really go? see, it is raining."

"I have my own kuruma, and so, am independent of the weather," was Miya's frigid response.

With the most ceremonious bows and the politest phrases of leavetaking, which expressed pleasure in each other's society and hopes of future meetings,

The Rivals.

the two women parted, each hiding in her heart
the sword of jealousy and vowing never to see the
hated rival again.

CHAPTER LVI

Mitsue Waits.

WHEN Miya had driven off, Mitsue and Toyo hunted in every nook and corner for Kwanichi but he was nowhere to be found. Mitsue sat down to wait, expecting he would come soon, and to watch the path that led to the house. The fact was, that Kwanichi finding himself in an awkward predicament and not knowing how to extricate himself, had escaped by the back door. He stole down the road in the pouring rain, sheltering himself as much as he could by keeping close to the houses. He hardly knew where he was going but seeing the doors of a Gō hall, where he sometimes had a game, open, he slipped in there hoping to be safe for a while. How peaceful it was in there. There were only three couples playing a game of gō quietly; the host, a lean dried-up man was polishing a gō board. The breeze had a soothing sound as it played among a group of graceful bamboos, outside the window. Kwanichi seated himself close to the brazier and leaned over it to dry his wet garments.

The host, who knew him, came across the room and plied him with questions as to his wet condition, to all of which Kwanichi replied evasively. His heart was still beating loudly and his mind was too confused to heed what was said to him and so after a curious glance at his disturbed countenance the host left him alone.

Kwanichi knew not whether he was glad or sorry, whether it was hate or pity that surged in him, stirring old memories and giving birth to new emotions. When he had somewhat recovered from the intense excitement which burned within him, he found himself wondering what would be the results of his leaving Mitsue and Miya alone in his house. Would they meet and what would come of their meeting? Ought he not to return and prevent it? He was roused from the deep brooding into which he had fallen by the gradually increasing noise among the gō players and looking up he became aware that all their heads were turned towards him and that the shouts were directed at him.

"Kusai, kusai!" (bad smell) they called and Kwanichi then perceived that one of his sleeves had caught fire and that a strong smell of burning filled the room. He extinguished the smoulder-

ing flame, and the calmor of the players ceasing, a woman's voice was heard at the door asking for admittance.

"Is my master here?"

"Yes," replied the host, "he is sitting in the back room." Kwanichi looked round and recognized his servant Toyo. He felt awkward and embarrassed at being found but hid this beneath a nonchalant manner. Carelessly he said:

"You have brought my umbrella I suppose."

"Yes, master and your high wooden clogs. So this is where you are—I have looked for you in all sorts of places."

"Indeed?" said Hazama coolly. "Has the visitor gone?"

"Yes, she has gone."

"And the lady from Yotsuya also?"

"No sir, she insists on seeing you?"

"Do you mean she is still at the house?"

"Yes, master."

"Then tell her you were unable to find me."

"Are you not coming home?"

"By and bye."

"It is nearly lunch time."

"Never mind—go home now."

"But master, you have not even had breakfast."

"I told you to go home." said Kwanichi sharply and Toyo putting down the umbrella and the clogs went away disappointed.

His hiding-place, having been discovered, and knowing Mitsue well enough to feel sure she would be capable of pursuing him there, Kwanichi determined to stay no longer. He would not go home either, until she had left the house, for in his present state of mind he felt unable to cope with her importunities. He did not know where to go and to make matters worse he found he had not a cent with him and he began to want his breakfast. But he put on his clogs, opened his umbrella and sallied out into the pouring rain.

Late in the afternoon the rain stopped, and though the month was May, it grew dusk very early. The players rose from their go-boards, and the host saw them to the door, and then lighted the lantern above him. Just then he saw Kwanichi enter his gate.

No sooner was the latter in the little hall than he called in a loud, irritable voice: "Dinner, Dinner," and entered his sitting room brusquely.

The lamp was lighted and beside it, with her back towards him, sat a woman. Kwanichi stared at her in amaze, and as she did not move or turn

towards him he exclaimed angrily:

“Has Mitsue not gone home *yet*?”

And he closed the door with a snap and walked over into his own bedroom. He called to Toyo to bring sundry garments and to serve his meal in there. Strange to say Mitsue did not come in while he dined—quite unlike her usual way—and Kwanichi congratulating himself on this respite stretched out his tired body when he had eaten, in the shadow of the moon and indulged in a long luxurious smoke.

As he lay there, his thoughts reverted to Miya. He saw again her graceful but emaciated form and heard the plaintive tones of her sweet voice. Once or twice he raised himself on his elbow to look round to make sure that the shadow, which the bamboo cast on the paper screen, was not hers.

“Miya cannot have stayed here very long,” he thought, “and I am as lonely as ever. When I could have done so, I would not forgive her, even though I saw her penitence was real, and so I have alienated myself from her forever. To-night I feel strangely lonely and this is a new burden added to the old. This full moon-light makes me sad—and greater than my hatred of her is, to-night, the sadness I feel at beholding her frailty.”

He rose and pushed aside the paper screen, and the crescent moon hanging in the calm summer sky lighted up his face and revealed the hunger in his sad dark eyes.

"Hazama san!" came the jarring voice of Mitsue whose presence he had absolutely forgotten, and turning round he saw she had already seated herself in his room close behind him. He gazed at her and thought her face looked dry and without the bloom of youth, and that her eyes which smiled at every man, lacked charm. He wondered how it was he had not observed this before, and while still puzzling over it he excused himself politely and formally for his absence, adding that since she had waited so long, her business must indeed be urgent. But Mitsue was angry and in no mood for polite nothings. Hardly allowing him to complete his sentence, she began her attack, in a voice shrill with displeasure.

"And so you consider it wrong for me to wait for you even if my business is not urgent? Of course it is wrong; but what *you* consider worse than my waiting, is that I should have come here at all this morning. Most unpardonable! for I interrupted you in a strange pleasure Hazama-san."

She glared at Kwanichi, who replied angrily :

“What nonsense you are talking !”

“Ah ! it is no good your trying to deceive me. No explanation is needed when one sees a young man and a woman in a room together, clinging to each other, laughing and weeping. I heard it all in the next room and I am no child of seven or eight years. Do I not understand these things? And when you had gone I came in here and saw the lady !”

Kwanichi who had not greatly minded her harangue so far, looked up at her last words and listened attentively. What he feared had come to pass—Miya and Mitsue had met. Mitsue continued :

“We had a long talk, about many things—thus I have come to know of the relation in which you stand to her. She even told me things of which women as a rule do not speak, and I learned many curious secrets. But, Hazama I really cannot help admiring you. What a talent !

You have this lovely lady for your pleasure—secretly—and the world regards you as an eccentric fellow, absolutely indifferent to the.....pleasanter sides of life. Your talent for secrecy is amazing ! Fancy having so successfully kept your pleasures

hidden from the world all these years!"

Kwanichi clenched his fists with rage.

"What do you mean by it?" he exclaimed, "Cease your foolish chatter."

"It is all very well," cried Mitsue, "for you to call it foolish chatter; you know it is true and that you are glad it is true. I can see it in your face you are thinking of it now, and I suppose you can't help being in love with her."

"This is just what I expected to happen." thought Hazama, "I ought not to have left them alone or given them a chance of meeting. What an annoying thing it is!" He closed his mouth resolutely and stared up at the moon.

Mitsue, keeping her watchful eyes on his face, said:

"Hazama, why are you silent? I am sorry that you should have to converse with such a woman as I am, after being in the company of that beautiful love of yours. I will not keep you long, I have only a few little words to say—may I say them?"

"Anything you like," said the exasperated Kwanichi.

"I'd like to kill you!" cried she jealously.

"Eh?" said Kwanichi in surprise.

"I should like to kill you, and her, and then myself!"

"Pooh! ridiculous! why should I be killed by you?"

"How dare you say ridiculous?" cried the Beauty, her eyes flashing; and then with a sudden rush of tears, "Do you hate me so much? why do you hate me? Tell me the reason. I will not go until I know."

"Hate you? Impossible!" cried Kwanichi in mock horror.

"Why then did you say 'ridiculous?'"

"Well, isn't it ridiculous that you should want to kill me? I know of no grounds you can have for wanting to do it."

"I have, indeed I have."

"You may *believe* you have, but....."

"And if I do believe it, what matters it if no one else thinks so. I shall carry out to the uttermost what I believe to be my right."

"Then I am to understand you intend to kill me?"

"I shall not hesitate to do so. Be prepared."

"I am quite prepared," replied Kwanichi coolly, wondering how far she was in earnest. This scene having in his opinion lasted long enough,

he stood up, shivering slightly, for the night was cool, and closed the doors on to the verandah. The moon sailed high in the heaven. Kwanichi looked at the clock which stood in the alcove and said :

“It is late, you had better go home.”

“Were I the lady who was here this morning, I am sure you would not dream of calling my attention to the hour,” was the vicious reply. Kwanichi was about to make some angry retort but considering it was wiser not to argue with her, he kept silence.

CHAPTER LVII

A Plea for Love.

“WHO is she?” said Mitsue after a pause, “I was told that she is an old friend of yours. From her manner and appearance I should say she is not a woman in *the* trade, nor just an ordinary lady. She seemed mysterious, and you enjoy a woman with a mystery, do you not? Is she perhaps a “flower with an owner.” (married woman).

Although Kwanichi felt sure this was a random shot, his heart beat uncomfortably loud and fast:

“I cannot tell,” was all he replied.

“It is said that pleasure enjoyed under such conditions is the greater—but the crime is also the greater. It is quite plain to me now why you should have kept the affair a secret. It is certainly nothing to be proud of. Now, you are furious that your secret has leaked out, and it is especially annoying that I should have become possessed of it—I, whom you dislike so much. Believe me I am delighted. You have long and cruelly tormented me—now, I shall be able to torment you to my

heart's content by means of this secret. You know what you have to expect."

"Are you quite mad?" asked Kwanichi contemptuously.

"Perhaps I am. Who has made me so? If I am mad, my madness dates from this morning. And since I became mad through coming to your house, it is your duty to restore my mind before I leave you."

She drew closer to him, but he shrank from her contact, wishing he could escape as he had that very morning.

"I have a simple request to make," said Mitsue, "will you grant it?"

"What is it?"

"I hate your 'what is it,' say, 'I will'."

"But —"

"No 'buts' please, you always give me such cold answers, I want a simple answer to a simple request."

Kwanichi nodded.

"Then listen, Hazama. You look upon me as a tiresome woman, I know, for I have clung to you regardless of your opinion of me, because I cannot for one moment forget you. No matter how I love you, you continue to dislike me and my love

is exactly like that described in the poem: "To love one who loves not in return, is more idle than to draw pictures on running water." I am drawing pictures on running water, and I despair of gaining my heart's desire; yet I cannot relinquish my hopes. You find it tiresome to be loved in this fashion by me; but, you know, at least that I love you, earnestly and in all seriousness—you know this, do you not?"

"Well.....perhaps so, but....."

"Oh! stop your eternal "perhaps," and "maybe," and "but." If I did not love you, should I continue to persecute you? That I do so, when I know you consider me a tiresome woman, is the strongest proof of my love for you."

"Since you say so, it may be true."

"You *do* know that I love you, in spite of your dislike of me?"

"Yes?" said Hazama uncertainly.

"Hitherto I have not spoken direct to the point, and in consequence you have evaded me. You know what I desire,—and that such a desire is generally considered unlawful.—If you knew me thoroughly, you would see, that for me, it is not so wrong as you think. And if it is, I cannot help it, for where love is, reason takes flight. You have

avoided me on the pretext of unlawfulness, and while I still believed you to be too hard and too eccentric a character to care for love, I considered your pretext sincere—but *now*,—”

As she said these words, fire flashed from her eyes, and she took up her pipe and struck Hazama, with all the force of which she was capable, on the knee.

“What are you doing?” he cried, taken by surprise, and snatched her pipe from her, but she struck him with her hand, wherever she could reach him. Kwanichi managed to get possession of her hands, and held her down firmly, whereupon she immediately bit him on the thigh. He twisted her off furious, but she clung to his knees, and lay there sobbing.

Puzzled at her extraordinary behaviour, Kwanichi said nothing, but endeavoured to free himself. She clung desperately weeping, her hot tears penetrating his thin garment and wetting his skin.

“Go home!” he said, at last, roughly.

“I won’t go.”

“You have got to go—and I will see that from to-day you never enter my house again—remember that.”

“I shall come, even if I have to die for it.”

“I have been very patient with you,” said Hazama controlling his anger, “but I cannot have this going on any longer, I shall see Mr. Akagashi and speak to him about you.”

Mitsue lifted up her tearful face.

“Please speak to him, do you suppose it matters if Mr. Akagashi hears of it or not?”

“You wicked and depraved woman!” cried Hazama, red-hot with anger. “I wonder really what Mr. Akagashi is to you!”

“And what do you suppose Mr. Akagashi is to me, Hazama san?”

“You are outrageous!”

“You evidently think he is my husband, but he is not?”

“What is he then?”

“I have told you before how my father gave me to him, in exchange for a sum of money. People may call us man and wife, but I don't regard him as my husband, he is my enemy. So there is nothing to prevent my having a lover, just as any unmarried woman might. Hazama, when you see Mr. Akagashi, say to him: ‘that woman Mitsue loves me madly, and I am going to take her into my house as my cook,’ then I will serve you until I die..... Did you think to frighten me by say-

ing you would speak to Mr. Akagashi; on the contrary, I think it would be to my advantage if you did; he would not know what to say to you. If any one is put in an awkward position by your speaking to him, it will be he and not I."

Kwanichi did not know what answer to make to these curious statements. Her boldness disarmed him.

"If, by speaking to him," continued Mitsue; "you hope to get rid of me, your trouble will be in vain. He is afraid of me, not *I* of him! Still you might try your plan, just to see what the result would be. Then I shall noise abroad your secret too. I shall tell it everywhere, that you are connected with a married woman, and are always having lovers' interviews with her. Then we shall see who will be harmed most, you or I! What do you say to that?"

"I say, that it is unworthy of *you*, who are sharper than a man, to take a woman's revenge. And listen to me. May not a man and a woman talk together, without being suspected of illicit dealings? Or, is a woman of mature age always a *married* woman? If you spread such a report it will be a wicked misrepresentation of facts. You

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slandrous woman! be more careful when you speak!"

"Hazama-san, turn this way, and look at me!" She plucked him by the sleeve, but he shook her off with a smothered oath.

"I annoy you, do I not?"

"You do indeed!"

"I am going to annoy and worry you still more. What was it you said? 'A wicked misrepresentation?' I must ask you, in my turn, to choose your words more carefully. Be a man, and own you have a mistress! I have no right to ask you this—if I had a right, it might be wise of you to hide the fact from me. Let me speak openly with you. If you had a hundred loves, I should never give you up. My mind is no unstable one. I know, I shall not gain my desire by noising abroad your secret; I am not the woman to do such a thing, though you may think differently. I spoke in anger, and I ask you to pardon a hasty word."

She humbled herself before him, and bowed, as the menial to the master. Again Kwanichi was at a loss what reply to make.

"Now, let me make my request. First of all, give up your attitude of hermit, who neither knows, nor cares for, the delights of love.

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You know me well and thoroughly. Am I a person likely to relinquish the thing for which I strive? Do you dislike me so much, that you will always be unable to accept, what I have so often offered you. Decide what *you* will do, and I will decide on *my* course of action. As a rule, I am quick in making a decision; but, in this case, I have been as weak-minded as a fool. I am not blind about things as a rule, but where you are concerned, I am blind—and infatuated! It must be my “Ingwa,” (result of actions in a former life) that you should dislike me still, in spite of my love for you. Or, is it the absolute disagreement of natures, which the Buddhists preach, the Water Nature or the Fire Nature of the man, which will not mingle with certain natures of women? Ought you not therefore to pity one, whose fate it is to love you, under such adverse and hopeless conditions? Though you may not be able to love the person, at least, you should have pity on the mind of such a one. That you are not so hard or loveless a character, as to be unable to extend to me some sympathy, I have been assured of, by the events of the morning. I know, *now*, that you are capable of love. The love, you bestow on another, is the same love as that, with which I love you. Think

how painful unrequited love must be! Was I, then, so very unreasonable when I said, I wished to kill you, Hazama san? It may be madness, but I was born to *this*: that I should love you, and be willing to give up my life for you, or be your slave, in return for a kind word or look. If you think this over, you will, I feel sure, be able to spare me a little love and pity, even, if it be only as small as a drop of dew. Can you not do so? I do not ask much of you but, will you not speak the word I am longing to hear, for the sake of our.....*friendship*?"

As she drew near the end of her plea, her voice trembled more and more, until it lost its usual harsh tone. She begged him for this *one* word, for which she would have sacrificed many registered bonds, worth thousands of yen. With suspended breath, and beating heart, her face, pale as death, she awaited his answer, ready, to be made happy by one word, or, prepared to end all, with the dagger she held concealed in her sleeve.

This Kwanichi felt was lovenaking indeed, and, it was as terrible, as it was pitiful. But, how make friends with a snake or a scorpion, simply because it loved him? The whole scene had rendered him incapable of saying a harsh word. His face

had grown softer, although his brows were still knit.

"A word that will satisfy you?" he asked, "what kind of a word do you want me to say?"

"How can *I* tell you, what words you should say to me?" cried Mitsue, with a passionate gesture.

"I don't really know what it is you want." replied Kwanichi, seeking some way of escape.

"Don't know? Ah! that is because you are seeking for some cunning word of evasion! There is but *one* word that will satisfy me; and you are the only one who can give me that word!"

"If you mean *that*, I know....."

"If you know it," broke in Mitsue, "try to say it."

"I know, that you want me to agree with all you have said, but that is difficult—I can find no word which will please you."

"Ah! try," she cried, "I will be content with whatever you say. Show me, that you sympathize with what I feel; that you are not devoid of pity."

"I am grateful to you, for your kind thoughts of me," began Kwanichi, slowly and laboriously, "I shall remember all you have said, tonight, and I will not forget, in the future, that you love me..."

"Are you sure Hazama san?" came the eager question.

"I am *sure*," he replied.

"Is it truth?" she asked.

"Yes, it is true."

"Then," she cried, triumphantly, "give me the proof!"

"The proof?" he asked, startled.

"Yes. I hate an empty word. You have given me the assurance of your sympathy; you have said you spoke truly—now give me the proof, show me that you understand."

"I would if I could," he faltered.

"You would? and you *can*....."

"*If I could*—yes—but....."

"If you are willing, you can give me every thing," she panted.

As she spoke, Kwanichi threw open the sliding door, with violence, and sprang into the dewy garden. Mitsue followed him like a flash, and in the moonlight her face looked like a rose.

CHAPTER LVIII

The Dream.

“**W**HY do I hear women’s voices, crying and disputing,” Kwanichi asked himself, early one morning, as he lifted his head from his pillow and listened, “when I know, there is no one in the house but myself and Toyo.” The voices became louder, more excited, and were accompanied by a violent knocking on the partition. At this, Kwanichi pushed back the bedclothes, and was about to jump out of bed, when, with a bang, the partition was knocked down, and two figures were hurled into the room. They were two women, and the hair of one was unbound, and floated about her shoulders. Her dress was wet with rain. She looked up at him, in an ecstasy of love and yearning, and cried, “Kwanichi san.” But when she tried to reach him, the other woman fell upon her and held her down, so that she was unable to move. The woman, with the long black hair and the wet garments, was Miya; the other, her hair dressed like a geisha and exquisitely arrayed, was Mitsue, and this was her revenge, for what Kwanichi had refused her the other night.

Still holding Miya tightly, Mitsue turned round and cried :

“Hazama san, here is your love, of whom you think so much.” She seized Miya's neck and twisted her head, so that the latter was obliged to face Kwanichi :

“Is not this the woman ?” asked Mitsue. Miya moaned softly and said :

“Kwanichi san, it makes me so sad; *do* tell me, is this woman your wife ?”

“What does it matter to you, if I am his wife ?” demanded Mitsue, viciously, shaking her victim, and when the latter groaned, and rubbed her legs against each other in pain, Mitsue held her the more firmly, telling her to be quiet, and to listen to what she was going to say to Kwanichi.

She began :

“Hazama san, I now know the truth. It is only, because this woman shamelessly clings to you, that you refuse, what I ask of you. Although she has deserted you and married another, you have still a sneaking affection for her. You are more unmanly, than I thought possible. How can you care for a woman who forsook you, and gave herself to another?—And you call yourself a man? If I were *you*, I would stab her to death.”

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Miya struggled to free herself, but so strong a hand was on her, that she was hardly able to breathe.

Mitsue continued :

“Hazama san, have you not often spoken of me as immoral? And yet, you have allowed this creature to live on in her shame, and though you love her, call yourself an honourable man. Are you not ashamed of the remarks you made about me? I will put into your hands, now, the opportunity of becoming a *man* again, freed from the stain of unmanliness, which is as a blot, on your character, in allowing her to live. Punish her now, I will not rise, until you do so. I will lend you the knife, a good knife. Here take it in your hand.”

With one hand, she drew from her sleeve a dagger, in a lacquered sheath. Kwanichi was petrified with horror—he gazed as if fascinated, at Mitsue’s excited face. Miya never moved. Was she already insensible from fear?

“Come,” whispered Mitsue, “while I hold her down like this, stab her in the throat, or heart, quickly. Fie! Why do you hesitate? Don’t you know how to hold a dagger? Draw it like this!”

With one hand she shook it in the air; the sheath flew off, and, with a flash, like lightning, the shining blade cut through the air, and dropped within three inches of Kwanichi's face.

"Stab her, stab her!", she cried. Kwanichi shuddered, and Mitsue, snatching up the knife, said:

"Now, I know that you love her still. Your honour demands, that you should put an end to her life, and you are too weak to do so. Let me take your place and kill her. It is very easy. Look here."

She drew the sharp blade across Miya's dishevelled hair, but she, with the strength that terror lends, wrenched herself free, and sprang aside, shrieking:

"Help! Kwanichi san," and then flinging herself on Mitsue, seized her by the wrist, in which she held the dagger.

"Kwanichi, quick, take the dagger from her, and kill me with your own hand. I want to die, but, I will not have that woman kill me. Help! Kwanichi, and put an end to my miserable life yourself."

But Kwanichi never moved. He seemed to be held immovable by some mysterious power; try as he would, he could not lift hand or foot. Meanwhile

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the two women struggled for possession of the dagger. It flashed now high, now low, like a bright crescent, seen through willow branches in the wind. Miya shrieked piteously to the man she loved :

“ Are you going to look on, while this woman kills me? Oh! help me Kawnichi, my life is *yours*, not hers; she must not take it. If you will not kill me, at least, let me kill myself. Take the knife from her, and let me have it in my hand, just for a moment; for mercy's sake, be quick, be quick!”

The struggle waxed desperate; there was no sound in the room, except the panting of the two women. Suddenly the dagger slipped from Mitsue's hand, and fell on the mat in front of Kwanichi. In a second, Miya leapt across the room, seized it, and held it triumphantly aloft. Mitsue was on her immediately, but, at that moment, Miya thrust at her, with all her might, and the dagger pierced her to the heart. With a shriek she fell back.....dead.

Miya dropped the dagger, and fled to Kwanichi.

“ Now, I must regard myself as dead. Kill me Kwanichi,” she pleaded, “ and, if you will do it, I

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will regard it as your pardon, and die happily. Forgive me for the past ; for, if you do not forgive me, I shall come to life again and again miserably, and shall torment others, as I have you. I implore you, pray to Buddha, that he does not let me go astray after death, and then, let me die beside you."

She placed the blood-stained knife in his hand, keeping her own over his.

"As this is the last time I shall ever see you, I want you to say one word, "Pardon," to my departing soul. It will be like a prayer and a blessing to the dead. While I am alive, you may hate me still ; but death changes all. With death all sin, and therefore all hatred for that sin, dies, and is reduced to ashes. Therefore, let the past flow away with the flowing stream, and forgive me, for I have repented and am glad to give up my life for my past fault. I have no words, in which to tell you all I feel, but I remember how you wept over me that night at Atami, and I hear your voice saying : "Don't forget what has happened tonight, you will think of it often." I ask myself in despair sometimes why I did what I did. I must have been mad at the time, or driven on, by some malignant power. And so, your curse fell upon me, and there

is now no place under the sun, in which I can live in peace ; so I must go,—and I pray, forgive me.

“ I should be foolish to imagine, that this soul of mine, which is accursed, could in this life, even though I had your pardon, be at rest. The Buddhists say, that the result of evil actions, in a former life, cannot be done away in this life, however much we may suffer here as the penalty. Therefore, though, with your forgiveness, I should long to stay near you, I know it is better for me to die at once, and bury all this grief with my body, and then be born again, pure, as I was at the very beginning. Thus, in a future life, in spite of difficulties and barriers we shall come together, at last. I will prove myself worthy of you, and we shall live together in perfect bliss. In my next life, I shall beware of foolish actions, and I beg you, do not forget me. Be sure, you never forget me, It is said, that our dying thought shapes our next life, so I will die thinking of but one thing : of *you*, Kwanichi, and of your forgiveness. And thus, I die ! ” Still holding his hand, she fell upon the dagger gasping :

“ It.....is.....done.....Kwanichi ! ”

Then Kwanichi awoke at last.

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"Miya," he cried, "it is you? what have you done?"

He tried to pull the dagger from her throat, but she was stronger than he.

"Let me have it," he panted, "Miya let go."

"Kwanichi Kwanichi," she sobbed.

"What do you want to say to me?" he asked, holding her close in his arms.

"Nothing. I am so glad. You have forgiven me."

"Miya, let me take the dagger." Again he tried to remove it, but she cried, with sudden strength:

"I will not. I am going to die like this, and be at peace. Oh! Kwanichi I am growing faint, say that you pardon me,—quick pardon, pardon."

"Can you hear, Miya?" he asked, for she had fallen back, with eyes closed, and when she breathed a 'yes,' he said, slowly, and impressively:

"I forgive you. You are now forgiven and pardoned."

"Kwanichi, I am so glad."

He leaned over and kissed her, his hot tears falling on her face.

"Now at last I can die," she cried, and strove to drive the dagger home. Kwanichi implored her to have pity on him, to recover, and succeeded, after a struggle in gaining possession of the

knife. No sooner had he done so, than Miya stood up and rushed from the room with swaying, stumbling steps.

Her lover sprang up, after a moment's hesitation, and was about to follow her, when he stumbled over Mitsue's dead body, and fell with great violence to the ground. He called loudly :

"Miya, wait! I have something to say to you. Toyo, Toyo, where are you? run after Miya and stop her."

He called and called, but Miya did not return, nor did the servant give any sign. When the pain in his knees allowed him to rise, he found he had so injured himself that he was unable to stand without support. He staggered from the verandah into the garden guided by the drops of blood from the wounded woman. They led him to the door at the end of the garden, then into the street, and far down the silent, misty road, he saw her staggering before him.

"Miya wait!" Again and again he called, but she heeded not, and he gnashed his teeth with rage, that fate, at the supreme moment should have rendered him helpless. Supporting himself by clinging to the fences at the side of road, he struggled forward, regardless of the falls and the agony he experienced.

He shouted "Miya" as long as he had strength to do so. Presently her obi (sash) becoming untied, and twisted round her feet, she fell, and lay still. Kwanichi, almost exhausted redoubled his efforts, and with a loud cry of Miya, plunged madly forward. At the same moment he felt a sharp stab in his throat; his words were checked in a rush of blood, and he fell fainting to the ground.

How long he lay there he did not know. When he came to himself, he found he was close to the moat, which encircles the Palace grounds. He looked up and saw Miya among the willows which fringe the bank. Rising with difficulty, he followed her, but stopped at the strange sight which met his eyes. The usually peaceful moat had changed into terrific rapids, which came dashing down with a noise like thunder. Huge boulders seemed have been thrown in, to break their force, but the waters leapt and plunged over them, in great bounds, sending the spray high into the air, and almost making the banks tremble beneath their onset.

"What an awful scene!" thought Kwanichi, clinging to the bough of a willow. As he gazed, he noticed a narrow steep path, bordered by high grasses, leading down the cliff to the water. He

also noticed the bamboos and grasses were disturbed, as though some one were moving among them, and looking round hastily for Miya, he saw she had disappeared, and was at once persuaded that she it was who was walking down towards the water.

He now knew the reason of her flight. She was going to drown herself in one of the whirlpools beneath those terrible rapids. Save her he must. But how? He could not reach her in time by taking the path—what could he do?—He paused one moment, and then sprang. By a miracle he was not killed, not even injured or stunned. But Miya had vanished.

Crying to Heaven at his ill-luck in having lost her by one moment, Kwanichi gazed into the water with blood-shot eyes, hoping against hope that he might yet rescue her.

Presently, at a distance of perhaps a score of yards, something came in sight, which was certainly not a piece of wood. It was tossed hither and thither by the waves, was visible for a moment, then lost to sight. Could it be Miya?

Kwanichi strained his eyes and leaned down ready to grasp at dress or floating hair. But the current was very swift where he stood, and at the

moment when he recognized the form of his beloved, she was borne past him, shot out of his reach, like an arrow from the bow. Undaunted, Kwanichi followed, there was no path, but he scrambled over rocks, climbed trees, hung over the precipice, and waded at peril of his life in the swirling water. He staggered along, bleeding and half dead, till he reached a shallow place in the river. There in the sobbing water, under the shadow of green trees, whose branches were bowed in mourning over her, he found his Miya. He fell upon her weeping.

Alas! alas! How grateful would Miya have been for one of those hot teardrops before she died. Now a thousand cannot avail her.

“Miya,” cried Kwanichi, “are you really dead! and have I found you only to have lost you? Beloved one! Too much thinking has driven you to this. First pierced by a sword, and then drowned! Did you want to give up your life twice for my sake, that I might know how true and deep was your penitence.

“I swore I would never forget my wrongs, no matter what should happen,—and now, in spite of my oath I find my resentment has melted, and seeing you dead before me, I cry that I forgive you

The Dream.

from my heart. But Miya, hear me I forgave you before you died, do you remember that? I said but one word, "Pardon," and in pain you breathed that you were glad. Did it mean so much to you, Miya?

"Ah! how well you have proved your penitence! What a splendid repentance has been yours! So grand, that I feel ashamed before you and implore you now to pardon me. I have been dull and have not understood you; my own grievance blinded me to your sorrow. Forgive me Miya,—ah! too late; you are dead."

Seeing how very tragic, and how brave was the manner of her death, Kwanichi felt that all her inward impurities had been poured out with her blood, and that her sin-stained skin had been washed clean, leaving to him her fair young body, which, for his sake, and as a proof of her repentance, she had sacrificed. She deserved full measure of grief and pity, and he was unworthy to bestow the same.

The moment that his anger and resentment were put away, there arose in their place that yearning love, which like a spring of water had dried up, but now filled his heart to overflowing.

Know you how bitter is the yearning for a Be-

loved one who is dead? There is no longing in the world so hard to bear.

Kwanichi now knew that it so easier to live with hot resentment in his heart against the living, than to endure life full of passionate longing for the dead.

He kneeled beside her in an agony of remorse.

"I have one thing to offer you, dear one," he sobbed, "and that is my heart. Hold it in your embrace, while your soul rests in the bosom of Buddha. This is the end, for you and me, of this present life, but in the next I will live with you as you desire and may the gods grant us a hundred years of life together. I shall not forget Miya,—I promise to remember you."

Taking her ice-cold hand in his, he leaned over her and looked into her eyes, now closed in their long sleep, but he could not distinguish her features for his eyes were dimmed with tears.

"Once you sinned, Miya," he continued, "yet what a noble spirit is yours, to be capable of a death like this. Brave woman! you are an example to all; your action is worthy of the highest.

"But what of me? I was born a man, and yet because I lost a woman's love, I threw aside all noble ambitions and committed a life-long fault!

The Dream.

Nor was I ashamed of my conduct, but continued to amass money by unlawful and inhuman means. Why did I do it? What do I want the money for?"

These questions Kwanichi asked himself again and again, but he could find no answer to satisfy his soul. He had done wrong, and there was no pleasure in it.

"Every man has, beside that in his own walk in life, a duty to perform to humanity. Am I doing so? When I lost Miya, I lost hope; and my lost hopes I threw away all that was good in me, all that makes of us men. My sense of duty to myself and to the world, I strangled.

"Miya, if you have repented for my sake, I must needs repent for my sins against humanity. Seeing how great and noble have been your amends, I feel ashamed and envious, for how can I hope to equal you.

"This life is hard and bitter, and no matter how hard it is, we have to live it here. In it, our pleasures, and our duties, those that concern ourselves and those to the world at large, each have their appointed place, and we must recognize them. I have never done so.

"When I lived at the Shigizawas with you, Miya,

close beside me, I regarded life as a happy dream. Since then—ah! well, you know how I have lived. Which was the true way of life, this or that?

“ These last six years, there has not been a single day, that I have felt, I was living the life of a Man! —You would ask why did I continue to live and you may think it was because I have lacked the courage to die. It is not that I have *lived*, it is because I have failed to die; for my whole existence has been a failure.

“ Wanibuchi was burnt to death, and Miya has killed herself.

“ *What shall I do?*

“ With this weak character of mine, I shall spend all my days in grief, haunted by Miya's sad face. My future will therefore be more cruel than my past. How can I live in such bitter grief?

“ To make amends, to live like a man, to pay the duty I owe to humanity?—What an effort! *That*, no doubt, is my duty as a *man*—but I am no longer a *man*. There is nothing human about me. Death! They say, now, that suicide is a crime. But can it be a crime for one, who is only alive because he breathes? A good-for-nothing to whom life is pain, and at whose death hundreds would re-

joice ?

“ It comes to this : I die because a single woman failed me, and I, in consequence, forgot what life requires of man. I demeaned myself to follow the trade of the thief and the usurer, and have not done a single action worthy of a human being. I made a bad start—and the evil of these years I cannot wipe out. Misfortune will cling to me while I live, and grief will overshadow my path. There is but one way : to die ; and live my life—a cleaner one—again—and then the burden of sorrow will fall from me ! ”

Kwanichi arose. He had found the way. The tears are drying on his cheeks, and into his eyes has come a strange brightness—he lifts his face—pale yet aspiring.

“ Miya, wait for my soul,” he cries, “ I follow you. You died for me, and I give my life to you. Receive it as the gift on our espousal in the future life—I know you will accept it, and, in leaving this life, I feel only a great content.”

He raises her gently and carries her on his back towards the wild deep water in which she lost her life. Strange! she is as light as sheet of paper. Wondering he turns his head—a strange sweet odour meets him, and on his shoulder lies a white

The Gold Demon.

lily in full bloom.

He stops in amaze—opens his wild eyes wonder-
ing—wakes and behold! it was a morning dream.

CHAPTER LIX

Despair.

SO strange and vivid a dream could not fail to make a deep impression upon Kwanichi. He could not banish it from his mind, and the thought of it, apart from the desire for Miya, filled him with restlessness. He began to long for its realization and to contemplate death.

That would end the knotty problem of his life, and in a new state of existence he would live more worthily. He wished he had a friend to whom he might speak freely, or that he knew some wise and experienced person of whom to take counsel. The anguish in his heart grew greater from day to day, and an inward voice whispered to him, that there was little hope of rising to higher things in the new life, for those, who ended a worthless life with a cowardly death.

“ Oh ! for a strong hand ”, he cried; “ to pluck out the evil which torments me, and to burn it in the fiercest fire ; Oh ! for the courage to draw a screen across the faulty part of my life ; to begin again and prepare myself, here, for the new life,

passing over to it by the bridge or a noble death. Is my life worth repenting of!" Thus he questioned; but the answer came not. The present pain urged him to endure this life no longer; but his remorse for the way he had lived, cried to him to find a better way. He dared not seek death to escape from pain, and he lacked the fine courage that is willing to bear everything in order to repair a fault. Kwanichi wished for life, but could not enjoy it; he wished for death but dared not seek it.

Sitting he thought of standing, standing he thought of lying down; when he was resting, he wanted to be working; he longed for night but it brought him no sleep, and, waking, his thoughts tormented him. He spent these days doing nothing, his heart full of dark despair.

At this juncture, fortunately, there came an urgent business call, which he could not put off. A big loan had been negotiated, and the proceedings till now had advanced slowly. Suddenly the would-be debtor pressed for the conclusion of the contract, and Hazama found himself obliged to journey to Shiobara, for the purpose of making some private inquiries, which would take some time. He was very loath to go, and at first contemplated sending

a deputy, but the rumoured beauty of the place and the hope of distracting his mind, made him decide to go himself.

Three days later, in the early misty morning, he was on his way to Uyeno, to leave by the first train; and five hours later he alighted at the station of Nishi-Nasuno, whence the road leads to Shiobara.

CHAPTER LX

The Journey.

FROM Nishi-Nasuno, Kwanichi struck out to the north-west through the wellknown wilderness of Nasuno-ga-hara, which is as wild as in the days of old. The broad sky, the endless plain, and a distant range of hills, beyond which lies Shio-bara, is all that meets the eye on the ten mile road which bisects the plain. Across here Kwanichi trudged, and then passing two villages, he crossed the bridge Nyushōkyō, which means "entrance to the fine scenery." A little way across the bridge, the atmosphere grew chilly, the hills rose higher and closer on each side, and the sun seemed to be darkened. There was a deep valley along which the road wound among a thick growth of trees, in which despite the gloom the birds sang happily, while at every step Kwanichi noticed lovely grasses in bloom. As he went up the valley, the upper course of the river, whose sound he had heard in the distance came in sight—a wonderful spectacle, rushing and tearing down over huge boulders, the white foam splashed into the air. It was

The Journey.

as if a thousand thunders had fallen, the white lightening hissing over them.

On the right, high cliffs rose almost perpendicularly, covered with green moss, and interspersed with narrow waterfalls, which looked like delicate silver threads, and filled the valley with happy murmuring.

After Kwanichi had passed the hill of white feathers and passed the waterfall of Mikaeri, the scenery grew much wilder. He crossed many bridges, thirty in all, on that zigzag route which rises above the valley. The road grew rougher, the hills more craggy, and where before had been grass and moss, was now bare rock. Over these rocks tumbled water falls, seventy falls in all. Hot springs too abounded; in one village alone there were forty-five. After this Kwanichi passed many celebrated spots: Oami waterfall; the Root Mountain, the deep water where children die, the cave of White Cloud, the Dragon's nose, the Nodome-no-taki waterfall, the stone of five colours and the boat rock. Then he reached Fukuwata, the village of Happy Life, which nestles among the green hills. Here grew azaleas and the wild wistaria, and the water was clear and shallow, and over-hung with shady trees. When he reached

this spot, Kwanichi stopped in amaze. It was exactly like the scene in his dream, where Miya, having jumped, had floated up again. The situation of the banks, the growth of the trees, the whirling water above, and the face of the rocks in the transparent water of the pools; the position, the surroundings of the whole place were exactly like it; and the more attentively he examined the spot the more marked was the resemblance.

A cold shudder passed over him. Strange! One may dream of past experiences, but is it possible to dream of something never seen before?

See! there was the spot where Miyas body had lain, and there the way along which he had followed her. To his amazement and horror he could follow the way step by step. He turned round, and asked the man who carried his luggage, the name of the place. It was called the valley of Fudo (God of Wrath).

A terrible name! A likely place in which to die. Indeed he had made up his mind, in that dream to die there. Kwanichi touched his eyes to assure himself he was awake and then recollected with a shudder that it was not Miya, but a lily which had hung across his shoulder. He hurried on; and there rose before him a wonderful cliff, like a

huge screen, surmounted by pines, most of which looked as if they would fall headlong into the precipice below. He gazed at it stupidly—it was the cliff from which he had sprung, in his effort to save Miya. What did it all mean? Had he really been here before—and jumped from this dreadful height. But no! had he done so, his slender bones would have been dashed to pieces. Was it meant as a warning?

As he still stood in doubt and fear, more at the reality of Shiobara than at the wonder of his dream, his bearer told him the place was called the stone of Tengu (tengu is a bobgoblin). He hurried on, uneasy at the thought, that more scenes like those of his ream might present themselves as it were a menace and a threat.

Coming to a sharp bend in the river, where the water, whirling and splashing seemed to rear like a group of angry steeds, he perceived with a thrill of almost terror, in the midst of the rapids, a large rock quite twenty feet high, upon whose flat weather-beaten surface a hundred people might easily have found standing place. Upon that rock, too, he had looked before; yes, in his pursuit of Miya's dead body, finding the water too deep to stand in, he had scrambled up it for a moment to draw breath be-

fore continuing his perilous quest. A few steps further brought him to the pool where Miya had jumped in. On that branch her hair had caught for a moment; over this rock she had dragged her loosened girdle. It was too horrible! Kwanichi trembled, and his hair seemed to rise on end like so many needles—he averted his gaze and hastened on.

As a dream, it had been a terrible experience, but a new terror, that of the unknown and supernatural, was added to this. His heart throbbed painfully, almost choking him. Was it really a dream? he asked himself again and again and would it all come true? Was Miya there somewhere waiting for him and what new pains was he called upon to bear? At the next village he took a kuruma, and two fast runners, urging them to their utmost speed. Thus they rushed past Kotarō's deep water, past the Temple Mountain, and the Sweet Spring Valley, and reached Shiobara ere the sun had set.

CHAPTER LXI

At Shiobara.

IN the village of Shiobara there are twelve inns, five of which have hot mineral baths. It was at one of these that Kwanichi alighted. The Seikin-rō Inn faces south, and the garden runs down to the river, which babbles past, over its clear bed of pebbles, with a pleasant soothing sound. To the west, whence come the cool breezes, rises Fuji, his perfect crest appearing dreamlike above the clouds, and to the northeast a screen of hills protectt he house from the fierce summer sun. It is a lovely peaceful spot—here might harrassed mind, weary soul and sad heart find a haven and relief. Kwanichi had not been there an hour, before its soothing influence made itself felt. The tumult in his heart ceased, his fears died, and he felt strangely softened. He thought:

“What a sense of well-being I feel up here! Why did I not come sooner? How foolish was I to despise the idea that Nature could cure the disease of my soul. Nature to me has always meant dull earth and water. How beautiful are the

mountains and yet they are but heaps of earth ; how cheering is the river, and yet it is but water ! How much more to be despised am I, than that which I disdained to know. Behold ! the verdure of the trees, the floating clouds, the peaks, the running streams, the sougling of the wind, the evening tints,—yes, even the crowing of the cocks seem not to belong to the sordid world, from which I have come. There Nature is sullied and perverted ; here all is pure and true. Nature is finding an inlet to my soul, and will drive out all its impurity. I shall forget my sorrow, forget my pain and weariness ; I shall feel as light as yonder cloud, my heart as fresh as the mountain spring.

“ Here is no love, no hate ; neither money nor worldly power ; no ambition, no competition ; degeneration, pride, infatuation, and disappointment cannot dwell here ; for here is innocent, unspoiled Nature ; here would I lead a simple life, and bury my past, as I would, some day, here bury my bones.”

He leaned on the balustrade, reflecting how unfamiliar he, the dweller in towns, was with nature. He was surprised at his own delight, surprised to find some unknown chord struck, that vibrated wildly in response to the new call. Like a child he felt, that having wandered among strangers, finds

him suddenly face to face with his mother.

It grew dusky, and a keen wind from the mountain sprang up. Kwanichi deemed it wiser to seek his room. Listlessly he entered, but the first object, that met his eyes, set all his nerves quivering and his muscles became tense.

In the alcove, where his satchel had been laid, there was a wild lily, placed carelessly in a vase, so that, the stem inclining forward, the flower faced him, as it were.

The sensation, that Miya was in the room, was very strong upon Kwanichi. He looked round, but saw no one; the air was heavy with fragrance. This was no mere coincidence, he said to himself; the mysterious will of heaven was hidden in it—it was Karma, before which he must bow—there was no escape.

He approached and looked at the flower fearfully. How exactly it resembled the lily of his dream; the pure white petals fully opened, the overpowering fragrance and the dew still upon the leaves. Kwanichi, who had been almost happy but a few minutes ago, again felt the heavy mantle of his grief descend upon him—he bowed his head and hid his face in his hands.

“Sir; I will conduct you to the bath,” said a

womnn's voice beside him. Looking up he perceived one of the waitresses, and exclaimed :

"Oh! woman, will you, please, remove this flower."

"Don't you like lilies, Sir?" asked the girl in surprise, "I found this one in the garden today. It is very early for lilies, they won't be out for another month. It is very unusual for one to be out so early; so I broke it off, Sir, and put it in here, thinking our next guest would like to amuse himself with a little flower arranging."

"Yes, it is early for lilies, but take it away, the fragrance gives me a headache."

"It must have opened by mistake," said the girl, taking the flower out of the vase.

"Yes, indeed—a great mistake," murmured Kwanichi, as he followed her down to the bath house.

In the dim light, he saw another guest of the hotel in the water, who coldly answered his salutation, stepped out of the water hastily, and sat down in a corner of the room, his gleaming white back turned to Kwanichi. The latter regarded such behaviour with mistrust, for the customs of the bath-house are sociable. Decidedly the man was avoiding him; but why, seeing they were

strangers? The moment Kwanichi got out of the water, the stranger stepped into it—keeping his face averted, and splashing very quietly. He was slightly built and thin; he was evidently very shy—probably he was suffering from a mental disease, and had come up here to try the mineral baths. Kwanichi paid no more heed to him, and the man picked up his “yukata,” and went out.

Having nothing to do, Kwanichi spent a good hour in the hot, steaming bathhouse; and on returning to his room he found the candles lit, and his supper set on the little low table, beside which stood a brazier lest he should feel chilly. He had just lighted his pipe, when the waitress appeared with the dinner things, accompanied by the landlord who was voluble in his excuses over the poorness of the meal. It was so early in the season, they had not expected guests so soon, and nothing was ready. In a day or two the best of everything could be procured; he hoped the gentleman would stay a long time, and pardon him for the poor dinner he was setting before him to-night. He thanked for the tea-house money; sent the maid for some more bean soup, and with many compliments and excuses bowed himself out.

After he had gone, Kwanichi asked the maid,

who waited on him, how many guests were in the Inn.

“ Only one beside yourself, Sir ? ”

“ Is it gentleman I met in the bathhouse ? ”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ I think he is ill.”

“ No Sir, I think he is quite well.”

“ Does he talk to you ? ”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ Who talks more, he or I ? ”

“ He does not talk nearly as much as you, Sir.”

“ Aha ! then you think I am very talkative, do you ? ”

“ Oh ! no, I didn't mean that—I beg your pardon,—but the other gentleman is thinking a great deal, and he is impatiently expecting his companion to arrive.”

“ He looks very ill,” insisted Kwanichi.

“ Oh ! you are a doctor ! ” exclaimed the girl, at which, he burst out laughing :

“ No, no, indeed, I am no doctor ! Has he been staying here long ? ”

“ He only came yesterday ; from Tokio, he lives in Nihombashi.”

“ Then, I suppose he is a merchant.”

“ I can't tell you.”

Dinner being over Kwanichi politely expressed his thanks.

“It was very poor,” replied the maid, adding her excuses to those of the landlord. She left the room carrying the little table with her. Kwanichi flung himself down on the mats, and meditated on the loneliness of the spot, the isolation of the Inn, and how the noise of the wind and of the water made one think of Hōki—the Devil. In the next room but one, he heard his only fellow-guest tapping his pipe on the edge of the brazier. He wished he had been more sociable, and, pondering over his queer behaviour, and who and what his expected companion might be, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER LXII

The Companion.

AFTER breakfast the following morning, Kwan-ichi betook himself to the village, in pursuance of the business which had brought him to Shiobara. He carefully inspected the village as to its prosperity, and particularly inquired into the history and prospects of the Seikin-rō Inn. His business accomplished, he crossed the river, and climbed halfway up Mount Kijuroku to see Sumaki-no-taki, the hot waterfall. At noon, he returned to the Inn, very hot and tired, and, on his way to the bathhouse, met the shy guest of the evening before. The man again tried to avoid him, and turned away hoping Kwanichi would not see his face.

“An evil conscience,” thought the latter, “what deed has he done, that he cannot look a fellow-being in the face.” But a glance at the stranger, for his ruse was not successful, convinced Kwanichi that his suspicions were incorrect. The owner of so ingenuous and open a countenance would be incapable of a wicked deed. Why were his eyes so full of misery? why did his mobile lips

tremble.

A new "né-san" waited on Kwanichi at lunch, and here he plied with questions about the strange guest. She told him, that the man had gone out a moment ago without eating any lunch, and that he was very anxious at the non-arrival of his companion, whom he had expected the day before; also, that she had heard him say he must send off a telegram, to find out what was the matter.

"He must be very anxious," said Kwanichi, "we men have a great many things to worry us! Who can that companion of his be, that he worries so about him—ah! perhaps it is a woman! Do you know?"

"I don't know at all," and then, as Kwanichi sat pondering, his chopsticks in his hand, she added:

"It seems to make you anxious too—are you of a disposition that worries easily?"

"Yes, I am." smiling.

"If his companion turns out to be a male friend, or an old person it will be all right, but if it should be a beautiful young lady, you will feel dreadfully upset."

"What do you mean by "dreadfully upset?" asked Kwanichi, but the girl only laughed, and left the room without answering the question.

Kwanichi spent the afternoon roaming about the

hills, drinking in the pure mountain air and sniffing at the fragrant grasses. Like a bird, that had suddenly been set at liberty, he felt and could have sung for sheer lightness of heart. But twilight, that strange disturber of peace, robbed him of his happiness and with listless heavy steps, he retraced his way to the Inn.

"This quiet is all very well," he said petulantly, when he sat down to his evening meal. "but it is very lonely when one is the only guest here."

"Ah! that is your own fault, Sir, for coming to a mountain resort all alone." laughed the *né-san*.

"I will bear what you say, in mind and profit by it on a future occasion!"

"Why a future occasion? Why not summon *your companion* by telegram to-morrow?"

"If I did, it is only an old maid of fifty-four that would step out of her *kuruma*."

"Haha! how funny you are? But don't summon the *old* maid, it is the young one you want."

"I am sorry to tell you, that in my house there is no one but that old maid."

"Well, then you have the young one somewhere else."

"Ah! yes, there are a great many young maids 'somewhere else'"—

The Companion.

"Your story is very interesting, Sir."

"But on further inquiry I find, they all belong to someone else!"

"Oh! fie, that is not true! You should speak the truth, Sir."

"Call it what you like, but that is the fact of the matter: if I had a pretty companion at home, I should not come out to this lonely spot."

"Yes, indeed," sighed the girl, "it is a lonely spot."

"Not only lonely, but dreadful is it not? with its Hobgoblin's Rock, and its God of Wrath and all the other queer places. You must think me quite a fool, to come, all by myself, to such a place as this."

"Oh! no Sir, what nonsense!"

"Ah! but I am fool—a great fool—you will find me registered under that title in the hotel book!"

"Then, I hope I may be registered beside your name in smaller letters, as "a little fool—maid, Shiobara." Kwanichi laughed.

"You are a fine joker," he said, bowing to her.

"That is because I am a little fool," she rejoined laughing too. That night Kwanichi was unable to sleep, he tossed restlessly upon his pillow, and heard the clock strike ten, then eleven, then

twelve. The other guest had not yet returned and Kwanichi found his thoughts again and again occupied with this man of whom he knew nothing, and whose foolish behaviour, he told himself, was keeping others from their sleep. He wondered where he had gone, and whether he had fallen down one of those precipices into the whirling waters of the river.

He woke late. The sun was high in the heavens, and filled his room with golden light. In the passage a maid was polishing the floor.

"You look very sleepy," said Kwanichi to her.

"And I am sleepy," replied she, "for I had to sit up last night for the other gentleman."

"At what hour did he return?"

"He never came back at all," she answered in a tone of disgust.

Seeing the doors of the stranger's room open, Kwanichi sauntered down the verandah past them, pretending to be engrossed in the beautiful scenery, but, in reality, to see if there was anything curious or suspicious about the room. In this he was disappointed, for what he saw there was very ordinary.

In the alcove lay a red leather bag and a bundle wrapped in a light blue cloth; also two or three

The Companion.

newspapers, while on the clothes rack hung a silk lined coat, such as men wear in the Spring and Autumn, and, on the floor, near by, he saw a pair of dark blue stockings. From the hotel book he had ascertained that the man was a tailor of European clothes. Kwanichi felt rather ashamed of his suspicions and his curiosity—the latter he was in no wise able to control, and his thoughts flew impatiently towards the man's arrival, and the news he would bring about his companion's delay.

After the sombreness of night among the mountains, which is so dark and gloomy, that a disposition not cheerful and sanguine by nature, is often a prey to those haunting visions of the dark—sadness despair—after a night, during which one fancies the ghouls and goblins of the mountains and the eerie inhabitants of tree and river have held high revels—the day is doubly welcome. How the sunshine fills one's heart, chasing sad thoughts from their darkest recesses ; how the light breezes blow the cobwebs from the brain ; and the colours of the ever, changing sky tinge the mind with some of their beauty.

Basking in the sun, whose rays were brilliant as gold threads in a piece of finest brocade, Kwanichi enjoyed the fine music, made in the hills by the echo

of voices, and in the valley of wind and water ; comparing it in his mind to the ringing sound of innumerable gems. A sound of running footsteps made him turn his head. The *nésan* who had talked with him the evening before, rushed up to him full of excitement :

“ I say, Sir,—he has arrived, has arrived, come and see, Sir, quickly ! ”

“ Who has come ? ”

“ Never mind who, but come at once and see. ”

“ What is the matter—what is it ? ” demanded Kwanichi.

“ At the staircase, Sir..... ”

“ Oh ! it is the other guest returned. ”

The maid had rushed away, so Kwanichi's words were left ten yards behind her. In spite of his feigned indifference before the maid, he was almost as excited as she, and hurried along the verandah, as fast as his dignity would allow him.

Coming up the path, he saw, a man and a woman. The man he at once recognized as the nervous guest, although he wore a broad-brimmed felt hat to hide his face from curious eyes. The woman—or girl, for she looked not much over twenty—wore her hair in the unmarried women's style, and Kwanichi, at once, noticed a

comb of tortoiseshell and gold lacquer, and a large hairpin set, with a sardonyx surrounded by brilliant gems of various colours. Beneath her silk coat she wore a fine striped kimono of reddish brown crêpe, showing, when she walked, its lining of pale blue silk—a sash of Dutch figured satin was bound about her waist, and round her neck hung a gold chain. Though she held one sleeve half across her face, it might be seen that she was not powdered, and her lips owed their carmine to no *béni*. There was a little, languishing air about her, like a flower ready to shed its petals; and she was possessed of a beauty and a natural charm, infinitely attractive.

Seeing Kwanichi looking down at them, they hastened their steps and the girl bent her graceful head.

“That is never his wife!” said Kwanichi to himself.

CHAPTER LXIII.

A Lovers' Quarrel.

THE man and woman sat side by side, the one pressing close to the other, and talked in whispers. Said she :

“ You can have no idea, how troubled I have been, and it was by no means so easy to accomplish, as you imagined. I know, that you have been full of anxiety, but, your anxiety was nothing compared to mine. My heart is still beating loudly, and I jump at every sound, fearing they should yet overtake me.”

“ Don't think about that now, for the plan has been a great success, and here we are together.”

“ Yes, yes,” sighed the girl, pressing nearer, “ but, oh ! how I suffered the night before last. I never believed I should be successful, and how I had sufficient courage, to run away from home, I don't know. I think, it is owing to the “ karma ” binding us.”

“ That binding karma has reduced us to a sad strait, my dear one. I never imagined, it would lead to this—but, there is no use in struggling against a bad karma.”

The girl turned her face away, to hide the tears that rose to her eyes, and said :

“ There ! you are calling it “ bad karma ” again, but why is it a bad karma ? ”

“ Isn't *this* the result of a bad karma ? ”

“ No, no, no, ” was the vehement answer, “ you cold-hearted man. ”

“ What ! *I*—cold-hearted ! ”

“ Yes, *you* ! ”

“ Shizu dear, I don't think that it is for *you*, to reprove me for cold heartedness ! ”

“ I don't care, for you *are*. ”

“ What nonsense ! Tell me, at once, what you mean. ”

“ I mean, that it is your custom, to say “ bad karma ”, as often as you look at my face. I know perfectly well, without your driving it home, that the relationship between us is—bad karma. It is not only *you*, who have suffered in this affair ; I, too, have suffered more than words can say, and yet, whenever you speak, it is to cry out “ bad karma, bad karma ”, as though you were the only sufferer. Can you not imagine how painful it is to me, to hear this—painful under ordinary circumstances, but under *these*, almost intolerable ! It makes me think you regret.....and find me a

burden." She paused sobbing. Her lover persisted :

"It *is* bad karma,—I can't help that,—but, I don't regret. No, no."

"Alas, ! I don't care, even, if it is bad."

She paused weeping. The man watched her in silence, feeling it was useless to reason with her. Presently he put his hand on her sleeve, and said, gently :

"Shizu, dear Shizu."

"I know you are sorry I came," sobbed the girl, "I knew you hate it all—Where shall I turn for comfort?"

"Think, but a moment," was the reply, "and you will find your words are foolish. Should I have urged you to come, if there was any likelihood of my regretting this course? I am grieved that you call me cold-hearted, as though, I were a tradesman, dealing in love, and you, but a part of my merchandize!"

"It is not fair to speak to me, like that," cried the girl, drying her tears.

"You began it," retorted he.

"That was, because you seemed to regret, what we had done. Look at me, Sayama san,—I am sorry," The man turned his head, and looked

into her eyes, but said nothing.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Shizu.

"I am thinking of the Fate of you and me."

"Don't think of it!" she pleaded, and, when he turned away, heaving a deep sigh, she added:

"Please, don't sigh like that, it makes me so unhappy."

"You are twenty-two, are you not?"

"Yes, and you are twenty eight. What does that matter?"

"It was summer—do you remember—and you were nineteen."

"Ah! well do I remember—it was this very month—and I wore an 'awase'; the evening was warm, and the moon was reflected in the pond—we stood on the brink together; yes, I was nineteen."

"It seems like yesterday—what a short three years."

"It is like dream."

"A sweet dream!"

"O'Shizu!"

"Dear Sayama!"

They held each other by the hand, and O'Shizu pressed her face against his breast. Thus they sat for a long time. Sayama was the first to break

the silence :

“ All these things, come to pass, according to the “ karma ” of each, but, if that fellow had not been in the way, they would have come to pass more easily and more naturally. It is evident that the “ divine lot,” which fell to our share, at the temple fortuneteller’s, the other day, would have been realized, and we should have come together at the proper time. All my plans for the future would have worked out well, had not that fellow stood in our path, * “ trying to tear paper the wrong way.” Thus much harm has been done, which cannot be mended—mostly to you, and through my fault.”

“ If fault there be, it is mutual,” corrected Shizu softly.

“ No, if I had been a little wiser, the results would have been different. It is a grave fault of mine, that I am unable to act boldly, and strike quickly, and through this fault, I have brought you to this strait, and for your sufferings, too, I am responsible. In spite of this, you have always been kind and tender to me—and I am very, very grateful to you.”

* to try and force things out of their natural lines or issues. Japanese paper will tear only *one* way.

A Lovers' Quarrel.

“How glad I am to hear you say that! Your words about “bad karma” always fill me with alarm, and I began to fear that not only was I a trouble to you, but, that you had repented your connection with me, as a girl, with whom it is better to have nothing to do. With these thoughts in my mind, I spoke unkind words to you, for which, I beg you to forgive me. It is “bad karma” as you say, but, forget it, for is it not also the thing we have desired?”

“It is well dear; and better far, than to have parted with you, like a living tree torn asunder!”

“Parting! The thought makes me tremble. There was no word of our parting, till he came, and stood in our path. How that word ‘parting’ was dinned into my ears at home! What long lectures did my mother read me! That we are here together, is because of that fellow—he drove me to it. May a curse rest upon him! And when I am dead, may my avenging soul haunt him, until he is driven, by horror, to his death.”

“What was he like—the fool?” inquired Sayama.

“A fool, a big fool! to think that a woman, who loves another man, would give herself to him! Each time he came, I received him with looks of

displeasure, which he was too stupid to understand. Don't you think, he must have been a fool, to pursue me, in spite of that, and then, to stand in the way of my love? And, I not only thoroughly hated him, but, I so resented all his actions, that I bestowed on him, my last present, before leaving this world, I mean, I broke his head!"

"Wha...a...t! How did you do that?"

"Ever since the day you left, he has pursued me ceaselessly. At last, I got very frightened, and pretending to be ill, I left my work and went home. There he followed me, immediately, and I was unable to get rid of him. Then, I saw, what had happened. He had seen my mother, and been approved of by her, and this visit, to my home, was a præ-arranged thing. Mother was so gushing to him, that I was perfectly ashamed; and he took advantage of her attitude, and her loathsome flattery, to assume the rôle of master of the house, commanding us to get him a bath, and cool the beer, and so on, never moving from his seat!

"Never shall I forget that evening! I had arranged to meet you; and I did not see how I could get away, for my mother would not let me out of her sight, that night. She had determined

I should accept him, and I had made up my mind I would not do so. I was thinking of you, all the time ; and the more I looked at *him*, the more I hated him. I got so desperate at last, that I determined, (seeing it was too late by then, to reach you,) to wait, till all were in bed, and then go out and drown myself. But I remembered Tanko and her Mother, who relied upon me for this and that, and I knew my death would bring trouble upon them. So I hesitated, and found, I *could* not do it.

And how long, do you think, he stuck to me?—Till two o'clock in the morning, and even then, we got rid of him with difficulty !

CHAPTER, LXIV

The Importunate Suitor.

“**T**HE next day, Mother lectured me on my undutiful behaviour, and told me, I was to hesitate no longer, and, that I had got to accept him promptly. This lecture lasted half the day, and was chiefly composed of eulogies on herself, for having brought me up,—oh! how sick I am of the phrase: “my kindness and benefaction in bringing you up!”—and threats and scoldings for me. In the end, she kicked me for having answered undutifully. Well, I didn’t care, then if she kicked and beat me too! You see, although I have worked hard and given her all my earnings, she shows no consideration for me. She is so greedy for money, she would make me work day and night, if she could; thinking only of herself, and denying me every little pleasure. I am not a money making machine, and I am not a slave whom she can bully as she likes.

“I am willing to work hard for her, if she will only be reasonable; but, when it comes to her trying to divide us, and forcing me to sell myself, to a man I hate, for his money, then, I protest.

The Importunate Suitor.

And so, she calls me disobedient, and stupid, and kicks me.

“Do you wonder, I grew hot with anger, and determined to run away there and then? But I had no luck. *He* arrived, and I was forced to go out with him. He would not go home till very late, and made me drink cup after cup of saké. As I was desperate, and he was insistent, I drunk as many cups as he offered, though I hate wine. I believe, he hoped to intoxicate me; but though my head felt queer, I showed no sign of having drunk too much.

“At the end, he began to talk in his usual odious manner, and grew more and more familiar. I was very frightened, and I spoke to him plainly. Then he became frantic, and began to hurl ‘poisonous phrases’ at me, calling me a dirty shop-keeper. I retorted boldly; he threw out more insults, and, at last, he said I could never free myself from him, because he had already “bound me,” to become his wife, with money. I replied: I am sorry for you; you must be blind, for what you have “bound,” was not I, but my mother. Thereupon he swore at me, and seized me by the collar to drag me down on the floor. I was so frightened and desperate, I hardly knew what I

was doing, for I seized a dish which stood on the mats and hit him on the forehead, between the eyebrows. The blood gushed out and streamed all over his face. I thought, if I stayed there, there would be more trouble, for some people, hearing the noise had come in, so I ran out, and escaped to the house of Tanko's mother. She had just returned from a journey, so I was lucky to find her—it was long after ten o'clock—and she promised to keep me there the night, for it was too late to catch a train.

“Then she dressed my hair for me, and I told her I had to hide myself, and I left full instructions concerning Tanko. What a good woman that Mother is! She was so anxious about me, and did not speak of herself and *her* troubles at all. She *is* kindhearted! That she and my mother belong to the same species, is difficult to believe. If I had had a *real* mother, I should not have known so much trouble. She would have been kind to me, and glad to let me marry a man like yourself.

“She was greatly distressed, when she heard I was going into the country. She begged for my address, so that she might come and see me, while on one of her business trips, and so, with tears we

parted!"

"There must be quite a commotion at your house, on account of your flight," said Sayama, reflectively.

"A great deal."

"In that case we must not delay too long."

"The sooner the better," sobbed the girl.

"Poor O'Shizu!"

Poor lovers! they embraced each other, as though they embraced an endless sorrow.

In the meanwhile, Kwanichi, sat in the next room, and let his thoughts revolve around the couple, who so interested him. By a process of elimination, he tried to arrive at some conclusion, as to who they were, and what they were at the Inn together for. The woman was probably at the bottom of their difficulties. Women usually are at the bottom of every crime, sin or difficulty, was his harsh conclusion.

Yes! That was it: the man had probably committed some crime on her account, and had got to suffer for it—and she had come up here to prove to him, that she, really, was not in the least to blame for it. But stop; she seemed to share his sorrow. Was there such a thing as true love after all? It is certain, they were not married. There

was the girl, geisha style of dress—could he have stolen her and were both in hiding?

Then, as usual, his thoughts flew to Miya, and angrily, he flung himself down on his couch.

Through the thin partition, he could hear the chink of cups—whispers—then sobs. At ten o'clock Kwanichi went to sleep,—nor did he wake again till midnight.

CHAPTER LXV

Swanichi intervenes.

AT half past eleven, when all the house was quiet, and the lights out, Sayama turned up the lamp, blew the charcoal to a glow, and said :

“Bring the saké.”

O'Shizu silently arranged the dishes on the table, placed the saké bottle in hot water, and the pair, then, changed their everyday for the ceremonial dress. As the girl tied her sash, it knotted.

“A lucky sign !” whispered Sayama.

“Ah ! I am glad ; I have been so afraid my courage might fail me at the last ; now, I know, all will be well. Listen to the rain !”

“You were always fond of the rain ; it has come to bid you farewell.”

“Dear, let us exchange rings,” begged Shizu, as they sat down beside the brazier. She slipped off her diamond ring and handed it to him. He seized her slender fingers, and placed on one his heavy signet ring.

“The farewell cup,” he murmured, and Shizu, with trembling hands, filled the bowls. The so

familiar action seemed suddenly fraught with a deep significance, and she wondered why it had never appeared solemn to her before.

“One thing, I do regret, Sayama,” she said: “it is that I die as a singer and geisha, instead of as your wife—even if only your wife for a day. I want to thank you, for all you have been to me, could I but find words in which to express all I feel. I meant to be such a good wife to you, no work would have been too hard, no command but I would cheerfully have carried it out. My step-mother’s spite against you made it impossible for me to do anything at all for you. Well, it has all been like a bubble on the water—and now, the bubble breaks.”

“Don’t, don’t say such sad things,” pleaded her lover, “let us be content, that we may die together, in joy, you and I.” His lips touched her ear:

“Are you ready, O’Shizu?”

“I am ready, Sayama.

He drew from his crêpe purse a folded paper and poured the contents—a white powder—into the two cups.

Each filled the cup for the other. O’Shizu, with closed eyes, invoked Buddha:

“ Namuamidabutsu, Namuamidabutsu,”

She then looked up at her lover; they lifted the cups to their lips.

At that instant, the doors were flung violently apart, the girl screamed, and dropped her cup, while a voice like thunder, shouted :

“ What is this you are going to do? Speak, what is it? ”

Sayama stared, bewildered, a moment, and then said slowly :

“ Oh ! it is *you* ! ”

“ Yes, yes, it is I,” came the impatient reply, “ and I want to know what this is that you are doing. Yes, I will apologize for my intrusion later on.”

There was no answer, and the girl shrank behind her lover.

“ There must be some desperate reason for so desperate an act,” continued the intruder, “ tell me, why you felt you could live no longer? ”

No answer.

“ Is it because you could not marry her? ”

Sayama nodded.

“ And why not? ”

Again no answer.

“ If you tell me, I may be able to help you. I want to help you; but, if you are beyond help,

I give you my word of honour, that I will not hinder you in your resolve to die. I will even be your "kaishaku," and help you carry out the death-blow. Still, let me first see if I can help you, for I have had a strong presentiment that I was sent here for that purpose. I assure you, it is not idle curiosity that prompts my question."

Scarcely knowing what he said, Sayama stammered :

"Thanks for your kindness."

"Will you tell me your story? Or wait, I will first tell you who I am. My name is Hazama Kwanichi; I am a sort of lawyer; I live in Kojimachi, Tokio. I am sure that it is by Buddha's providence we have been thrown together; that two lives may not be lost to the world, and that I may learn—" he stopped.

"What can I tell you first?" Sayama had found his voice.

"Why you might begin, with the reason, as to why you two could not be married."

"Yes; but then, I must first confess my disgrace. I stole a big sum of money from my master and employer. He is a paper merchant in Tokio and I was his manager. My name is Sayama Motosuke. "She," pointing to O'Shizu,

who, at this point, crept forward, and bowed shyly, "she is "Aiko" of the Kashiwaya geisha house, and—and a gentleman wanted to redeem her—and she was obliged to receive him,—and—and I was prosecuted for the money I had embezzled. I knew, I should be sent to prison, unless I killed myself first. I was unable to help O'Shizu, and so, finding ourselves in this hopeless strait, we determined to die together."

"I see. Then it is all really a question of money. As to your embezzlement, I suppose it could be privately settled, if you could find the amount. And, as to the lady, I suppose we could just as easily redeem her as any one else. What is the amount of your debt?"

"About 3,000 yen."

"And the redemption money?"

"About eight hundred yen."

"Three thousand, eight hundred yen? And if you have this money you need not die?"

When it comes down to a matter of arithmetic, it seems our lives are not worth very much, was Hazama's thought. These two poor creatures are worth nineteen hundred yen apiece. He smiled at them, a trifle sadly.

"Then, it certainly isn't worth your while to

die. I think, I can find you the sum of three or four thousand yen, easily enough. Can you tell me the details of your case?

What a happy moment for the two despairing lovers! They could not even, at that moment, consider whether this stranger would prove true or false;—both felt like a willow tree, whose branches, heavy and bowed down with rain, is seized by the refreshing wind, and dried, and lightly swayed in the sunshine again.

CHAPTER LXVI

Sayama's story.

“**Y**OU have spoken such kind and encouraging words to us, whom you never saw before, that I will boldly tell you the whole of our sad, and not at all creditable tale. I am, indeed, heartily ashamed to disclose it. Well, sir, as I said before, I embezzled three thousand yen of my Master's money. I had first borrowed a little money to pay for some of my pleasures and amusements, and finding I could not replace this sum, I borrowed money from various people in order to do so. This was so easy a method that I continued it, till the amount of money I owed, swelled, to alarming proportions, and I suddenly found no one would trust me, or give me credit. Then I began to speculate; I lost my investments; I borrowed, or rather stole some more money from my employer, and speculated more wildly—until every sen was gone.

“These matters became known to my master and he summoned me to him and told me, that on account of my past services he would be lenient and forgive me—upon *one* condition.

“ Now, he had living in his house, his wife’s niece, whom he had some time ago proposed as a wife for me. At the time, I put him off, under some pretext or other, and he now brought the proposal forward again—in plain words, if I married the girl he would forgive the debt.

It was a great kindness on his part, and I was wrong, in every way, to refuse it—but I could not bring my mind to accepting his offer. Hereupon, he was very angry, and declared, that unless I restored the three thousand yen, he would bring an action against me. A period for reflection he granted me, and then sent a confidential messenger, to say, that he had no wish to ruin my life and prospects by branding me with a criminal record, that I had better do, as he suggested. I stood out obstinately against him.”

“ Ah ! there you were wrong.”

“ Yes, true. On no point was I in the right. I left a letter to thank my master for his kind intentions, for, I had made up my mind to kill myself. In the meanwhile the redemption question for O’Shizu came up. Her mother, who is not her real mother at all, is a very cruel and avaricious woman, and treats O’Shizu almost inhumanly. She looks upon her as a machine, out of which she

squeezes as much money as she can. She knew of my relation to her daughter, and countenanced it, until she knew I was in pecuniary difficulties. Then she abused me to my face and behind my back, and lectured O'Shizu ceaselessly about caring for me. About a year ago, a gentleman appeared, who fell in love with Shizu, and proposed to redeem her. Do you know the Tomiyama Bank in Shitaya; he is the director."

"Eh! what? what do you say?" ejaculated Hazama.

"Do you know Tomiyama Tadatsugu?"

"Tomiyama Tadatsugu!" burst out Hazama in a voice that betrayed all the hatred he felt at the sound of that accursed name. He gazed at the shrinking couple, who wondered what this outburst might mean. Recovering himself he asked in a more natural tone:

"And is this the man who would redeem O'Shizu san?"

"Yes, it is he."

"And you refused to be bought by him?"

"I refused," replied the girl.

"But you were his mistress for a year?"

"No, never; never"; flashed she angrily, "I was summoned to wait on him at a certain restaurant

—I have loved no man but Sayama,—I may be a geisha," she continued sobbing, "but I have had no lover but Sayama!" Hazama stared at her, and slowly his eyes filled, and as the first tear splashed onto his hand, he cried out:

"Oh! excellent woman! Then you would really rather lose your life than be faithless to your love?"

To the amazement of the lovers he bowed his head and wept.

When he had recovered he said:

"Yes, that is what a woman should be; nothing less than utterly faithful and true to one love, no matter how hard the way. In this crooked and perfidious world, I have never before met a woman like you. Have I not reason for tears, tears of gladness?"

"I am happier to-night, than I have been for years. But tell me some more about Tomiyama."

"He came very often and used to buy my time for the whole day, so that I was obliged to be in constant attendance on him. Then he made his proposal, which I, at first, politely refused. You know, he considers himself a great beau, and thinks himself very clever. He is, also, always talking about his wealth and how he can do this

and that. "I can pay a thousand yen for that." he used to say; or: "What would you do if I offered you ten thousand yen?" Everybody calls him "the Flarer," for his vainglorious speeches. He kept on proposing to me and I was obstinate in refusing, so, at last, he went to my Mother, and they must have come to some private agreement, for from that day, she lost no opportunity of trying to separate me from Sayama-san. It was then, for the first time, I felt the hardship and indignity of a geisha's trade. I awoke from a pleasant dream and began to hate my life, and wondered how I could escape from it. At this point Tomiyama offered to redeem me."

"And what was he going to do after that?"

"Well, he told me his wife was always ill; lying on her bed all day, and childless and good-for-nothing, and that he would get a separation from her and make me his wife instead." Hazama was startled:

"Do you really believe he would?" "He is such braggart one cannot depend on him;" replied the girl, "but it is true that his wife is ill and that he is not happy at home. Then came Sayama's difficulties, and my one idea was to save him. I wanted to apply to Tomiyama for the

three thousand yen, and if he consented to give them, I should have gone to him for a while—it would have been like a terrible nightmare, and then run away and joined Sayama. But Sayama said it would be swindling.”

“He was right; it would have been very bad swindling.”

“And embezzling would be the smaller crime of the two.” added Sayama. “How could I consent to be saved by such a mean trick. Better far to die together than to live in the knowledge of having allowed one’s—wife, to sell herself.”

“And that is your story, the story of a true and faithful love! Let me do what I can to help you. The few thousand yen will be easy to procure. To you, O’Shizu, I say that your love for Sayama is *your* greatest treasure, and *his* greatest treasure; guard it with every means in your power. There is very little love that is real in this world, I have found; but where it is, follows happiness beyond conception.”

He rose and silently left the room.

Sayama and O’Shizu gazed at each other, bewilderment giving place in their eyes to happiness. Who was this man who had turned the poison into a healing balm? And they were alive

and all was well !

The eight times repeated cock-crow broke the stillness of the early dawn. The lamp had burned low, and through the chinks and cracks of the shutters, the light crept in. The dark star, which had threatened the two lives, was about to burst into a glorious sun. "Namuamidabutsu," breathed O'Shizu, and she gazed with tender eyes at an insect, that lay dead in the cup she would have drunk, but for that marvellous intervention.

CHAPTER LXVII

Miya's Diary.

THOUGH I have never in my life prayed fervently to Buddha or to God, I, now, pray with all my heart, that these words may be read by you. In exchange for so great a favour, I am willing to surrender my life to the gods, and will never complain that my days on earth were shortened. I know that you still hate me ; in spite of this, I beg you to read these lines, written by an unhappy woman, who died by her own hand, in expiation of her fault.

When I was allowed to see your face again, all the words, that I had prepared for the last ten years, were choked back, and I had only tears, and unutterable sorrow and yearning to give you. I would, now, that I had been able to speak and to make you speak to me. The only moment, I carry, of that morning, is your sad, wan face, which is forever before my eyes.

That you could have altered so much, was a terrible shock to me. Night after night, cruel dreams of you, besiege me, and I gaze trembling on your ravaged countenance. Your anger with

Miha's Diary.

a guilty woman I fully expected, but that our parting would be so bitterly disappointing, I did not divine. I returned home more full of grief than ever; my head and my heart ached; indeed, my heart was all but broken. I could neither eat nor sleep; at the least word I choked with sobs; the most trivial sights brought tears to my eyes. For four days I suffered unspeakable torments, and then, my weak frame succumbed, and till to-day I have lain sick unto death. I know I cannot live; my life is being dragged from me into that dark corner, where lurks death. Would that I could die, my head upon your lap, at peace at last. But I have sinned too much to make me worthy of such a death; so, before I faint away, I offer up this, my one and only prayer: "May these lines be read by you, even though you hate me, that you may see my sincere repentance, my silent suffering, and my love for you."

I am sorry that you never opened one of my letters, after our meeting in Viscount Tazumi's garden, for therein I set forth at length my thoughts after our parting at sad Atami; also my meeting with Arao-san, whom, I found so changed. I cannot touch upon these subjects now, for it would be too painful, so I will only write what

occurs to me at the moment.

I should so like to know a little more of your ways and means of life. You must have passed through much hardship and many difficulties, in the rough waves of the world. Still, I found you free from cares, and in no difficulties; this is a comfort in all my sorrow. I know you have had your share of hardship, while I have lived a life of suffering. Even the crows and sparrows I envy, even the plants in the garden. Prisoners, who may not see the light of day, live in hope of their acquittal; for me there has been no hope; I doubt if even death can release me from the pain, I am doomed perhaps to bear forever.

As for Tomiyama, I have served him for ten years, each year feeling my hate increase, until I have completely alienated him. For three years now, we have lived apart. Arao blamed me; he said my thoughts of you were infidelity to Tomiyama. But since I am a fool, for only as a fool could I have been faithless to you, how could I, a fool, have learned loyalty to him? And this fool was kidnapped from you by another, and no one pitied her, when she was flung weeping upon the uttermost marge of the farthest sea, out of sight of the sky of her home! Can you not pity me?

Miya's Diary.

Is the fault of a fool a more serious offence than the fault of the wise ?

And now, I must summon all my courage to speak to you of a matter, that lies heavily upon my heart. Did the world treat you so devilishly that you, a man of such noble qualities and so gentle a character, should have chosen that one trade out of so many ? Am I a fool, that I am utterly unable to understand it ? Though heaven and earth fell, I would have sworn that you could not have so soiled your hands.

We have one life, and of it we can make a gem, or a common brick. Return to your former self and the jewel will still shine. At present you are smirching your soul, and the excellent character you have, with the dust and dirt of a polluted world. Ah ! had I not left you, this would never have been. Why, oh ! why did I marry Tomiyama ? I cannot understand it. The iron hand of Fate must have pushed me, from a good, into an evil course. It had been better, if, in your fierce anger, you had killed me, rather than allowed me life, and such misery. Oh ! why did you not drag me by force into some mountain fastness, where we should be happy still ? Why are we not walking now on the moonlit shore of Atami ?

The Gold Demon.

If you could forgive perhaps we might! Ah! foolish thought! but it makes my heart leap with joy, and my body thrill and tremble.

I have a few treasures with which I will never part. They are three photographs of you, and to look at them carries me back ten years and for a while I am free from pain. The one I like best, I wonder if you remember it, is a picture, taken in profile, you look up, and are smiling. It is growing oh! so faint, but it does not matter, I shall not be here to see it much longer. My Mother has my will; I have asked here to place the three pictures, beneath my head, in the coffin.

.....A certain woman possessed a piece of unique brocade, and, as it was of no use to her in the hottest season, she was stupid enough to lend it to another person, who refused to return it, no matter how much the woman begged and prayed for it. The Autumn passed and the Winter came, and the woman was reduced to poverty, and thought with ever-increasing anxiety of her beautiful brocade. But, by this time, she did not even know into whose hands it had passed. One day, she chanced to meet a beautiful woman, and lo! and behold! she was dressed in the long-

Miha's Diary.

lost material. How rich and beautiful it was! It hung like a glory upon the other woman's shoulders, the woman, who did not know, that its real owner stood so close beside her. And she, who had so rashly lent it, though she knew that through her own fault it was lost to her, could not help hating and envying the woman, who displayed the beauties of that old brocade.

During my visit to you I met a lady at your house, who said, she was a relative of yours and came everyday to help you in your household. I trust my coming to you has not caused any serious trouble.

I have so much more to write, and however much I may write, it is difficult to end. I have left some big things unsaid, and written much that is worthless. It is four o'clock in the morning, I will stop here and write but the name that is dear to me.....Hazama.

To-morrow is your birthday, and I shall make a little feast for you. Will it bring joy or sorrow? May to-morrow bring you every happiness. This is the only hope I can entertain, while yet I live.

The Gold Demon.

From a foolish woman, to one from whom she is parted, and who is so dear, so dear to her.

The twenty-fifth day of May.

CHAPTER LXVIII

O'Shizu and Kwanichi.

THE roses were everywhere in bloom, and the breeze, that danced in Kwanichi's room that summer afternoon, was fragrant with their perfume. It danced, and lifted high the thin, trailing yards of a manuscript, casting a portion of it over Kwanichi's shoulder, and then winding it round his neck. With an angry gesture he pulled down the encircling parts, and then, tore them into pieces. It was Miya's Diary, which, with difficulty, stealthily and secretly, she had had conveyed to his house; and now, in spite of his vows never to open a letter of hers again, he had read it. He was asking himself why he had done so. The letter affected him deeply, whether he would or no. He did not like to be moved in this way, he told himself angrily; everything, that day, had combined against his calm, and peace of mind: the fragrance from the garden, and the sight of the flaming pomegranate blossoms stirred him strangely. Kwanichi seized the trailing letter,—it was four yards long, the length of a woman's sash,—and stepped into the garden. Here he

tore it up into tiny pieces, and then, overcome with a sudden lassitude, as after some violent labour, leaned against an ilex tree.

Presently a young woman appeared on the verandah, her hair exquisitely arranged in the "marumage," the married woman's style. She tucked her long sleeves out of the way, and shook some water from her snow-white arms. On perceiving Kwanichi she smiled gaily, and cried :

"Master, the bath is ready !"

Now this pretty young woman was none other than O'Shizu, the only person who could charm Kwanichi from his melancholy.

She had constituted herself his devoted slave, waiting upon him from morning till evening.

Now she was ready to escort him to the bath, to assist him into and out of his clothes ; arrange his looking glass, and perform numberless little services. Her husband too, Sayama, who lived with Kwanichi must never be neglected, and between the two, she felt as if New Year's Day and All Soul's Day had fallen together, as the saying goes, so busy was she all day.

Just now she was fanning Kwanichi on the verandah ; he was hot after his bath. After watching him for a while, she said :

"You look dreadfully tired; what is the matter with you?" "Nothing particular is the matter; I do not feel very cheerful." "Take a little beer!" suggested O'Shizu, "I have put some down the well, and it is nice and cool."

"Aha! That is for Sayama-san I suppose," smiled Kwanichi. "No, indeed," burst out the little wife, really vexed, "Sayama knows his position better than to help himself to your beer." "What nonsense!" replied Kwanichi, "tell him not to be so punctilious. Are we not all one family? Does he not feel at home here?"

"Yes, oh! yes;" cried O'Shizu, the tears springing to her eyes; "You have made this a real home to us. But now, let me get you some ice and some summer oranges, and here are some apples too."

With a light step she tripped off, and, in a little while, returned with a tray, followed by the old woman servant, bearing ice and beer. These O'Shizu arranged daintily on a small table in front of Kwanichi, and dismissing the old woman, poured out a foaming glass of beer, and then began to peel the apples and oranges.

"You don't expect me to eat and drink alone, do you?" questioned Kwanichi.

“ Oh ! but I could not drink beer with you ! ” laughed the girl ; “ you had better take two or three glasses at once, then the beer will be effectual, and you will feel better, for indeed you look very ill.”

“ I am always ill, no wonder I look ill ; and no amount of beer will cure me. However I will take another glass.” O'Shizu filled the glass he held out to her, and clapped her hands to see him drink it at one mouthful.

“ This world is a very mysterious place ! ” began Kwanichi ; “ Here are you, two entire strangers, quite unknown to me a few weeks ago, living under my roof, as though you were part of my family. Mr. Sayama is such a pleasant companion, and *you* treat me with such genuine kindness, that I have come to look upon you as relatives. What a strange happening ! I hope we may continue the friendship all our lives. But I am a usurer, hated by everybody, one whom people call ‘ devil ’ and ‘ dragon ’ ; and I feel how loathsome you must find it to live beneath my roof. Moreover, it is the nature of a usurer’s trade to make money by draining other people’s hearts’ blood, so to speak ; and you must, naturally, wonder what my object was in paying

for you, total strangers, so large a sum of dearly-valued money. Are you not asking yourselves all the time what was the wicked object I had in view?"

"Do have another glass of beer, Master?"

"Well, O'Shizu, what do you really think?"

"We owe our lives to you, and they belong to you alone; you must do as you like with us; Sayama says the same."

"Thank you. I earn my money in no delicate way, I tell you, and I earn it quickly. To help you, was a whim of mine, as it is now my wish to see you established again in your class. I have had no thought of reward, or way by which I might profit. I want you to feel re-assured on this point." With a sigh he continued: "Still, as you know what my trade is, you will, probably, listen to my words, as though they were the devil's own promise. In coming here, you have place of yourselves under a bad tree, as the proverb has it."

"Oh! sir, what have we done to displease you so?" cried O'Shizu, in real alarm; "never, since we came here, have you spoken like this! we are careless people, and may have offended through our carelessness; please, tell me, so that we may

please you better in future."

"No, no, it is nothing; and I am wrong to talk so foolishly;" replied Hazama soothingly; "You have been both attentive and kind, quite like real relatives, and I am grateful to you both. As I told you the other day, I have neither friends nor relations. There is no one in the world, who cares whether I take medicine, when I am ill; or who cares if I am ill or well. That you should have tried to cheer me, this afternoon, has done me a great deal of good; yours is a kindness by whose power even a dead tree might bloom again. I have spoken the truth to you, in token, whereof, and of our friendship, let us drink a glass together."

CHAPTER LXIX

O'Shizu's Views on Love.

WHEN the next bottle of beer was opened, Kwanichi reverted to the topic, that was uppermost in his mind.

"Now surely," he said, "a man like myself, a usurer, who, in order to wrest money from people, will, be they friend or foe, trample upon their very faces, must be liable to suspicion, when he acts, as I acted towards you. A day will come, when my reasons will be disclosed; when you will see what sort of man I really am. When the mystery is cleared up you will not be surprised, if I assist ten or twenty people, like yourselves, with all the money I possess. This sounds to you conceited and bombastic; but please, remember, that this is a confidential talk. You look very pensive, let us stop talking, if I have made you sad."

"Tell me your story!" begged O'Shizu; "Ever since we came here, Sayama and I have wondered why you look so gloomy, why you have so little life in you. We felt anxious."

"Since you came, you have put fresh life into my surroundings."

"What must you have been like before?"

"Just like one who is dead!"

"What can be the matter with you?"

"It is a disease, I have."

"What sort of disease?"

"I can't help feeling gloomy; that is my disease."

"Why are you gloomy?"

"Owing to my disease."

"What disease is it?"

"It is that I am gloomy."

"That is nonsense; that is no answer!" replied O'Shizu, "we should go on with this dialogue forever, if you did not answer reasonably."

"I can't be reasonable, I have had too much beer."

"Please, don't lie down, you will go to sleep if you do so. I want an answer to my question." O'Shizu came round to Kwanichi and pushed him into a sitting posture.

"I wonder, what Tomiyama Tadatsugu would say if he saw you now," said Kwanichi irrelevantly.

"Bah! don't mention his name, it makes me shudder," exclaimed the girl.

"Makes you shudder? but why? It is not *his*

fault, that you hate him so."

"It *is* his fault; and it is a fault that he is alive at all!" cried O'Shizu violently. "Why should *he* have crossed my path? Are there no agreeable people among our forty million compatriots?"

"I meet no agreeable people!"

"And it is a horrid crowd of people, like Tomiyama, who go about the world doing harm, so that there is no peace for anyone in this earth! Why are such horrid, abominable people born?"

"Dear me! This is an unlucky day for Tomiyama!"

"It is very foolish to speak of him at all. Talk of something else."

"Very well; which is capable of deeper affection, a man or a woman?"

"Surely a woman—" began O'Shizu.

"You can't depend upon her?" interrupted Kwanichi.

"Give me a proof of *that*!" exclaimed O'Shizu.

"Ah! *you* are an exception! Other women are not like you. They are shallow-minded, and so they are changeable. Faithfulness or unfaithfulness do not mean much to them."

"It is true," agreed the woman, "that we are shallow-minded, but, if a woman *really* loves, she

cannot change, and she cannot be unfaithful. In real love a woman is as strong and true as a man."

"Yes, there have been cases like that. But, tell me, when love proves to have been unreal, whose fault is it, the man's or the woman's?"

"That is a very difficult question. The fault may be on both sides. It depends on the woman's character, and above all on her age!"

"Her age? What do you mean?"

"We, geisha, usually classify love into "sight-love," "humour love," and "root love," the three modes of women's love. The "sight-love," is formed after very brief acquaintance, in fact, usually at sight, and is very common among young girls, who have not yet outgrown the *red collar. They go by a man's appearance, and there is neither bitter nor sweet in their love. Then, from seventeen to twenty-two or three, they begin to understand something about love, and as they are no longer attracted by merely a handsome face, or well-cut clothes, they think they know a great deal about it. The love, *they* feel, is "humour love," for, it is pleasant manners, an amiable temper, a trick of speech, or something

(*worn till 15 or 16 years of age).

of that sort, by which they are won. They are still fickle ; for they love *this* man, and then, *that* man for a while ; they do not yet understand the deepest love. This, indeed, is rarely understood before the age of twenty-four and twenty-five. It is then, that woman first tastes *real* love. Her mind is, by that time, fairly settled ; she has learned something of the world, and is able to judge for herself. Outside appearances no longer influence her entirely ; she has become serious. Nine woman out of ten do not change their minds at this stage of their life. As the song says : " While they yet wear the red collar and * Shimada, ' young women know naught of love ; but if an old maid pours out her love, it will go hard with the man, she dotes on."

" Very interesting ! Sight love, humour love, root love ! " Love depends on age ! Yes, yes, there is something in it."

" You seem very much struck with the idea."

" Yes, indeed, I am greatly struck."

" Then, I am sure, it has reminded you of some one."

" Ha ! ha ! ha ! why ?"

(Shimada : young woman's style of hairdressing).

"You agree that I am right then."

"Ha! ha! ha! Right? in what way?"

"I know, I am right," said O'Shizu, turning her wide-open eyes, on Kwanichi's flushed face. Certainly the beer had done its work. O'Shizu rose and went to the door.

"And if you were right, ha! ha! ha! what then?" he called, as she passed out. For a long time after, she heard his laugh re-echoing through the little house.

CHAPTER LXX

The End of Miya's Diary.

I DO not know why my unworthy life has been prolonged till now. Seven days ago, I hoped, the end had come, but alas! I am still here, and each day passes more wearily, more painfully, than the preceeding one.

For the sake of avoiding suspicion, I have called in a doctor, but I do not take his medicines, I throw them all away. I am sure my disease can be found in no book of medicine, although the doctor, unhesitatingly called it hysteria. I confess I was angered to hear it called by so common a name.

By day, my head is heavy, my heart oppressed, all my senses seem benumbed, so that it worries me to see, or speak to anyone. I am, therefore, confined to my room, expecting daily to draw my last breath, and feeling the life within me, grow weaker and weaker, as the weary hours drag slowly past. At night my condition is quite different; a heavy weight is lifted from me, my mind is clear, and I do not feel the

need of sleep at all. Need I tell you, upon whom, all through the night, my thoughts are concentrated?

These thoughts, though I would think no others, are yet a torment. I am like one, in a flame of fire, seeking for water. If this agony does not soon end, by my own hand I will end my life. There is but one thing that has kept me from this course. I have never been able to persuade myself, to give up the hope of seeing you, before I die. Good people, have, since the days of old, oftimes been vouchsafed the vision of Buddha before they died; and may I not hope, through the power of my love, to see you once, ere I close my eyes in death?

My mother-in-law paid me a visit yesterday; partly to inquire after my health, partly on Tadatsugu's account. He is never at home, nowadays, is always amusing himself elsewhere. An unpleasant report concerning him crept into the newspaper, and my mother-in-law, having seen it, came here to inquire into the matter. She gave me very good and kind advice; and she told me that Tadatsugu's dissolute ways were chiefly due to the unhappy condition of his home. She knew all about our affairs: I don't know

The end of Miha's Diary.

who had told her. I might have answered her rudely, so that she despaired of seeing me do better, and caused me to be divorced ; but that is more than I dare hope for. I could not bring such an angry answer across my lips, for my mother-in-law is a good woman, and has always overwhelmed me with kindness. The tears came into my eyes and I acknowledged my fault, and begged her to forgive me.

If my life were not entirely consecrated to you, I would have consecrated it to this dear lady. With her as a mother, and you as my husband, I could have slept happily upon the bare earth, and worn a straw mat for clothing. And this good woman I have deceived ; I am indeed a miserable creature and must expect a miserable death.

Strangely enough, death does not seem so terrible a thing, as people would have been believed. I shall be more happy dead ; oh ! that I could even this moment die. I feel a little sad, and a little cowardly, when I think how my parents will sorrow at my loss, and that I must die without merit. I vanish and leave no trace, while this pen, this ring, this light, this house, this summer night, and even the song of the mosquito remain unchanged. I shall be remembered scarcely

The Gold Demon.

longer than the wild grass, that has withered away upon the hillside."

THE END.

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