

貞観子



# DAI-BOSATSU TOGE

*Great Bodhisattva Pass*

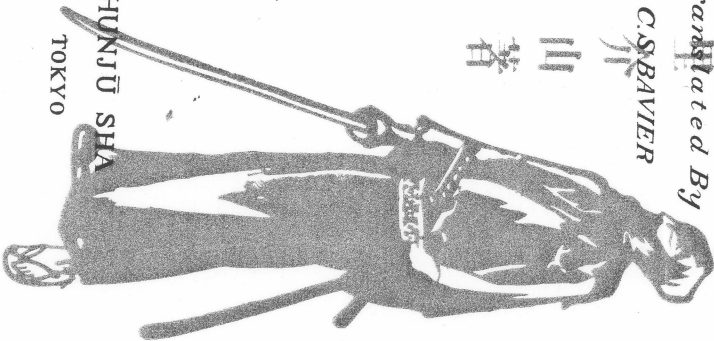
BY KAIZAN NAKAZATO

Translated By

C. SBAVIER

芥山著

大菩薩峠



SHUNJŪ SHA  
TOKYO

春秋社版





## PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION



This novel, Daibosatsu Tōge or Great Buddhissattva Pass, was begun when the author was twenty-four years of age, and is still unfinished continuing intermittently for more than twenty years. As to the length, this novel can claim the first place among the stories of the world.

Daibosatsu Tōge is the name of a pass near Tokio, the capital of Japan. But *bosatsu*, or "buddhissattva," means a being that stands at the border of man's world and that of Buddha, in order to save the former by letting it pass into the latter. Tōge, or pass, therefore stands to mean the *turning point*. Thus, although Daibosatsu Tōge is an actual geographical name that has to do with the story, it, at the same time, serves as symbol of this novel. And the story has no hero, so to speak.

The most conspicuous figure of the story Ryunosuke Tsukue, a born swordsman, devilish in nature, and yet is in full possession of man's weaknesses, is not necessarily the hero, as much as the cunning thieves, the immoral woman, the clever dwarf, the wealthy daughter who must live under a curse, the knavish samurai are not; nor the simple and honest miller, the saintly blind priest, the patriot who.



sees further than his times, the young samurai who is vengeance bent, the priest of the meditation sect, who appears as if he had the whole universe at his beck and call, nor the mysteriously clever, ferocious and faithful dog.

The phenomena of man's world seen through the characters above, are all due to the accumulated demerit since the beginning of this world ; good is not always good ; evil not necessarily evil. This novel pictures the progress of man, with his manifold sins, to the unique salvation of Buddha through *Buddhisattva*.

However this novel is not a moral fable, nor an allegorical story. The times employed are the middle of the last century when Japan was undergoing rather a rapid change from Old to New ; and the author has paid due difference to historical facts in the narrative. Therefore the persons depicted in the story are not unreal, though at a glance some of them may appear as if too fictitious. In this respect, this novel is more realistic than *Les Misérables*, and is yet more romantic and lyric than *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy.

The author much appreciates the fact that this novel has, through the kind offices of Mr. Toyoko Kanda, President of the *Shunjusha Publishing Company*, the publisher of my novel, found an able translator in the person of Professor C. S. Bayer, who is connected with several colleges and universities in Japan. He is not only an able writer, but is conversant with the history, custom and lore of Japan. Although the author is glad of this opportunity of my novel

thus being introduced to the world outside the Japanese reading public, he is loath to have the rest of his novel judged by the quality of the portion translated herewith. The part here translated is what the author penned some twenty years ago, when he was still young and inexperienced.

But if one would further seek the story, even with all the knowledge of Japanese and English that Prof. Bayer commands, he would find it difficult to bring forth in full the thought and feeling, that are exclusively Oriental, and are expressed in the story in Japanese. If he succeeds in the correct translation, the author is convinced that the English reading world will be enriched with characters, expressions and thoughts that are not to be found in the novels of Europe and America.

Before closing, it may be added here that the author occupies a unique place outside the general trend of the writers in Japan of the present. He is often harshly and unkindly treated by them ; for to the present Japan, this novel is too great a piece for criticism. The just and fair criticism of this novel can only come from a great mind, that is deep in thought and wide in view ; or perhaps many years after it is completed.

Besides, this novel is not written to catch the eye of the vulgar ; it is not one of those so called the 'literature for the masses' in Japan of late. The author devotes his life for the sake of writing this story, prompted by the idea and faith that are dear to him. The ever-increasing length is

## PREFACE

not due to his desire, but is entirely due to the process of depicting cause and effect of various phenomena in human world. Therefore reading through the whole narrative, any one who is endowed with sound judgement will find this novel not strange, unnatural nor a patch work.

And again I should like to mention that in Japan there are now many stories written after the manner of this novel, hoping to attain the similar popularity. Especially there are film stories imitating Great Buddhisattva Pass, such as named Ryunosuke, and so on. The author must warn foreign readers against them, and state here that he has not allowed to film or stage any part of his novel. Especially he must, with pain, state that there are malicious writers, who on purpose scribble and film imitation stories, attempting to injure the reputation of my novel.

Kaizan Nakazato

October 1929.



## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

While dabbling in, or rather struggling with, a little monthly writing of my own, I found many well-wishers of my project, and among them Providence was most gracious to include Mr. Ei-ichi Furuya. He may not have come to fame and renown yet, for he seeks them not; but the truth is, he is a man profound in learning and firm in conviction, and not the least gifted to express. Through him, I had the good fortune of becoming known to Prof. Asadori Kato of the Risho University Literary Department; and through him Mr. Kanda, President of the Shunjusha Publishing Company. It was in connection with Mr. Kanda's plan to take Japanese oratorio actors, who perform in graceful slow motion dancing and in classical costumes, to America, that I have become acquainted with this delightful personality, who combines business acumen with artistic temperament. I made, then, myself bold, to state, on several occasions, views for diffusing Oriental culture in the West to him; and proposed to write synopsis of any books he might wish to consult with English and American publishers for translation and distribution. Some days later, Prof. Kato, in his usual kind and jovial ways, remarked

if I would try my hand at turning the most widely read novel of the time, Daibosatsu Tōge, into English. I only smiled in return and did not take it seriously, for I well knew that I was not equal to the task.

But then I thought how useful it would be if this novel were translated into English, for it would serve to explain Japan. Knowing how useful are such stories as Kenilworth by Sir Walter Scott, and Cloister and the Hearth by Charles Reade to understand England and Europe, I hoped for an able translator would appear for Daibosatsu Tōge. Because the story will, taking in as it does, the times when Japan was in the throes of turning from her oriental seclusion to comity of nations, and narrating popular items and lore dear to most of the people of this country, give insight into the characteristic of this nation, and will be a valuable aid to a student of Japan.

When finally I was brought to accept the difficult task, I had the great pleasure of seeing Mr. Kaizan Nakazato, the author, who rather reminded me of meeting a soldier and philosopher than a writer. His laconic speech, a pair of piercing eyes, courteous but resolute manners pleased me immensely. At first it was to translate Book 1 only, but Mr. Kanda intimated me to add the following two books, for the author was not entirely displeased with, poor as it was, my translation that had already been done and shown to him.

For proof-reading, help and suggestions I am indebted to the author himself, Mr. J. C. Ross, Mr. Izumi Yanagita

and Mr. S. Furutachi, and several members of the Editorial Staff of the Shunjusha Publishing Company. I put it here in record by way of thanking them, but not to evade my responsibility for any mistake, slip, misprint or error in the book.

C. S. Bavier,  
Yokohama,  
October 1929.



# **BOOK I.**



# DAI-BOSATSU TÖGE

OR

Great Bodhisattva Pass



## BOOK I.

*Kōgen-Ittō-Ryū* School Fencers



### Chapter 1.

**S**EVENTY-FIVE miles west of Yedo, or Tokio, the Tokio-Kofu By-way rises highest and steepest entering in the Ham of Hagihara, East Yamanaishi County, in the Province of Kai. That is Great Buddhissattva Pass, and the difficult passage is twenty miles long.

The mountain stands six thousand and four hundred feet high. We understand that long ago a holy priest standing on the summit of this mountain prayed to Buddha that the water fall east as well as west might run smooth and clear, and buried an image of Buddhissattva. The water that runs

east is called the Tama Gawa, west the Fuefuki Gawa, both have run smooth and clear benefiting man and land, and they will so run for ages to come.

From Yedo, or Tokio, a road runs over Kobotoke and Sasago Passes via Hadzioji Town, and then proceeds on to Kofu. That is Yedo-Kofu Highway. The by-way is to Ōme Town from Yedo—a distance of some thirty three miles taking the turn to the right at Oiwake by Shinjuku, and then over mountains to strike out at Isawa of Kai. The by-way is also known as Ōme Road and is forty miles to Kofu from that town. Great Buddhisattva Pass, the most difficult part of the road, has the distinction of being used by Prince Yamato Takeru as early as the latter days of the first century as he led his famous expedition to Eastern Provinces. Saint Nichiren also seemed to have taken this pass as he travelled hither and thither to propagate his new faith in Buddhism in the latter part of the thirteenth century. Then such well known actors as Ebizzo, Kodanji and others some eighty years ago, as they were going to Kofu from Yedo for a run, went by this road to avoid the roughs who swarmed the highway near Gunnai, who would resort to petty blackmail of the travellers. A rough road seems to be preferable to rough and wicked people.

Be it as it may, where man finds it difficult to visit so seems the spring. Amidst the leafy green of early summer were now open the cherry blossoms at their best on Great Buddhisattva Pass.

“Burglars have been busy at Uenohara, I hear.”

“What, burglars at Uenohara?!”

“Yes, and the Quarters have been broken in, do you hear.”

“Well I never! The Quarters have been broken in? How’s that robbers are so common now!?”

A young man and an old man, sitting on the verandha of a Shrine for Myoken (Seven Stars of the North deified, a gardian Buddhisattva for mariners and travellers, and its visible messenger is the white snake) thus went on. They were no suspicious characters, two of the honest hill folks who hew trees as well as fire the bushes to open up land.

The hill folks of this district had rather a peculiar way of bartering amongst themselves using this shrine as their market-place. Suppose one brought some rice from Hagi-hara, he would leave it before the shrine; a few days later some would bring charcoal from Kosuge, put it down there by the rice and would return carrying the rice on his back. Hagi-hara stood for mountainous Kai and Kosuge for low Musashi. Kosuge might furnish at times fish and salt as one belonging to the sea side of the Land, yet what Hagi-hara brought forth was always the product of the mountains. Even if the commodities were left over-winter they were safe—this Great Buddhisattva Pass really formed the boundary between the lowlands and the high.

The two people had further discussed the question of frequent burglary round the place of late and in laughter concluded that they had nothing to fear from the burglars;

they would rather take care not to visit thier houses, the rich alone needed to dread the robber. They were about to rise, when they spied one come in the direction of the lowlands brushing aside the overgrowing shrubs of the road.

"Some one is coming, it looks to be a samurai," one of them said and rather perturbedly they took a path that leads to Koganezawa from behind the shrine as if afraid of the eye of the samurai, putting their arms through the shoulder-straps of the pick-a-back hods that carried bales of charcoal and the pouches plaited of stripped leather.



## Chapter 2.

The one who came climbing up the pass from the Masasui side of the road was, as the folks predicted, a samurai. He was dressed in black silk kimono but wore no skirts. A thick sash of *hadaka* silk girdled the waist and the 'colt-rampant,' his family badge, was seen white on his kimono. Both the sword and short-sword were encased in sheaths lobster-back in design, lacquered black worked over with vermilion in checkers. He wore no coat, no leggings guarded his legs, nor the customary travelling sandals. He came up the steep pass in clogs that were worn under bare feet, and in quick pace.

Arriving at a spot that offered an extensive view he

tipped his drooping sedge hat and had a look in the direction of Kai.

He looked to be a man about thirty in age, slender in face, white in complexion, lean but well above the average in physique.

As this young samurai stood on the summit, a gust of wind blew up the side of the mountain assailing the leafy trees. The white backs of the leaves shimmered in the wind and that reminded one of the sea. Then all of a sudden, as if cast on the beach, an object dived into view. It was a group of monkeys. They appeared in a giant chestnut tree that stood over and above the roof of the *myoken* shrine. They were about ten in number and stared hard at the man, gibberish every now and then showing their white teeth. Great Buddhista: Pass you know, was noted for monkeys.

Shide Yanagisawa Pass was open Great Buddhista fell into disuse, though even to-day the road is not entirely impassable. Monkeys are even to-day met with in this pass; they are not at all unusual. But if one should, out of curiosity, be inclined to interfere with the animal it is certain that he would come to grief, for the monkey is a spiteful animal. It is a good reader of human mind. They will come close and tease a man if they think it is safe. But then if they think the odds against them are too great they call for help. At the call monkeys will appear in every direction, tumbling over the ridges and clambering up the hollows; a man unused to the sight

will be horror-stricken. Yet for a man hardened for the road there is a way to deal with them knowing well their empty courage.

The samurai seemed to be quite used to them. He cowed them with one hard stare, and left them to betake themselves to a few boughs higher up to remain there with a menacing attitude. The samurai seemed to be expecting someone to come. He peered into either direction of the pass.

Yet nobody seemed to be coming. What was he waiting for? He remained waiting for about an hour. Then through the thick summer leaves came faintly a human voice. As it struck the ear of the samurai he took a few quick strides in the direction of Hagihara, and hiding himself among the pine-trees leaned over to see what was coming in the direction of the voice, and saw the figure of two pilgrims climb the zig-zag of the pass. At their sight he hid behind the shrine, for naught we know. The monkeys above started to stare afresh.

"I say, granddaddy....." a clear voice of a child shot through the air. One of the wayfarers was an old man sixty years or so walking ahead of the other, who was a girl of eleven or twelve—it was this girl who spoke.

"Welladay, the summit at last" the old man said, and proceeding before the shrine knelt uncovered undoing the chin-straps of the hat.

"Is this the top, dah, is it?" she asked, a lovely girl, full of vim.

"Now the way is all downhill, an easy stage will bring us to Kawachi before sundown. About this hour of day full two days after leaving Kawachi will bring us back to Yedo, and that after full two years' absence. Well, well, let's eat our lunch."

The old man opened the pack to take out the customary bamboo-bark parcel that contained rice-balls for lunch.

"Hand me that gourd, granddaddy, I heard a stream a little way down as we were coming, let me go and get our gourd filled" the girl proposed.

"Oh yes, it was that we drunk it empty on the way, didn't we? But I'll go, you keep still" the old man said taking down the gourd from his loin.

"No, I go. Let me fetch water for you" she said and taking the gourd from the hand of the old man she ran down a path to the stream that runs a little way below towards Koganezawa.

The old man absentmindedly gazed at the path after the girl left. Then there were heard footfalls behind him.

"Gaffer" he was addressed; it was that samurai who spoke.

"Ay" he answered, and was going to salute him arraying himself rather in a flurry. The samurai, looking round to make sure of something, said curly 'come' beckoning at him not telling what he was wanted for, and not even removing his hat. So the old man feeling very uncomfortable approached the man bowing slightly and said politely 'What is your command, my lord?'

"Turn round" the man said, and the next moment there went forth a burst of blood and the old man was seen down on the grass gruesomely cut into two at the waist.



### Chapter 3.

"Granddaddy, I've fetched you water" the girl called out as she came up the slope skipping, holding the gourd in both hands, her face beaming with joy and affection. But not finding the old man where he was, she was struck with some slight wonder, and thinking he might possibly have gone behind the shrine she went there and saw what had happened

"Mam-m-a-h" she uttered, throwing herself upon the body and weeping bitterly, muttering "My poor granddad, who—who could have killed you?!"

There were, however, cool lookers-on looking from a height at this unexpected tragedy. Each move, each action of that samurai, as well as the scene of the old man cut into two, and the bitter wail of the little girl—none escaped their observation. These on-lookers were the monkeys in the giant chestnut-tree.

They now came down trooping from the tree. They formed a big circle round the body and the girl prostrate upon it. The circle closed in gradually, and in the next

moment a small monkey ventured forth to pull out a hair-pin of the girl holding the object high in view to the rest of the animals as much as to say 'See, what I've got.' Not to be done by, another young monkey took a comb from her head and shook it in the air. Big monkeys meanwhile helped themselves to the rice-balls that had been left by the old man partly exposed the bamboo-bark wrapper being open, and stuffed their cheeks with the food. One of them picked, then, a stick from the ground, and what do you think it did?—it put the stick on its side like the sword and getting behind the girl hit her back hard with a sweep as did the samurai to the old man with the sword.

The girl who had been lost in weeping screamed at this and leaped off the body. She was a girl stout in heart; she picked up a stick too and held it up above her head ready to fight. The monkeys screeched their gibber, and goggling their angry eyes at the girl were ready to pounce upon her. The scene became extremely menacing and distressing. But then fortunately a traveller came by. He looked to be a man about forty, wore a sedge-hat and a mantle striped from top to bottom, and on his side was seen a 'journey' sword. Seeing what was going on he circled the live torch he carried in his hand. This frightened the animals that had been in high temper and spirits and they all betook to the giant chestnut-tree again.

That the man was an old stager to travelling can be known by the fact that he was carrying a lighted torch.

Those who were to take Great Buddhissetva Pass would carry with them a torch prepared from the resinous part of the pine to keep off wild animals. Of all animals the monkeys dread fire most.

Not quenching the fire of the torch the traveller called out to the girl "Hope you are not hurt, girl."

And approaching "What, murder?!"

Putting aside the girl he examined the corpse carefully at the cut and sighed

"What skill! and what a pity a man of such high achievement should try it on such a poor old man as this" and he remained thinking for a while. Then he rose, and consoling and encouraging the girl as best he could took her upon his back; and putting away the corpse he went descending Great Buddhissetva Pass towards Musashi, bathed in the sunset hue from behind.

*4*

#### Chapter 4.

Some thirty miles east of the pass where it faces Mt. Mitake across the River Tama is the village of Sawai. There, citrons grow well. Should any one have visited this village he would soon have seen a mansion before a hill. It had a lintelled black gate massive in structure, flanked with long white walls wainscotted black, guarding a high

double roofed large dwelling house inside. This was the home of Ryunosuke Tsukue.

The Tsukues were a high famed house descending from the Somas. Yet there was then something more famed than the house itself, it was a fencing school, ten yards by eighteen, in the compound. Several always, at times a dozen or so, fencers who travel seeking experience and instruction from school to school were to be found there. They were inclined to talk and their conversations took a lively turn to-day.

"Have you heard that there was a skill-testing murder at Great Buddhissetva Pass yesterday?"

"What, a skill-testing murder at the pass?!"

"Yes, an old pilgrim, slick at the waist clean through; everybody from Kai over the pass is talking about it."

"Humph, an old pilgrim, how cruel!"

"Of late we hear so much of burglary, and now a 'test' murder again; we are living in turbid times to be sure."

"Yes, you're right. All along the By-Way needless to say, all over Chichibu, Kumagai as well as in the Provinces of Yashu and Joshu burglars are everywhere, and strange to say a fresh crime bears a close resemblance to the one committed before."

"Yes, that's a fact, and yet none has been apprehended for it yet, it's up to the Provost to commit harakiri."

"Still no 'test' murder nor burglary in this Sawai



Village and around. I put it down to the influence of this fencing school."

It was two days after there was the murder at Great Buddhisattva Pass that the guests, dependants, and some of the pupils of Tsukue were thus engaged in conversation at the fencing school of Sawai.

"A bout with no protectors on, please."

"Very well, after the style of our young master."

Two fencers rose and took their places on the floor.

"Sawai Fencing School's famed Bout of Silence," some one called out after the manner of an announcer.

The Bout of Silence of Sawai School is the name the fencers of the time gave to the style of fencing resorted to by Ryunosuke Tsukue, the young master of this school. His manner of fence was to stand on the guard of 'a step, or back,' with the point of the sword, be it a practice stick or dummy sword, as high as the eye of the opponent, the left foot, heel up, brought close to the right heel as it is with the guard of 'to the eye.' But then he would keep the point of his sword a few inches off that of the opponent. But at the moment he essayed a move, Ryunosuke would cut or thrust, with lightning speed, the very movement of the opponent. He employed this method invariably irrespective of the opponent, whether he was a fencer of his own school or belonged to some other school, whether he was physically stronger than himself or not, and often a bout would come to a close without even once the sticks clashing. Ryunosuke by this manner of

fence proved himself to be an ugly man to fence with, and he really never lost in a match.

The two fencers were trying to copy his style. Then at the portico of the dwelling house that stood obliquely in front of the fencing school, a caller was heard.

No answer from within.

"Hey, please, say!"

No answer from within yet. Meanwhile the fencers went on at their practice. But one of them got impatient and attempted a cut at the wrist; the other taking advantage of that put the stick on the head of his opponent lightly and the bout was over.

"Say, please, hey!"

The bout over the attention of the samurais in the school was now drawn by the call. They put their heads out without ceremony to find, through the screening shrubs, a finely dressed young lady standing with a servant.

"I'll see to that" said one who lost in the bout, and he walked quickly off towards the dwelling house from the school taking the covered passage that connected the latter with the former.

"Mr. Andow's off rather boldly, see, because it's a fair young lady that is at the door"

His friends were all tickled.

"Ay, ay" sounded Andow's bass voice. Then in the charming voice of a woman:—

"I am young sister to Bunnojo Utsuki of Wada. I

have come to seek an interview with Mr. Ryunosuke as a matter of favour."

"Yes, I see."

The people in the school could not see Andow, he was hidden from their view. But they could picture to themselves Andow sitting awkwardly but trying hard to be proper.

"Well.....our young mas-t-er" Andow seemed to be all the more awkward.

"He is not in, you know," he said.

"Mr. Ryunosuke is out" the woman seemed disappointed.

"Then, when will he return?"

"Well, you know, as for his movements we have no knowledge. I couldn't tell you when he will come back."

"But surely he'll be back to-night."

"Well, you see, as I told you we cannot really tell when he will be back. If it will do, I'll convey your messages to him."

The people in the school were highly amused at the conversation between Andow and the fair young caller, and one of them remarked:—

"This is rather a unique sort of 'school-breaker,' isn't it?"

"Shall I go and see who and what it is?"

A volunteer scout came forth.

"Yes, by all means; go around, and cautiously."

Busy people! Pretty soon the scout returned at the double and panting,

"I've seen, I've seen."

"Well, what manner of woman?"

"She is Mrs. Bunnojo Utsuki, a famed beauty."

"What, wife to Utsuki of Wada? She said 'sister to' a moment ago."

"No, not sister, not openly married yet, but Mrs. Utsuki all the same. Only recently she came from her home, the Village of Yawata of Kai; clever, beautiful and daughter of a rich man. I often saw her when I lived at Yawata."

"Why on earth then Bunnojo's wife should call on our young master calling herself Bunnojo's young sister."

"Sh—young master?"

The chattering ceased. Lo and behold! The man who now came in at the gate in big strides was no other than the samurai who killed the pilgrim at Great Buddhissatva Pass two days before—he was in the same attire as he was seen at the pass.

## Chapter 5.

Before Ryunosuke sat, sympathy seeking, a beauty of sweet seventeen, or eighteen, though she looked to be rather a little officious in disposition. She was dressed in silk crepe over a crimson underwear of the same material, all tightly worn girdled with a sash of speckled red.

Her hair was done up in *shimada*—the knot for a maiden of marriageable age, which is rarely retained after a marriage.

"You are Miss Hama, are you? And what can I do for you?" Ryunosuke asked.

The woman had been waiting for it; she began:—

"The matter I have ventured on myself, not consulting with my brother, to bring before you, to seek your generous consideration is"—

(She spoke in a manner above her age.)—

"Nothing but about the coming great tournament at Miake Mountain on the fifth."

Ryunosuke had just seen the programme of the day; he took a look again on a sheet of long *hosho* paper that was on the desk. It was the programme. Seeing this the woman continued:—

"My brother is in a pitiful state of agitation over the coming tournament; he can't eat, he can't sleep. I, his sister, cannot be a mere on-looker."

"I well understand that. The coming tournament is an important one; I must not fall behind others" came rather coolly from Ryunosuke. The woman was visibly affected by the answer

"No, no, not that, my brother is no match against you. I have heard him say ever so often that though you and he alike were at Mr. Hemmi's school, you have become far above him. How unfortunate then it is that he now, before all the world, must fight you, sir, of all

the fencers, in the coming tournament. I wait for the misfortune."

"Nonsense, Miss Hama, in the eye of Mr. Hemmi I am a man as good as expelled from his school. But Mr. Bunnojo is his favourite, he is the man expected to come to hold the title of the Kogen Ito Ryu School Fencing after Mr. Hemmi."

"May it be what others say, Bunnojo himself is convinced that he is no match to you."

"That's mere modesty" Ryunosuke said. He sat correct and unperturbed like an image carved of wood. Not even a hair turned. The complexion was rather on the side of being pale as usual. He did not speak more that it was necessary and kept a firm upper lip. But the woman seemed to be much in agitation; her cheeks blushed and her eyes flashed a little.

"Should my brother fail in the coming tournament the House of Utsuki would fall into disgrace and ruin not to speak of the future of my brother himself. Such being how we stand, only for this once I ask you to give my brother a chance; I have come to fall upon your mercy for the sake of my brother, for the sake of his future career."

Tears ran down the woman's cheeks, her coal-black coiffure bobbed as she bowed low; it was an entreaty that carried her life and soul into it.

Ryunosuke watched the woman for a little with the eyes downcast.

"You exaggerate things, Madame, the tournament not a real combat with white steel; there is not much honour or shame in either losing or in winning; you talk of the disgrace and ruination of a house, I cannot understand at all, Madame." The answer was a cool one.

The woman raised her head. The face flushed in zeal and the eyes shining lustrous in tears enhanced her beauty.

"Let me explain, if you please. My brother is to find an appointment in the army of a certain daimyo as fencing instructor soon after the tournament, and his marriage is to be announced at the same time, too. But....."

"That's doubly felicitous. Then your brother must all the more show his ability and prowess in the tournament, for that will give lustre to the laurels—the coming appointment in the daimyo's service and the happy announcement."

"Unfortunately, Mr. Ryunosuke, but you have been chosen for my brother's match when things were so arranged as I have mentioned. He has no hope against you. To shirk the match would bring a greater disgrace than a defeat. The only hope is your mercy. If you would chivalrously refrain from getting better of my brother in the match, we should regard it a favour long to be remembered. For the sake of my brother and for the sake of the Utsukis I have dared myself to come and lay the case before you."

If what this woman said was true, it deserved pity. Weak is her sex, yet she came all the way to ask a favour

of a man for the sake of her brother and the name of her house! It was up to Ryunosuke to be chivalrous and make her return home with joy in heart. But his face grew only all the more pale and bloodless.

"Miss Hama.—I understand that is your name, I have not known that my friend Bunnojo had a sister, your love for your brother and the Utsukis moves me, but you must know that tournament is something sacred, and....." He cut his word short and closed his mouth making his statement unretrievably emphatic. The woman uttered confusedly, "Then you do not grant....." Her voice shook in convulsion. He looked all the more cool.

"When I take the sword, be it only the foil, there's no parent, no pupil nor master in my eye. Even the best of all best friends I regard him as the worst enemy whom I must kill. That is how I school myself to the art of swordsmanship."

Coolly he told his mind. This was his wont, it needed no effort. Really he was always practising fencing in the frame of mind he had just now described. He only said a very usual thing in very usual words. But the woman was horrified.

"You are too hard-hearted, sir, too hard" the woman said and she gazed upon the face of Ryunosuke with the eyes tearful and bespeaking resentment. When they met the eyes of Ryunosuke, that were slender and contained white lustre in the bottom, a flush of blood coloured the cheeks of white Ryunosuke. But it was only for a

moment, the paleness returned. His knees moved forward a little.

"I say, Miss Hama, you call me hard-hearted, I resent. The sword is to us like virtue is to woman if I may draw a parallel. I do not think it proper for a woman to trifle with virtue even if it were in the benefit of her parents, brother or sister. No matter who the suppliant is it is not right to yield the palm. It is against the principle of a swordsman."

"But suppose if it affects the life of one's parents, brother or sister....."

"Do you mean then it behoves one to sell her virtue if the case were such?"



### Chapter 6.

It was when the sun was set behind Mitake Mountain that Ryunosuke saw Utsuki's sister out. A little while afterward Ryunosuke was seen near the mill-house by the Tama below Mannenbashi Bridge.

"Yohachi! Yohachi!"

The mill did not work at night. It was quiet within the hut save the rats that were running about. A dim light shone from the inside.

"Who's that?"

"It is Ryunosuke, open the door."

"In a minute, sir."

The man within seemed to be a little perturbed and the door was slid open. A man as stout as an ox, but in face like a child, made his appearance.

"Yohachi, I've come concerning a little matter that needs your kind help."

"Yes." This young man would cover always at the sight of Ryunosuke.

"Yohachi, you are a man of strength, aren't you? Come close to me," and Ryunosuke whispered something in the ear of Yohachi, who now could not speak trembling for fear.

"Can't you do it?"

"But, you know....."

"Out with your yes or no, quick." Ryunosuke's right hand was on the hilt of his long sword.

"But you know....."

"Shut up"

"What, sir! ? Are you going to draw upon me?"

"Go, or no, that's all I want to know."

"Yes, yes, I go."

"Go?"

"Yes."

"Here's the rope, here's the handkerchief, do as I have told you; don't make a mess of the thing."

## Chapter 7.

Danjō, Ryunosuke's father, once when returning from Yedo heard a baby cry in a forest near Ōme. He told one of the followers to bring it to him. It was a plump boy, a yearling, and he brought him up. That boy was Yohachi, Danjō named him so as he found him. He did not like the 'Oh, you're only a waif, aren't you?' of his playmates as he grew up, so he used to come to this mill-house to play. The keeper was an old man; and when he died Yohachi was eleven or twelve, and he succeeded the old keeper at his death.

Yohachi's forte was honesty and a Herculean strength. His strength began to show itself when he was eleven or twelve, and at the age of fifteen he was equal to three men. He was now eighteen and his strength was said amazing. Should a wagon wheel fall into a rut or a raft stick between two rocks, then Yohachi shone. A messenger would hie in the direction of the mill to summon the man.

"Yohachi, a good square meal of white rice, won't you help us?"

"Right-o!"

And soon, be it a heavy wagon or full-length cedar raft, the captive was liberated. Money had not much charm with Yohachi, he did not like that reward. But he would indeed be pleased and grateful if one should reward him with a meal of white rice. Should it be given to eat with a slice

of salted salmon toasted, he couldn't think of anything better; he would eat as much as full half a peck of rice. Even if no white rice be coming for his reward, Yohachi would not grumble much. The reason was, that he was well supplied with meals of barley and toasted rice-dough in the mill-house. Sharp people often would dodge feasting him with rice after having made him toil a great deal to help them out of a difficulty. If the practice were repeated two or three times Yohachi would not respond to a call. Then feast him first with rice, and forgetting the old sores, he would, come willingly out to help the folks again.

Yohachi hates to go to the village, for the ill names the children would call him. So he kept to his retreat—the mill by the river. Yet touching it was, that every morning he went to the village to ask after Danjō, his master.

"How's grand master this morning?"

"He is all right" the servants of the house would say; Yohachi then would return satisfied. Ryunosuke's father Danjō was now very old and was bed-ridden from paralysis.

Not long after Yohachi went out at the threat of Ryunosuke, a lantern fell spinning from Mannenbashi Bridge to the bottom. Pretty soon Yohachi was seen running towards the mill-house with a woman carried unceremoniously in his arms. He was panting, and he stood before Ryunosuke. The woman who was carried in the arms of Yohachi was



no other than Hama Utsuki, who had been seen at Tsukue's mansion to preach chivalry to Ryunosuke.

Some time later Ryunosuke was seen alone on the path along the river; the moon was now up.

When Ryunosuke had gone as far as the bridge (Man-nenbashi), a man attired in travelling costume with his packs balanced at both ends of a shoulder strap, a man whom one would take for a rafter, came humming a tune. At Ryunosuke's approach the man seemed to be taken a little aback. But then soon recovering from it he bowed with very courteous 'Glorious night, my Lord.'

Ryunosuke stood gazing after him a moment then he called "Halt"

"Ay!"

"Where are you from?"

"From Hikawa, my Lord."

"Hikawa? Who of Hikawa, name!"

"Shichibei, a rafter."

"Halt, I say halt."

"Yes, what is your command?"

The man looked as if intending to halt, but at the next moment he bolted off. At the very moment of this move Ryunosuke drew upon his short-sword and swish he cut as he drew. How could the man dodge the blade was hard to see. But dodge he did, and darted off like a bird startled from its lie. That Ryunosuke did not draw upon his long sword was due to his over-confidence. Ryunosuke now

stood petrified watching after the man who was fast disappearing. His mind was distressed because he failed to make good the cut.

Fast! Yes. Like a hawk! Like a shot! Over Man-nenbashi Bridge that spans ninety-six yards! Did the man cross it at one single leap? His feet seemed never to touch the ground. Ryunosuke was taken aback by the speed of the man, too.

Examining the point of his blade, Ryunosuke perceived that there were stains of blood on it. Looking closely on the surface of the bridge, he found wee stains of blood in succession. Ryunosuke did not intend to kill the man, but the fact that he failed to inflict upon him the cut he had intended mortified him profoundly. He walked home gnashing his teeth only to find confusion at his home, lanterns moving hither and thither round his house.

"Oh, Master Ryunosuke, we are burgled, Sir, the mansion has been broken in."

"Thief!?" he muttered, and on examining the household three hundred gold *ryo* in money and a treasured sword forged by Tōshiro were missing.

"No need to report; never tell this abroad" were what Ryunosuke commanded of his household and the pupils.

## Chapter 8.

Hama, who called herself sister of Bunnojo Utsuki and called at the fencing school of Sawai was not Bunnojo's sister but his betrothed as the fencers at the school guessed. She was from a certain old and honourable family of Yawata of Kai Province. She was clever but a little forward in her ways. So while at her own home at Yawata, she not only managed her father's house but she used to express her opinions in matters that concerned the village, and was held by the villagers in high esteem. She could not forget that yet, and while her status at the Utsukis was not yet a matter of public recognition, she took upon herself the task of rescuing her husband from the predicament.

The Utsukis were a house of Shogun's yeoman of a very long standing. Its estate covered many acres of land and forest. Besides, it had a fencing school not a whit inferior to the one that stood across the river at Sawai.

Ryunosuke's style of fencing was effective but ugly, while Bunnojo's was elegant and he was kind to his pupils. His reputation was far above that of Ryunosuke. That reputation was really what induced Hama to come to wed Bunnojo. But later hearing the fact, from professional critics, that Bunnojo, her man, was no match to Ryunosuke, she had been inwardly seething with vexation. Then followed the programme of the coming tournament, and her

man's dejection. Hama got disgrusted with her man. Yet she could not sit still and see him worry his life out over the coming public event. So she ventured to visit Ryunosuke to negotiate for a compromise as the readers have seen.

That night Hama could not sleep. The detestable Ryunosuke, and the disappointing husband! The two filled her mind to madden her thought.

The two fencers appeared in turns to the mind of the woman. The more she thought of them the more she could not help, detestable as he was, putting Ryunosuke above Bunnojo, her man. Ryunosuke loomed up before her as a hateful man. But that hate was due to the fact that he was a better man than her man. By contrast her man began to look despicable, and she grew all the more vexed. The vexation was beyond the endurance of a woman of Hama's type.

Before she accepted the union with Bunnojo, it was rung in the ear of Hama that Utsuki had a thousand pupils; he was the first fencer among the swordsmen of the Kogen-Itto-Ryu School, and so on and so forth. But what is the plight of that man now. She gave free rein to her anger. But it only resulted in finding fault with the achievement of her husband and in belittling him. But in so doing the hateful Ryunosuke began to look to be a better man. Nothing is so unfortunate for a wife than to find a better man than her husband.

Hama thought if her man were a better fencer than

the rest, how happy and proud she would be. The sacredness of a bout to a samurai, and the sacredness of virtue to woman! The enigmatic statement of Ryunosuke began to ring in her ear again.

Ryunosuke at the interview; Ryunosuke seen in the mill-house—there he was seated on an overturned bushel. The lamp before the shrine on the shelf cast a dim light upon the man through cobwebs that lodged bran. She remembered that when she came round to herself she found that she had been bound, and that Ryunosuke was gazing down upon her. The cool countenance, the eyes that gleamed white; and his cool pleasant gaze at her agony as well as his word 'Your simile of woman's virtue and the sacredness of a match for a swordsman perturbs me'—so saying, Hama remembered, he stumped on the floor once or twice. Hama could not drive away the memory of that sight. "Oh—abominable Ryunosuke!" Hama thought. But the abomination began to turn into, by degrees, something far from abomination.

Ryunosuke's parting word 'decide by the time the drum booms out from the Mountain in the morning air' began to trouble Hama; her bosom seemed to heave anew.

On his part Ryunosuke sat still in his study with his arms folded till the night was far advanced. He turned over in his mind the failure of his attempt upon the man on the bridge; the burglary of his treasured sword forged by Toshiro in his absence; and the forcible kidnapping of

that woman Hama, instigating Yohachi. The last item troubled Ryunosuke's mind. He now failed to see what manner of mind had made him do that. While Hama was interviewing him, his mind was free from impure thoughts. But on her leaving him, as she passed his gate, he was filled with a desire for the woman.

Ryunosuke was through a cool reasoner, impetuous and obstinate. It was so, too, on this occasion. First he was highly reasonable and frustrated the wiles of a woman. But then what was his subsequent move? He made a mess of himself. As he sat alone into the far advanced night, Hama, the woman, filled his thought.



### Chapter 9.

It was the morning following the evening when Tsukue's house was broken in, that in a peasant cottage near Ōme, eight miles away from Sawai, a girl sat by the fireplace, cooking something in a sooty pot stirring the fire with long poker.

"Uncle, where did you go last night?" the girl spoke. She was the girl whom a traveller rescued at Great Budhisatva Pass the other day. The man who was called 'Uncle' was still in bed. He raised his head from the pillow and said:—

"No, I didn't go anywhere."

The man was the traveller who rescued the girl from the monkeys in the Pass by means of the lighted torch.

"But, I awoke mid-night, and you weren't in your bed."

The man looked aside and said :—

"Oh, that was because I slipped out to bring in faggots from the forest—for I feared it might rain."

"Oh, I see," the girl said and seemed to be satisfied with the explanation.

"Uncle, are you going to take me to Yedo, to-day?" she asked. But failing to evoke a ready response, she thought that she must not press with the request evidently. She did not say anymore about it. Then her eyes wandered, and it saw the shrine for the dead in a corner of the room. The joss-stick that the girl had lighted a moment ago was emitting a long line of smoke. The girl rose and muttering the prayers for the dead she lighted another stick, and said like to herself "Rest in peace, Grandfather, surely you will be avenged when I am a woman." While she thus spoke her eyes grew dim with tears.

The man in bed was watching this with some displeasure, pipe in mouth. He called out to the girl :—

"Come here, Matsu!"

The girl wiped the corners of her eyes with her finger looking aside, and answered 'ay' and sat politely before the man.

"You say 'you'll surely be avenged,' 'you'll surely be avenged' every time, but that is not proper. Revenge is what the son or daughter of a samurai may attempt.

Prayers for the soul of your grandfather are what is proper for you to practise.

"Yes, but I cannot be consoled otherwise" the girl looked aside again to brush the tears.

"But that 'I can't be consoled' will interfere with the peace of the departed spirit. By the way, I said I would start for Yedo with you to-day, but I'm hurt, you know."

"Hurt!?"

"Yes, but not much. I hit myself hard at the hip falling over a protruding root last night carrying the faggots. Two days will be sufficient to heal; I must ask you to put off our going."

"Anytime will do for our starting, you must get better of the wound first."

"I am glad that you speak to me kindly. I have, Matsu, something that you will take care of for me." And so saying, he searched under the mattress and took out a thing which seemed to be a dagger in a brocade sack.

"What's that, Uncle?"

"Never mind what it is, carry it always in your bosom, never show it to anybody."

"This is a dagger, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is. You shall see by and by, never let that leave you."

The girl could not understand the import of these instructions. The master of this house came out of his bed, but limping; he must have been much hurt. Sitting by the fireplace he and the girl took breakfast.

"Mr. Shichibei, Mr. Shichibei" some one called at the door. Shichibei must be the name of this man.

"Oh, Mr. Kaemon, where are you off to, this early morning?"

"I am going to pay a visit to inquire of a household concerning an event. Won't you come with me?"

"To ask regarding an event! ? What has happened."

"Don't you know? Mr. Tozaburo, the timber merchant, was arrested at daybreak this morning."

"Mr. Tozaburo, the timber merchant! Well, I never!"

"Yes, he is arrested, He was taken to the Station and is now undergoing an examination.

"Why?"

"I don't know very well. But he was arrested on the ground that he may have something to do with a certain thief."

"But, how should such an honest man as he be having any doings with a thief?" Shichibei cocked his head wonderingly.

"Well, you see, the Quarters at Uenohara were broken in some days ago."

"What, the Quarters at Uenohara!?"

"Yes, a bold thief, I can tell you. But he was found by a samurai who lodged for the night there, and as he ran he dropped a document in one of the rooms, and the samurai found it later."

"A document!" Shichibei put his hand over his bosom

as if to feel for something, and looked not at all at ease, but the talker did not see it.

"And you see, how it came by I don't know, but the document bore the name and seal of Mr. Tozaburo, it was his receipt for a sale of timber.

"That's too bad. I should go at once to pay a visit to Mrs. Tozaburo, but you know I was hurt a little last night, so please give my compliments and apology at the house."

"Hurt!?"

"Yes, but not much. I stumbled and fell in the forest and hit my side rather a little too severely, that is all."

"That's too bad. You must take good care of yourself.

Well, good morrow, I'll be off."

After Kaemon was gone, what passed in the mind of Shichibei, he said:—

"Matsu, let's start for Yedo."

"But you're hurt."

"Don't you worry, there are bearers, there are horses."

"I am glad, Uncle" Matsu said and she busied herself in getting ready for starting leaving off breakfast.



## Chapter 10.

It was the fifth day of the fifth month. It was the day for the swordsmen of Eight Provinces East of Hakone to hold a dedication tournament on Mt. Mitake

Ryunosuke Tsukue stood on the verandah of his house and looked up and gazed at the mountain. Dark cedar trees stood piercing the sky and a streak of thin white cloud hovered over the trees. The boom, boom of the drum that was to rouse all Eight Province Lowlands, came from the cloud.

"It's a fine day" Ryunosuke said audibly.

White clouds over a mountain enhance the vivid blue of the summer sky!

"It is just the sort of day for the dedication" said the pupils repairing hither to accompany the master. Ryunosuke dressed himself, and wore on his side the long sword forged by Taro Yasukuni of Musashi, the one he tested by trying it on the poor pilgrim's waist on the summit of Great Buddhissetva Pass the other day. He was now about to leave his home for the Mountain accompanied by two of his pupils and a servant. Then Yohachi, the mill-keeper, rushed in panting with a letter.

"Sir, I'm asked to deliver you this letter" Yohachi said. Ryunosuke took it and found, to his surprise, that the letter was by the hand of a woman. 'By the time the drum booms out from the mountain'—he recalled his threat to the woman. Was the letter her answer? Ryunosuke read it over several times.

### Chapter 11.

Bunnojo Usuki also rose early that day, dressed after an ablution and bowed before the gods' shrine in the house praying for his success at the tournament. Then he called his wife, Hama, to his study:—

"Is nobody about?" Extraordinary determination and sorrow was read in his countenance due to the fact that he feared the presence of anybody.

"No, nobody is about."

"Very well, I have something that I must now give to you."

"What can it be?"

"As I leave home for the Mountain I give this to you" and he delivered a letter still fresh with the smell of the ink. Hama took it wondering, and found to her surprise that it was a letter of divorce or what folks call 'three lines and a half' in slang.

"This is a letter of divorce. Why?" She was dumfounded. She gazed at her husband a while, then sitting up straight addressed him:—

"Are you joking, my Lord? What have I done that you must divorce me?"

"Do not ask, I desire not to mention the matter. Let's part in wise silence."

"But can a woman go to their parents and say 'I'm



divorced for naught I know' ? Your joke surpasses my comprehension."

"Hama, do you call my action a piece of joke ? Haven't you something in your bosom that tells you why you are divorced ?"

"What do you mean by saying 'something in your bosom that must tell why' ?"

"I was loath to mention the matter, but now I must. You came home violated by Ryunosuke Tsukue the other night."

"Came home violated by Mr. Ryunosuke ! ?"

"The more one tries to hide, the quicker the truth seeks light. I was puzzled with the strangeness of your behaviour of that night and the fact that Kyusaku, the servant, who accompanied you to Sawai, is missing since. But since I have heard people talk and now know."

"People talk ! ? What do they say ?" Hama exclaimed reddened with rage.

"You want to get rid of me on false accusation based on mere hearsay. If I'm in your road so much....."

"Yes, you are. To the fair name of the Utsukis as well as to me who is a man of sword, your presence is objectionable, so I hand you this letter of divorce."

"That's not fair, my Lord" Hama said, and what did she mean, she tried to snatch the short-sword of her husband. 'Thud' Bunnojo pushed her back. She fell—more on her back than on her side. Her husband withdrew to the next

room not even with so much as turning his head to have the last look at the woman.

Hama had no reason to be so vexed as she did on being given a letter of divorce from her husband. If Bunnojo were a man not so cool and gentle as he was, things might have taken such a serious turn that he would have beheaded Hama with a flash of his sword and then cut into the dwelling of Ryunosuke with the sword stained with Hama's blood. Cooled down a little Hama began to weigh things. Upon reflection she thought that to be set free from Bunnojo was perhaps after all a good thing for her, but where to go then ? She thought she could not very well return to her parent ; where to go ? under whose roof ? that thought troubled her. She could not form any definite plan yet, she was only crying turning from side to side with vexation.

Bunnojo Utsuki meanwhile dressed ready to start and entered the palanquin that had been brought round ready for him. He left home alone, not taking the leave of anybody, even his pupils, and hied on for Mt. Mitahe.

From Wada Village to the foot of Mitahe is a little over two leagues. Bunnojo left the palanquin at Taki rest-house by Misogi Bridge, and climbed the mountain on foot. He carried, under his arm, a wooden dummy-sword in a bag, that was to be used in the match. He wore a drooping hat and seemed to be desirous of being left alone as much as possible. Climbing 24 *cho* (2,880 yds.) the black gate was reached. There the fat round top of the mountain

covered with thick dark giant cedar-trees, studded with fresh green buds, came into full and close view. The birds were heard warbling in the shade. Turning round the Eight East Province Lowlands were seen in parts at the intervals of the distant ridges. Beyond, it was all mist and haze. Bunnojo stood there a while. From the rest-house by the gate came in a waitress's voice :—

“Good morrow, my Lord, have a cup of tea !”

He entered and sat on a form sipping at tea. Looking aside his eyes met a quaint hermitage-like little structure built from the rest-house overhanging the cliff. There an old man, white beard, sat looking at Bunnojo. Before the old man was a desk, and on it were seen divination lots and fortune-blocks. He was a fortune-teller.

“Shall I read your fortune ? Let me forecast how you will fare in the tournament.”

Bunnojo shook his head lightly, the old man did not solicit any more.

Then from below came the party of Ryunosuke Tsukue. They likewise stopped before this rest-house.

“Good morrow to you all, Sirs, have a cup of tea.”

“All right, let's have a rest.” Ryunosuke said, and he led the way into the house. Bunnojo looked up and saw that it was Ryunosuke, the man. Colour came to his cheek, but Tsukue could not see him for the drooping hat which Bunnojo wore and for the fact that he was seated in a far corner. The old man put his head out again and this time looking at Ryunosuke said :—

“Let me consult the book of fortune for you. Your lot in the tournament will be revealed to you.”

Ryunosuke nodded gruffly. Whereupon the old man took up the divination lots and said :—

“My cast is ‘hit or miss’ as folks say. I don't say I always predict true as the common fortune-tellers say. I only strive to convey the wisdom of the old sage as I see it revealed in the cast. Whether it applies to your case or not, it is not my business.”

He held the divination lots in both hands and lifted them as high as the brow and remained still a while in order to look to be concentrating his mind. Then he divided the lots into two, and putting the right hand lots down, took one out of the left lots and put it between the small finger and the ring finger of the left to begin to count the lots in twos, and by the eight signs of the divination. According to the count he arranged the blocks of fortune, and remained to look thinking for a while cocking his head ; then said :—

“The cast says ‘Windy Sky Slight Stay,’ and according to the explanation in the book it is ‘close knitting clouds but failing to rain, but some come from the west.’ This means that the male element is quite all right but a slight slur is there of female nature, and because of that the ‘rain,’ the true function of the ‘clouds’ is prevented from taking its due course. That is what the cast says.”

The old man stroked his white beard to right and to left, and said continuing :—

"But, the cast also says that out of the 'west,' the quarters where the female elements of Nature reside, will rise thick clouds, so the 'rain' will fall after all but after much hesitation. So you will be after all the winner but that is after a prolonged and very difficult contesting. Let me congratulate you on that anyhow."

The old man now turned a few pages of the Book of Changes, and said:—

"Well, congratulations! But there is one bother to come to mar the aspect, you see. Listen to me attentively. In the Explanations I find the following words 'Man and wife embittered, The sanctity of married life thereby marred.' See! And as I have told you the cast straight-way said 'the male element is quite all right but a slight slur is there of female nature,' didn't it? I spy by the cast that a woman is there about you."

Ryunosuke's followers were highly amused at this and were listening to the old man trying to look unconcerned. Then the old man:—

"Have an eye on your wife, your wife is not all right. She doesn't quite like you. Of course she is to blame—for a wife to allow herself to be disrespectful towards her husband, not to speak of be inclined to be faithless. But the husband also is to blame to some extent, he must have her well in hand. You mustn't allow yourself to be hen-pecked, man....."

"Shut up!" said Andow, one of the pupils who accompanied Ryunosuke, upon this. "Go easy, old man, what

do you mean by calling our master 'henpecked,' he is not married yet. Sir" turning to Ryunosuke "Let's waste no more precious time of ours upon this fake fortune-teller. Let us go, it's only an easy stage to the summit." Andow concluded, and they paid the man and the house and resumed their climbing.

Later Bunnojo also left the place all by himself. The distance to the summit from this rest-house is short. As Ryunosuke and his party as well as Bunnojo walked their way, the road now became thick with the swordsmen, swanky and proud who had come from various towns and villages of the Lowland Provinces to take part in the tournament.



## Chapter 12.

Amongst all the Eastern Provinces Musashi is the most noted for its association with the sword. The very name Musashi itself is derived from a military event of old. It is handed down to us that the origin of the name is from the event that, as early as towards the end of the first century Prince Yamato-Takeru, the Conqueror, caused an armoury to be established on Mt. Chichibu. But the people of Mitate Mountain would say no, it was not on Chichibu, it was at our Oku-no-miya of Mitate (Inmost Shrine of the Mountain), that is Oguna-no-mine, the peak of Oguna,

where he built his armory. Oguna was the name of the Prince before he was called Yamato Takeru or Japan's Brave by a rebel chieftain of Kyushu who succumbed to the prince's dagger. Oguna Peak is also called Kōkoro-san or yama. Kōkoro means "Kō" armour, "koro" basket or store. There is a suit of purple strap armour at Mitake Shrine numbered as one of the national treasures. This is popularly said as belonged to the conqueror prince of the first century. But as a matter of fact it was offered to the gods of the shrine by the Ninety-first Mikado Gouta Tenu in order to pray for the safety of Japan in the year 1281 A. D., as he did to several other shrines of the Land, when the Mongol Invasion threatened Japan.

Such being what the proud history of this Mt. Mitake is, the dedication tournament that was used to be held every fourth year here was an important and exciting event for the swordsmen of East Provinces. Not only did they throng from all parts of the Eight Provinces, but also from Shinshu, Izu, Kōshu and other surrounding provinces as well as attended by some enthusiasts from far Oshu and West Japan. Every man who came was a fully qualified swordsman, proficient in the art enough to establish a school of his own.

The number that assembled to-day was over five hundred. Those who had far to come arrived at the mountain a few days previously and were quartered at *Oshis'* houses. Pilgrim visiting mountains have a number of what they call *Oshi*, or leader, who are ordained to conduct pilgrims.

Out of the five hundred, a hundred and twenty would partake in the tournament. In the court that lies before the shrine's hall of worship, curtains were put around a square to form an arena in the centre. A solemn ritual by the priest over, the tournaments began.

Bunnojo Utsuki reaching near the summit called at a leader's quarters, and was conducted by him to the court. Bunnojo now entered the theatre at the west side stooping a little to pass under the curtain raising it with the left hand. Entering he found the place already full of swordsmen all sitting at attention and in solemn silence. He was about to take a seat on the last row of the Kogen Ito Ryu School fencers. But one Hiresawa, a reputed fencer of the school, beckoned to him. So greeting the whole school with a slight bow he took a forward seat and leaving his dummy-sword in the charge of Hiresawa, he looked about to see if Rynnosuke had already arrived, but there was no sign of him.

According to the programme bout after bout went on, they were all very absorbingly interesting and instructive. After thirty odd matches a recess was allowed at noon. Then, when the day began to decline, a very refined 'formal motion' contest between one Amagase of Takatsuki, Musashi Province, representing Ryugō Ryu School fencing and one Ōno of Odawara, Sagami, who represented Tamiya Ryu School entertained the spectators. Then the referee called out:—

"Mitsutsugu Fujiwara Bunnojo Utsuki, of Kogen Itto Ryu School"

The announcement suddenly gave tention and a serious turn to the atmosphere which had been rendered stagnant owing to the lack of excitement.

Bunnojo was twenty-six years old, dressed in a silk *kosode* with 'wisteria abloom,' his family badge seen in white. The wide sleeves of the garment were tucked under the armpit by means of a tuck-cord, and his skirts were of *chan* silk. He carried a dummy wooden sword of three foot two, made of red oak, the hilt-guard was leather. He stood now in the arena in socks snow-white and on the soft and a little moist mountain soil. A little later the voice of the referee rang out again:—

"Muneyoshi Soma Ryunosuke Tsukue, formerly of the Kogen Itto Ryu School."

The match between Tsukue and Utsuki was the particular one that people had looked forward to among all the bouts of the day. Because Tsukue was one whom all fencers expected a great deal of, the strangeness of his method of fencing attracting much attention. Especially the renown gained of 'At-the-Moment of' had given no small amount of unpleasant experience to many a fencer. To-day at this place of publicity the report of this bout would instantly go throughout the whole land of Japan. He was therefore watched with much interest and with some concern for the reason that he had belonged to the Kogen Itto Ryu School and was now seemed to be evolving a school of his own—in a

way a traitor to his mother school, and that man was now pitched against Utsuki who well represented the manner and spirit of that school. So this match was more significant than a match between two different schools. Some doubted the wisdom of the committee to see Tsukue and Utsuki scheduled for conflict considering it a piece of thoughtless selection. Some elderly people feared for an untoward turn the match might take form out of spite and professional jealousy.

Ryunosuke Tsukue responding to the announcement, made his appearance out of the east end of the theatre raising the curtain. He was seen dressed in black silk *habutae* clothes with 'nine stars' for the badge, and in silk skirts of *sendashira*. His sleeve tuck-cord was leather. He came forth with a wooden sword that was of the same make and length as that of Utsuki. The two fencers first greeted their seniors with a bow, then towards the shrine. The referee was an old man called Isshinsai Nakamura, a famed fencer who opened a new school of his own called Fuji-Asama Ryu, who was particularly good at refereeing matches.

He appeared in front of the senior seats attired in *kamishimo* or Shogun's Court ceremonials. He carried an iron framed folding fan in his right hand.

The senior seats were filled with old dignified leaders of various schools. Amongst them Toshiyasu Hemmi from Chichibu of Musashi, the first master of the Kogen Itto

Ryu School, was conspicuous. He looked as if he were the chief promoter of today's events.

Utuki and Tsukue now took their places in the arena parting left and right, and sat on their heels to salute each other with a bow. Their knees described the letter V. They sat so distanced that the tips of the swords were three feet apart. Now their eyes met.

The atmosphere of the whole place began to be oppressive and charged with gravity and significance. Now they rose at their own sign, Ryunosuke assumed the guard of his wont--'to the eye' and 'at the very moment of the move.' His face was white and as usual showed no sign of emotion, respiration normal, so the opponent had no means of gauging his move, and the tip of his dummy sword appeared to be light as if floating.

To counter to this guard of Ryunosuke, Bunnojo had no other course open but also to be at 'to the eye.' His face was plump and his cheeks rosy. With eyes as clear as crystal he watched those of Ryunosuke that gleamed white. Bunnojo was the first man among the Kogen Itto Ryu School fencers indeed, for thus matching Ryunosuke face to face, there was not much to choose between the two.

But it could not be a clean and smooth battle to fence with Ryunosuke because of his peculiar guard. He never assumed the offensive but only gave a dirty and ugly counter which was always effective. In order to throw Ryunosuke off guard it was always necessary to assume an offensive. An opponent would usually grow impatient

being kept standing without a move for a long time. The old fencer Isshinsai must have also found it a difficult thing to referee a bout with such a fencer.

The old referee was ever alert never relenting the close observation of the two fencers. It seemed to him that the best course was to declare the bout a draw before they came to anything, for it seemed that there was no end to watching for an opening of the two fencers. But he himself was held charmed by the tenseness of the two contesting swordsmen, and failed to give the necessary signal.

Little by little, however, Bunnojo began to breathe unevenly. Ryunosuke on his part grew paler in complexion, and perspiration began to appear on the temples in big beads. Isshinsai was about to signal a draw. But then the tip of Bunnojo's sword which had been held still until now began to move after the manner of a wagtail. Isshinsai held back his signal thinking that Bunnojo was planning for a move, and looked at Ryunosuke in his eyes only to find them turned to ferocity. Bunnojo's eyes also betrayed murder. Isshinsai cast a hurried glance at Toshiyasu Hemmi, the doyen, who was seated among the seniors. He had been watching the bout with eyes not at all peaceful, his hand gripping firm an iron framed folding fan. He shook his head lightly reading the meaning of Isshinsai's glance that was to seek his leave for a draw. Isshinsai was perturbed. To his experienced eye it was clear that the match was now no mere bout but a duel. Nothing but such an extraordinary thing as the great cedar-tree before the



shrine would be rent asunder and fall between the two fencers happen, or the referee would put his own person between the two swords, the murderous intentions could not have been dispelled. Isshinsai thought that no delay was now permissible, so he called out

"Draw!"

Isshinsai called it out on his own accord to rise to the occasion and held out his iron framed folding fan right between the two swords. But then

"Point!"

rang out from Bunnojo and he gave a bold and ferocious thrust to Ryunosuke with both hands firmly on the hilt. It was hard to decide which word was pronounced first the 'draw' or the 'point.' The 'point' of Bunnojo made every one of the five hundred odd that were present shudder. But then Bunnojo himself was, strange to behold, seen behind Toshiyasu Hemmi amongst the Kogen Ittoryu fencers, sitting with his head between the knees, finding his way there like one thrown by a catapult.

Ryunosuke was seen standing, however, in the middle of the arena with his wooden dummy sword point down in his right hand.

### Chapter 13.

The spectators were all puzzled. They could not tell what was what of the lightning conduct of the two fencers who came to blows at long last of the suspense. They did not know which one was the winner. Then Isshinsai, the referee, stepped out to the middle of the place to announce findings.

"The bout was a draw with no points to either side."

For a draw it was strange to see Bunnojo not remaining in the arena but run into his school; people looked dissatisfied with the announcement.

Ryunosuke's white gleaming eye turned upon Isshinsai:—

"Sir, was the match a draw?"

He drew himself up erect, the wooden sword still held in hand, point down. He spoke sharply.

"Yes, as I have announced" came calmly from the old man.

Ryunosuke closing up a little:—

"Then out here with the man, I demand."

"There's no need. If there is any fault with my adjudgement, state."

"Yes, I state. I foiled the point by an advance, and in so doing I landed a cut in the face. Your old feeble eyes could not, perhaps, perceive that."

The bout had now changed into a fracas between a contestant and the referee, and it gave no small amount of

concern to the assemblage. Many were inclined to think that it was really a mistake of the old man to announce it as a draw, and were watching for his words. But Isshinsai kept cool and answered with a laugh:—

“What, do you call me blind? Stop your plattle. You are very rude. You were both blind and deaf with excitement. I called out draw, you could not hear me, that is all. I am not concerned with your private actions after my adjudgement. There could have been no point, nor any cut, as far as the bout itself was concerned.”

The announcement of the referee ‘draw,’ the action of Bunnojo trying to deliver a thrust, and Ryunosuke’s cut appeared as if all had taken place at the same moment but they could not have happened at the same time. They must have taken place in the order above stated. So Ryunosuke held his tongue and looked in the face of the old man:—

“Sir, let us try again.”

“No, to bout again because of a grudge is against the usage of a dedication tournament.”

Isshinsai was adamant.

“But to leave an issue doubtful is not fair nor honest before gods. I desire another bout” Ryunosuke said firmly and showed his obstinate determination that he would not leave the place unless a just announcement as to the result of the bout was forthcoming. Isshinsai was also a man who never went back on his own word. So:—

“No, no more meeting. If you must have another bout, it shall be I who fight you.”

“I regard it highly amusing.” Ryunosuke said with a cool smile. “You are the grand master of Fuji-Asama Ryu School. Mr. Isshinsai Nakamura is a fencer good enough for me to bout with.”

“Old as I am, I still keep the skill and prowess to beat a haughty man like you” said Isshinsai and was now sufficiently roused to meet Ryunosuke, for the obstinacy and rudeness of the young fencer had been too much to endure for an old stager of Isshinsai’s stamp.

The unexpected dispute had now taken an interesting turn people thought, and if Isshinsai should really give fight to Ryunosuke it must be an interesting extra indeed, and all waited for it with suppressed excitement.

“Mr. Tsukue, I say Mr. Tsukue, know your own place” shouted Toshiyasu Hemmi, Grand Master of the Kogen Ito Ryu School fencers. He could not see Ryunosuke’s haughtiness pass unchecked.

#### Chapter 14.

Toshiyasu Hemmi was the grand master of Kogen Ito Ryu School of fencing. Formerly Ryunosuke belonged to his school. They were master and pupil. Toshiyasu by right had authority over Ryunosuke.

To relate a little about the Kogen Itto Ryu School it started as early as seventeenth century by Kagehisa Itosai Itô of Izu Province. His style was taken by Tada-akira Tenzen Mikogami ex Jirozaemon Ono. He was a fencer not a whit inferior to the famed Yagyu, and was instructor to the Shogun side by side with him. Tadatsune Jirozaemon Ono, one of the sons of Mikogami, opened the Onoha Itto Ryu School; Tadanari Tenzen Itô the Chuyaha Itto Ryu. Especially Tadanari was given by his father Tadaakira leave to inherit the family name of his grand father and the use of the sword of jar-cutting. That house was taken up by Tadao Heiemon Kamei, then the best pupil of the school, and he was given leave to take the family name of Itô. Next to Tadao came Masakatsu Gozaemon Mizoguchi to start the Mizoguchi School.

At Ozawaguchi, County of Chichibu, Province of Musashi lived one Yoshitoshi Tashiro Hemmi. He received instruction in Itto Ryu School fencing of Mizoguchi style from Nagamasa Gosuke Sakurai, and becoming thoroughly proficient in the art and lore of the sword he opened a new school Kôgen Itto Ryu, and was called the restorer of East Province swordsmanship. The present Toshiyasu Hemmi was a man of this man's line, and his word to check Ryunosuke had full weight born of the history and tradition of the profession.

"You assume yourself, you are rude to Sir Referee, restrain yourself" Hemmi yelled. His pupils who sat be-

hind him some nursed Utsuki, some stared at Ryunosuke ready to give him battle.

Ryunosuke looked at this in silence. His slender eyes that gleam white showed a sneer. He turned to the shrine to bow and left the theatre raising the curtain to pass out.

The blow that was landed on the face of Bunnojo was a cruel one, it crushed into the skull. Worthy of his training and tradition Bunnojo managed to get back to a seat behind his master and die there with his face hid instead of exposing himself to the shame of having fallen dead on the spot. He was quite dead when he sat face down behind Hemmi.

Though it was to test one's real skill and prowess, to kill a man was something unpermissible. Yet it was clear that Bunnojo acted first, and that if Ryunosuke did not act quickly enough to deliver the cut, Bunnojo's thrust, which was given with such ferocity, would have pierced the throat of Ryunosuke, and what had befallen Bunnojo would have fallen upon Ryunosuke himself. Why then Bunnojo dealt forth such a savage point? Unless one were intent on killing it was impossible to deal out that. Why did Bunnojo act so? Such being what it was there was fault on the side of Bunnojo, too; Ryunosuke alone could not have been blamed for cruelty and overstepping the rules of bout. Therefore though many were indignant at Ryunosuke for his haughty behaviour, they held their tongue and sat to finish the tournament which had only now two events left to get through.

Ryunosuke took no interest in the remaining events. He took to the hostelry, changed clothes, took supper, and slipped out for Oku-no-miya Peak through the cedars, which were wet with clouds.



### Chapter 15.

Passing through the Gate to Gods he climbed the road over Fog Hill, and taking the path to the right he came to where a finger-post for Nanayo Falls of Oku-no-miya Peak stood.

The soil of Mitake Mountain is fit for producing cedar. Giant cedars from fifty to sixty feet high and a pleasure to look at, cover the whole mountain from foot to summit. Especially they are magnificent along the path that leads down to the falls from Fog Hill. Ryunosuke wended his way among those trees; fog and clouds concealed his traces soon.

Looking back, the bonfire before the shrine as well as the light of votive lamps looked faint as if they were asleep. The sound of the water at the falls was now audible. Ryunosuke stood pensive. A prayer-bird hooted in the tree high above his head. At Mitake the prayer-bird is called *gokikodori*, at Holy Koya (a mountain some forty miles south of Kobe as the crow flies) *busposo* or *buddha-bird*.

As Ryunosuke stood the tranquility was broken by a, football.

"Is that Mr. Ryunosuke?" It was a woman who spoke, she was Bunnojo's wife.

"Is it Madame Hama?"

"Yes. Beware, they are planning to waylay you."

"What, a trick!"

"Yes, five of the fencers have left the hostelry and are coming this way after you."

The hand that touched Ryunosuke was warm, the breath that he felt at his ear was like the puff from a furnace.

"Madame Hama, this is no place of safety. Get over there and hide" the man said pointing to a wayside shrine for *Sai*, or the god of road, that stood hard by.

"Are you intending to die fighting?" Hama asked and seemed as if she was going to stop Ryunosuke from going forward.

"If you are, kill me first, please!"

"What?!"

"Bunnojo is dead" her voice shook and it was low.

"I am no longer Utsuki!"

Ryunosuke committed himself to no speech.

"Where shall I go?"

The prayer-bird hooted again.

"I can't go back to Kai" Hama added and Ryunosuke began to feel the soft body of the woman come pressing against his body.

The bird hooted again.

"Isn't it a cuckoo, the bird of parting and death?"

Hama leaned back to look up in the tree.

"Oh, speak to me, Sir Ryunosuke!"

Ryunosuke still held his silence.

"Are you proof against woman as you are against the sword?"

Hama's hair in streaks fell upon the neck of Ryunosuke who was silent. The night was still, the resonant Nanayo falls alone broke the silence.

A little while later voices were heard in the direction of Fog Hill.

"Coming, they are coming, our enemies are."

The whole countenance of Ryunosuke was lit up, he felt a joyous thrill for the coming fray.

"No, no" Hama cried and clung to him beseechingly.

"Let's get away, I don't want to die, please take me to live with you" the woman said.

When fog and clouds shrouded the mountain the figure of the man and the woman was no longer in sight.



## Chapter 16.

At Motomachi, Hongō of Yedo, there was a draper whose house had a fire-proof compartment. Clerks and boys in all about ten were seen within. One of the boys was watering the street before the house that hung Yamaokaya

for the name. A man who appeared to be a peasant accompanying a girl, ten or eleven years old, who carried a small parcel under her arm, came in. The man:—

"With your leave, if you please."

"Come right in, please." The shop people shouted with much show of welcome, thinking they were customers. It was about a month after the event last stated that these two people made their appearance here. The readers must have guessed them rightly. They were no other than Shichibei who lived near Ōme, and the little girl was Matsuo, grand daughter of the murdered pilgrim.

"Is this Mr. Kyuemon Yamaokaya?"

"Yes, so it is." The boy who came to attend them stood vacant.

"We are from Ōme, we want to see Mr. Kyuemon or Mrs. Kyuemon, if you please."

"You say you want to see our master or lady, but what is your business?"

"Well you know, I have brought here a relation of this house—a little girl, this child."

The boy gazed at the faces of Shichibei and the girl in turns and seemed to be puzzled what to say. Then a clerk at the counter spoke.

"Do you say that you have brought us a girl who is a relation to us, is it?"

"Yes, that's it. If you tell the master or his lady that it is a daughter of Hikosaburo who used to deal in swords at Honchō, they will know. This is the daughter." Shichi-

bei introduced Matsu to the clerk. The clerk did not at all look quite free from suspicion, but at last called a boy and said :—

“Chōmatsu, master is not in, so you shall have to tell the mistress that a farmer from near Ōme is here with a daughter of Mr. Hikosaburo of Honcho, and says that he wants to see her. Got it?”

“Yes, sir” the boy answered lazily and went in.

“Well, sit down” the clerk said to Shichibei and pushed the brazier to him as it was the custom. Shichibei sat down and began to smoke his pipe calm and collected, but Matsu looked to be not at all at home, and kept herself as much hidden as possible behind Shichibei. Pretty soon the boy who had gone in came back and said standing in the most rude manner, but addressing the clerk :—

“The lady says that she has never seen nor heard of such a person as the sword-dealer of Honcho. So of course his daughter cannot be anything to her, and she wishes me to tell them to go.”

Shichibei and Matsu at this looked at each other in the face. But Matsu put herself forward and said with her eyes full of tears and her face turned red :—

“She couldn't have said that. She could not have. The mistress of this house is my mother's elder sister. If she looks at me she will understand.”

Matsu said this with much force. The clerk and the boy looked scornfully at her and Shichibei.

“As this girl says, if mistress will come and see her all will be plain” Shichibei said.

“But she says she doesn't know such people; what can I do?” pouted the boy.

“If I see aunt she will know me. I remember such things as that she took me to a theatre with her and so on when I was little.” explained Matsu. To follow up that Shichibei said, speaking in the language of the honest farm folks :—

“You see, I rescued this girl as I found her distressed with her grandfather at Great Buddhisattva Pass on the Yedo-Kofu By-way as I happened to pass there. So I have taken her with me. She says she has nobody to go to but Mr. and Mrs. Kyuemon, so we've come. Please tell this to the mistress.” Shichibei bowed several times to ask. So the clerk, looking highly annoyed, with a jerk of his chin to the boy said “Well, you go and tell our mistress once more.”

The boy went in very reluctantly, but came out with a small paper packet :—

“Sir, Mistress says that she has no knowledge of such folk. This is a very small sum—she says, but it is for ‘sandal money’ and she asks them to take it and go back. If the money is not enough you may, out of the cash-box, add a *ryo* or two she says.”

The clerk, receiving the packet from the hand of the boy and advancing before Shichibei said :—

“I am sorry, friend, but the matter must stand as you

see, so please return with this very small token for 'sandal-money' and he pushed forth the packet towards Shichibei. Shichibei was hurt but controlling his anger held his peace staring at the packet. Matsn turned aside and trembled with rage. Just then "Good-day, Murn, please take seat," shouted the whole company of clerks and boys.

The one who now walked into the shop was a woman passed the prime but attractive and stately, her hair was done on the back of the head and cut short indicating that she was a widow of a daimio or Shogun's retainer, but on close examination her coquettish airs would bespeak of her non-samurai origin; age about twenty-seven or eight, she carried early-autumn cut flowers made into a bundle.

"Show me once more that piece that I was shown the other day, won't you?"

"Very well, Madame, you needn't have troubled yourself to come; you might have sent us a word. A new stock arrived yesterday direct from the weavers, and we were thinking of taking it to you for inspection. These are the consignment" bowing and talking away like anything the clerks and boys they piled up heap after heap of drapery before the woman.

"Oh, I merely dropped in as I was passing this way" came from the woman turning over the wares with an air of dignified contentment.

"Hey, Mr. Clerk, what the meaning of this?" came sharply from Shichibei who had been utterly neglected. With a gesture of contempt he threw down lightly the

packet of money that was placed before him. The tone of his speech made the woman turn round to have a look at Shichibei. The clerk and the boys who thought that they had had it done with the peasant visitors were startled to see him now begin to talk in such a tone.

"We haven't come to beg for money, hey Mr. Clerk. You reckon wrongly with your man."

Shichibei hit the edge of the brazier to empty the ashes of his pipe.

"I've come only to bring a relation of yours to you, that is all. Yet you treat me as if I were out for a blackmail and try to get rid of me by money. I am not that sort, you know."

The tone became all the more menacing as if Shichibei were looking for trouble. The shop's people began to feel uneasy, and some of them who were quick tempered were clenching their fists.

"Well, I am loath to be taken for having come to extort money. So I will show you the money I was entrusted with by the grandfather of this girl as he died."

So saying Shichibei undid a small parcel to take out three packets of a hundred gold *ryo* each.

"See, this is the money I was entrusted with by her dead grandfather. Perhaps I thought there would be no need of this display, but now it is just to show you that we wouldn't have brought this if we were after money. Well—"

Shichibei continued in a tone a great deal softened down. "Well, I don't think it is desirable, even if it could have

been granted by dint of my asking, to leave this girl in charge of people who drive their relations away not even once granting an interview. Since I have taken charge of her I feel a great deal towards her, she is no longer a stranger to me. All right! Since it seems that fate wills it, I'll see to the welfare of this child. She shall be my adopted daughter, I declare this to you to obviate any future misunderstanding."

Here the man put away his pipe into its sheath and turning to Matsu,

"Well, return with me, they won't have you, poor child" he said, and doing up the three hundred *ryo* of money into a parcel again was ready to depart. Matsu looked very miserable, her eyes were full of tears. She nodded an assent burying her little chin in her bosom.

The back view of the departing figures was lonesome in the cool of late summer evening. But the boys and clerks of the store laughed at the departing figure. Matsu turned back and stared with angry eyes at the curtain of Yamaokaya. She seemed she could not leave it at that, but Shichibei consoled her saying "Matsu, never worry, Yedo is a big place, I'll fix you up all right"

And presently the girl was seen following the man.

### Chapter 17.

As Shichibei and Matsu were about to take the turn towards the Shrine of Myojin of Kanda (popularly believed to be a shrine built to appease the angry soul of Masakado, a defeated rebel chieftain of tenth century) they were addressed:—

"I say, father and daughter." There was not much traffic in the street, so they could soon see that they were addressed. The speaker was the widow-like lady whom they saw at Yamaokaya.

"Excuse me, but I understand that you are relations to Mr. Yamaokaya, the draper."

"Yes, this child is. I am no relation of his. I am only a peasant."

"Is that it? I asked the people of the shop about you. I take it that you are in some fix, so I ventured forth to talk to you. I suppose you were surprised by being spoken to by a stranger."

Shichibei thought she spoke rather in too familiar a tone for a woman of her appearance and attire, and said, "We were not surprised, Madame"

"Well, you know—" the woman began turning her head to look away:—

"I live in a lane over there. It is not proper to open the subject here, but if you wish I may take charge of this girl, so I spoke to you."



"That was very kind of you."

Shichibei felt a little uncomfortable to find a rescue coming from such a strange person as her.

"Thanks all the same, Madame, but to throw it upon you, an utter stranger, is asking too much. I couldn't do that."

"To an utter stranger' is the term I should have used to blame myself. This world is a strange place. As you said at the store, there are such sort that turn a relation, who has come far, from the door, as well as offer help to a stranger in difficulty from no other motive than kindness. All is fate. If you have no other place to go to, take the girl to mine, I need a help."

Shichibei was not a little surprised to find such a kind stranger, and before he could bring forth an answer the woman began to show the way saying "Come, and pass the night under my roof at all events. There's no one in my household whom you would find disagreeable."

"Well then, if you kindly will," said Shichibei, and he, with the girl, followed her much mystified with the breezy kindness of the woman. Presently they came to a house, had stood in a lane west of Tsumagoi Hill near Yushima High Street. There were black board-fences four yards long for the frontage of six yards, lattice doors filling the remaining two, and above and over the fence a garden pine showed its comely form as well as the balustrade of the upstairs verandah of the house that was very tastefully constructed. The woman opened the

door and conducted her guests saying, "Come right in, this is my house, there's nobody in except the old servant and the pussy."

Passing the gate Shichibei saw *Shogetsu-do Ko Ryu* and so forth hung at the door indicating that the woman taught 'flower arranging' and was not a vampire after all as Shichibei was inclined to take her for.

### Chapter 18.

Along the Yedo-Kofu Highway there stood many low-land towns such as Goshuku, Fuchu, Hino and a few others before Hachioji was reached. But along the By-way, or Ōme Road, one might say one could find no human habitation worth calling such, but the rank grass of the Musashino Plains.

Especially Maruyamadai of Ōme Road was noted for footpads and the like, and nobody, even a strong man, would take this road save in the broad daylight and in company. To pass this place after sunset was sheer madness. But this morning the rule was set aside. While the waning moon still shone in the early morning the tinkling of the bell of a pack-horse came from the direction of Maruyamadai. Sandalled hoofs brushed the morning dew. A young horse-man in a sedge-hat, oblivious to the dangers of notorious Maruyamadai, was leading the horse

to pass there. Possibly he was a peasant returning home leaving Yedo overnight.

He was a bold fellow although he was only a peasant and had nothing to lose. A man of common sense, he he only a horse-man, would not take, this hour of day, this part of the By-way. Surprising as it was on a closer examination, one would find that the horse-man was no other than Yohachi the mill-keeper below Mannenbashi Bridge. He was a sort of a half wit, so 'knew no fear' as the saying is.

On the horse were three big basket-trunks tied to the pack-saddle and a wooden image of *Jizo*, (a god whose function, amongst others, is the protection of children) about three feet high. Where had he got it from? A great deal of the paint had come off and the point of the staff as well as that of the orb were chipped. He set the image upright in the middle of the horse's back, and had it tied by a rope neatly. So from a distance it looked as if *Jizo* was riding. Yohachi, leading the horse, looked back to see the image from time to time

"Oh, my *Jizo*, you there, sir!?"

"Well, I'm told that I was found a baby along this Road and the grand old Mr. Tsukue fathered me. Who are my parents? I suppose, even I wasn't born out of a tree-fork or between two rocks. I must have had parents. Nearly everybody has one whom it calls 'pah' and another 'mah,' but I haven't got either of them. So people look down upon me. I don't mind that though, because

the grand old Mr. Tsukue looks after me and I am happy. But I'd like very much to see, only once will do, what I can call my real 'pah' and 'mah,' indeed I do. The abbot of Kaizōji Temple says 'Jizo is a buddha who specially favours orphans. *Jizo* has said even in Hades the children calling at him would receive help from him. So believe in *Jizo*, and you shall surely come to find your parents.' Therefore I believe in *Jizo*. If I see one carved of stone, fallen down on the road-side, I never pass unless I set it up. If I can find flowers I offer them and worship, if water is to be found I offer that. Yesterday I found this wooden image at a second-hand furniture dealer at Yotsuya of Yedo. I asked the price, he said one *kowan* and two hundred *mon*, so I paid out all of my pocket money to buy it. I am going to set it up in my house and worship."

He thus talked to himself as he led his horse.

"Well, I'm all by myself. My grand old master cannot be said to be happy either. He's ill in bed several years and has lost the use of his limbs. The only son, this young master, has been missing since the day of that great tournament. The grand old man is now kindly looked after by zealous relatives, but in heart he must be lonesome."

Yohachi began to cry.

"Lonesome he must be. I am hail and hearty, yet not a day passess without my longing to find my parents. The grand old master has disowned Mr. Ryunosuke, but I am sure he must at times think if only his son were with him. To open my heart Mr. Ryunosuke is open to blame. He was

disowned by his father certainly, but it is his real father, it is a mistake that he does not come back to his father out of love to one's aged parent. I have had a loathsome feeling towards Mr. Ryunosuke from the beginning. I think one need not go more in fencing than one learns how to defend oneself. Yet the young master thinks nothing of killing people. Even if it were necessary to acquire skill in using the sword, killing people is beyond the limit. I know it's not for me to think ill of one of my masters, but if he goes on as he does without mending his ways, he will surely come to grief in the end. As I thought he might be somewhere in Yedo I went about the city searching for him going out of my way yesterday as well as the day before yesterday. But Yedo is a big place, so I couldn't find him. If I saw him I thought I would give him a straight talk and take him back with me to his old father, but I couldn't find him."

Yohachi went on, then he turned to take a look at the image:—

"Well, well, never mind, I'll do treble exercises before the image—one lot for the grand old master, one for young master and one for my own self"

His soliloquy ceased. The pack-pock, pack-pock of the horse broke the silence of the forest.

Presently he began again.

"Then there's a woman I can't understand at all. She is that Hama, that woman whom I carried into the mill-house as young master commanded me to. I shudder to

think of that event. I had never stooped to such a thing. But then that woman, in spite of that, came and asked me the morning of the tournament to take her letter to young master. I can't at all understand her." Thus Yohachi travelled leading his horse, and when two-thirds of the notorious Maruyamadai were passed he saw a light through the trees—somebody must have been kindling a fire.

"Oh, I see a fire" he said and went on expecting nothing untoward, but as he approached noisy voices were heard in the direction of the fire.

"Oh, some folks are up so early" he muttered and on approaching, the voices became all the more noisy.

"Can't they travel silently? Sounds as if a brawl is going on. Oh the noise!"

Pack-pock, pack-pock! Yohachi led the horse. Now the figure of a few men with sticks and poles surrounding a man was seen and the noise appeared to be that they were hurling threats at the man.

"What are you doing here?" Yohachi addressed them. Maruyamadai was frequented by roughs and footpads, it was nothing surprising to find them there. So a sensible man would, on seeing them, try to get away from them, but Yohachi was a simpleton, he thrust his head right in the midst of five or six rogues.

"Who are you?" the rogues were rather frightened.

"Thought you were gambling or doing some such thing by the noise, but I now see that you are scolding this little man."

Extreme boldness and a lack of sense at times look alike

"This is a half-wit"

"Let's beat him up"

Those who appeared to be something like footpads were low class members of what people called 'long short-swords-men' who knocked about this locality and did not hesitate to stoop even to waylaying passengers not to speak of pilfering. A proper 'long short-swordsman' acted honourably, he was a Japanese Robin Hood, but town dwelling.

The one who was the object of the knavish action of a group of roughs, or long short-swordsmen, was a boy eleven or twelve and appeared to be the son of a samurai, from his costume. He sat in the middle of the road, and was ready to draw upon if any one should close in, but appeared to be really tired out, and he was pitiful to look at.

"Oh. I see you are going to rob this child, eh? You had better not, it's not right to rob, you know."

The knaves wanted well nigh to burst out in laughter to see a simple face right in the midst of them, and talking in this fashion, and turning back to find *Jizo* standing erect on the horse-back. The comic aspect disarmed their fighting Yohachi.

"I have told you that I have an important mission to carry out, and so I have asked you to let me go, for I offer you all the money I have with me. But if you still insist on taking my clothes and my swords there's no help but I draw upon my sword and fight you" said the boy deter-

minly as he sat and stared at the rogues with eyes that held tears.

"Hey, youngster, your swords fetch money—they attracted our eyes. We are not the sort that are charmed by a few pence carried by a youngster in his pocket. Give them up before you come to grief. You may brandish that shining object, but you can't scare us, we are the famous 'five' of the Roads to Kai. You had better hand them over with good grace, and begone in peace."

One man shook his pole over the boy's head, another tried to snatch the sword that the boy held embraced in his arms. In so doing the man bent stretching out his arm, Yohachi pushed him hard at the loin. Losing balance the man fell rolling over like an egg-plant.

"You knaves" Yohachi said.

"You chip in?" they shouted. They never expected this simpleton would be so brave.

## Chapter 19.

Soon the place was clear of the knaves. What could they do against Yohach, the Strong?

"You were in danger. Are you not hurt?"

"No, I'm all right. I must thank you."

"Did you come by yourself?"

"Yes, alone."

"From where?"

"From Yedo."

"Where are you going?"

"To a place a little way further than Ōme."

"A little way further than Ōme! ? I am going that way myself, I'll go with you."

"Yes, if you kindly will"

The boy tried to get up with his sword as a support, but he staggered. No wonder! If he had left Yedo early this morning, it was a long journey of eighteen miles, and that for a child! He seemed that he could not move for sore and swollen feet. It must have been when he was in that condition that he was waylaid by the knaves.

Yet he never complained of the sore feet nor of the tired body; he tried to walk with Yohachi. His pitiful plight could not escape even the eye of Yohachi.

"You seem to be very tired, wait a moment....."

He looked back to see the horse back, and cocked his head.....

"The load is not much, but it is disrespectful to put the image on one side, and.....one may not ride with *Jizo*."

He now folded his arms and remained in mute consultation with the *Jizo*

"Oh yes, that's the way," he said and clapped his hands. And approaching the horse he took down the image reverently and putting it on his back to which he secured it with a rope-sash as a mother does with her child.

"This will do fine. Now you get on this horse; oh no, no ceremony! You can't walk with those feet."

The boy seemed indeed grateful, and sat on the horse as he was offered. Yohachi led the horse taking the bridles in his hand and carrying the *Jizo* on his back. He looked funny but he did not mind:—

"You seem to be a son of samurai. What part of Ōme do you go?"

The morning mist had cleared, the larks were up, and Mitake where the tournament was held came into view like one awoke from a sleep when the forests, farm and distant farm-houses did not obstruct the view.

"I am going to a place called Wada"

"Wada!"

"Yes, to Utsuki of Wada."

"Mr. Utsuki of Wada!"

Yohachi turned back to have a look at the boy.

"To Mr. Utsuki? Is Mr. Utsuki your relation?"

"I am an Utsuki."

"Are you an Utsuki? Then are you Mr. Bunnojo's brother?"

"Yes, I'm Hyoma, his brother."

"Are you? I never knew."

The boy was Hyoma, Bunnojo Utsuki's full-blooded brother.

Hyoma had been from infancy brought up by his uncle Katayanagi, a retainer to Shōgun, who lived at Bancho, Yedo. On hearing the sad news concerning Bunnojo, he

left his home rashly without taking leave, and hid upon the road to visit his old home, and when he had been on the point of dropping from fatigue he was set upon by the rogues.

The horseman's surprise at hearing that he was an Utsuki seemed to the boy a little unusual, and he said:—

"Mr. Horseman, do you belong to Ōme?"

"Yes."

But Yohachi cut short his words, and proceeded in silence for about a hundred yards or so. Hyōma did not venture any further questions. Then Yohachi resumed:—

"Your brother Mr. Bunnōjo was also an unfortunate man."

"Do you know of my brother?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then you must know of Ryunosuke Tsukue."

"Yes, I do."

"Then possibly about the tournament that was held on the fifth of the fifth month at Mitake!"

"Yes, I know all."

"That's good! Tell me about the bout between my brother and Ryunosuke," Hyōma said and seemed excited. But just as much as Hyōma was anxious to hear more Yohachi seemed to be reluctant and sad.

"Well, Mr. Ryunosuke won, Mr. Bunnōjo lost."

"But I hear that it was not an ordinary bout."

"Oh no, not at all. It was an extraordinary affair. It

concerned your brother, so you must be angry. I, too, am sad and vexed about it....."

Yohachi began to cry.

"You have nothing to cry about, have you? You surely had nothing to do with it."

"Nothing to do with it? Oh yes, a great deal."

"With you!? That bout!?"

"You had better say nothing about it but forget."

"How can I! That's why I slipped out of my home at Yedo. I have come to avenge my brother."

"To avenge your brother!? Whom do you fight?"

"Ryunosuke Tsukue, of course."

"Fight Mr. Ryunosuke?"

Yohachi turned. The eyes of the boy on the horse-back were fixed upon Mitake Mountain and hot tears ran down his cheeks.

## Chapter 20.

The very night of the evening when Shichibei and Matsuo were turned away from the door of Yamaokaya, the draper, his wife sat tipsy with a bottle by her side and a young dude, Mr. Yamaokaya being away at Kioto and Osaka on business.

"O! I hear some one come."

"Only a cat!"

"But I think I am sure I heard some one come."

"You are a coward. You're trembling. Open and see."

"Oh."

There stood a man sure enough.

"Good Lord, who are you?"

"Who? You must know, I'm the peasant whom you turned from the door a little while ago."

"Well, I never!"

"Excuse me for disturbing you, Madam."

The man entered and sitting down cross-legged he threw down his black cowl. It was Shichibei of Ōme. He put his right hand in his bosom and taking out a dagger he stuck it in the floor matting with the sharp edge in the direction of the woman.

"If you want money I'll give you all I have, so don't kill me."

"Money is always on your lip and you gave me a mighty sum a while ago. But as I said then, I am not after money."

"Then take anything you like, I'll make this man take you to the strong-house."

"Shut up, I haven't come to rob."

Taki, the woman, was thoroughly scared. She began to tremble and remembering:—

"Oh, yes, yes, about the daughter of Hikosaburo of Honcho.....you know I did not hear about it direct from you but through the boy, so naturally I couldn't understand the matter very clearly. Yes, she is my niece, I thank

you for having brought her to us. We will take her over and bring her up as if she were my own child. I apologize, it was due to misunderstanding through the mouth of the boy."

"Too late, woman, too late! Stop your prattle. That child is mine now; I have already declared to that effect to obviate any misunderstanding in the future. She has got nothing to do with you now."

"Then take some money as foster-fee."

"What? Foster-fee! No you have no right to give that now. She is not of yours any more."

"No, don't, don't kill me."

"No, I won't kill you."

"Then you will not kill me."

"Perhaps not, but I won't go back so soon though."

"Please take some money."

"Money? No!"

"Then what?"

Taki looked desperate, Shichibei smiled ironically and said:—

"Mrs. Yamaokaya, I have no other ambition but to disgrace you, that's what I have come here for to-night."

"To disgrace me!"

Taki turned paler, her lips lost colour, too. Shichibei liked it.

"You needn't be so frightened, I don't mean to ravish you. See, it's my disposition from boyhood that I must every time get even with people, be it a good turn or ill;

so you see I only came to get even with you for the injustice you had done to us. So a bit too rough, I know, but I'll strip you....."

"Strip me ?!"

"Yes, I must ask you to strip, then I'll bind you hand and foot, oh no, it won't hurt you—and you must stand till dawn at the spot Matsu and I were turned adrift with laughter, got it? When the day begins to break people will see you and they'll come to your help, they won't pass you by. You may feel a bit lonely, but soon night'll be over. Fortunately here's the dear young mate of yours, he shall keep you entertained....."

"Help!"

The woman and the young dude called out for help, then came the woman's shrieks and the noise of her rolling about on the floor from agony.

Shichibei was a thief; no common sort he was!

The readers remember that references were made in early chapters of this book to daring burglaries committed at various places in the lowlands and in Kai. Shichibei was responsible for nearly all of them.

Shichibei was a genius for thieving, in boyhood he already made folks marvel at some of his doings.

Perhaps it was when he was nine or ten, when he was a servant at the squire's house at Ōme, he began to steal things belonging to the master as well as the neighbours. What did he do with the spoils? He only gave them away

to his playmates. They would tell their parents, if they asked them who gave those things, "Shichi gave them." Gradually Shichibei became a source of nuisance, and the people began to think that something must be done to this boy, so the squire one day called Shichibei to him:—

"You have a very bad habit, Shichi, do you know that? While a child people will forgive you, but as you grow folks won't take the matter so lightly. You must cut it out, if not I'll expel you from this house. Have you heard me?"

"Master, I can't help stealing things, for when I see anything I must take it. And once that thing is in my hand I'm satisfied, I don't want to keep it any longer so I give it away to other children. You know that, master, don't you? I don't steal like a real thief. You mustn't think ill of me."

"Audacious rogue! You know how to talk too. Well, if you love to steal" the squire altered his tone.

"Try to steal to-night out of my room a packet of money which I will put by me. If I find you in the act I'll kill you with this sword."

"All right, by the dawn the money will be mine," answered Shichibei much pleased.

"Cheeky beggar! Got that you are a dead man if you fail to steal?" Squire said. Possibly he meant it, because this squire was a person who was granted the privileges of a samurai, so he was given authority to punish any one.

"If I succeed in stealing, what then, master?" The boy was ready to turn the table on the squire, his master



who was now thoroughly disgusted with the boy and said

"Well, you can please yourself in that event."

"Then I may steal as I like you mean?"

"Shocking! Surely I'll do to you to-night, so come if you dare."

The squire put a packet of money by his seat that night and a drawn sword by the lamp, to frighten Shichibei thoroughly to cure him of his bad habit, even if he would not hurt him actually. The squire then brought out a desk to read to beguile himself of the tediousness of waiting in the long autumn night.

"Ha, ha, he must have got scared," the squire smiled and presently the first cock crew. By Jove, the money was gone!

"How's this?" he exclaimed in surprise and searched for the money everywhere under the desk, by the lamp. He shook the skirts of his clothes, but the packet of money he put on purpose was really gone.

"He must have stolen it."

And called up some of his servants to look for Shichibei.

"Where's Shichibei? Can't you find Shichibei?"

But there was not even a shadow of him. The squire got vexed and went to bed to sleep till the sun was high in the sky.

"Master, Shichibei is back."

"Bring him here."

Shichibei walked in, cool as cucumber, into the master's bed room.

"Master, I brought you a souvenir."

And he produced some steamed jam-buns wrapped in wood shaving. The squire was really got surprised and yelled at him viciously:—

"Shichibei, where did you go last night?"

"After I received the money from you I went to Hachioji to buy fishing tackle. I have been long wishing to obtain."

"What, Hachioji?"

The man goggled his eyes in surprise. No wonder! It's fifteen miles from Ōme to Hachioji. He couldn't tell what part of the night the boy stole the money. But any way thirty miles both ways for a boy in so short a time! It was enough to astonish any man.

"I shudder to think of your future, begone at once."

And in that way he was dismissed from the squire's household. Then he returned home and engaged in croft farming as well as went out to work on hire from time to time, making a living somehow. By and by he got married, for kind folks arranged the affair between Shichibei and a daughter of a neighbouring village. This woman was unfortunately rather of doubtful virtue, and was that sort that some people doubted her chastity while she was not wed yet. She disappeared soon after she gave birth to a son. Neighbours said she eloped with one of her men.

Shichibei looked to be a great deal disheartened when he was deserted by his wife leaving a child. Later he lived alone saying that he had taken the child to one of his

relatives to be looked after, and engaged in forest work as well as crofting. At night he bolted the door early and never kept company with anybody. Folks said Shichibei became now rather too strict in his aloofness. But in reality his kleptomania was asserting itself again.

During day he worked as hard as anything. At night he shut up his house and went forth to steal.

He never burgled near his house. He did it in places a score or two leagues away from Ōme, sometimes in Kai, sometimes in Joshu, and so on. He got back before dawn, and worked as usual in the day tilling the croft or making faggots. The money he got by stealing was given away for charity anonymously. He never gambled nor visited gay quarters, nor used the money to dress himself above his station. So nobody suspected, and nobody knew of his numerous crimes till he was caught at long last.



### Chapter 21.

Before Danjō, Ryunosuke's father, sat Hyoma Utsuki and Yohachi.

"Mr. Hyoma, if you are to seek proficiency in the art of swordsmanship, practise the right school."

Danjō said to Hyoma with much force and dignity. He came to Danjō full of anger and resentment—Danjō the father of the detestable Ryunosuke! But on meeting the

old man, the pitiable plight of the man, and his sincerity moved Hyoma and he listened, hands on thigh, to his heart-felt words of advice.

"Look at Ryunosuke, he is a good warning to us all.

At first he fenced rightly, I was highly pleased with him. But since I fell ill his fencing deviated from the right path."

"Sir, what do you mean by deviated from the right path?"

"People who are ignorant of the real thing, I understand, speak very highly of the achievement of my son, but to my eye his art is getting worse day by day. Not a day passed, Mr. Hyoma, without my gnashing my teeth and wishing I were strong once more to correct him. But that is an idle talk, I have only to watch him go from bad to worse."

In the eye of Danjō, the highly peculiar skill of Ryunosuke was not regarded as a good thing.

"It was as plain as day to me that the manner of fence of his type would bring such results that we had the displeasure of seeing. My days are numbered, I charge you Mr. Hyoma to punish my son, Ryunosuke."

The long speech tired the old samurai, and he paused for a breath.

"Be it as it may you cannot fight Ryunosuke no matter how ardent and zealous you may be. You are no match yet, first you must acquire the necessary skill and prowess."

"Yes, sir, I will; I shall not fail in my duty."

"You speak becoming of a samurai. Now to practise fencing rightly, a right teacher is essential. I'll introduce you to one, practise it under him."

Who was he who Danjō would recommend as a teacher who will teach the right and correct fencing?

"At Okachimachi, Shitaya (Yedo), there is a fencer called Toranosuke Shimada. His school is Jikishinkage. We are friends of many years, and we exchange greetings every now and then. He is the man really qualified to teach the noble art."

"Mr. Toranosuke Shimada, I think I have heard his name, Sir."

"He is the only man at the present age who perpetuates the correct mode of fencing handed down by Iseokami Kōzumi."

Danjō spoke very highly of Toranosuke Shimada just as much as he spoke ill of the mode of fencing of his son Ryunosuke.

"His mode is correct, but his training is severe you must know--so severe that he has not many pupils. Mr. Shimada is a man indifferent to reputation, so comparatively unknown he is. But he and I have been great friends since we were young. He and I share many views in common. If you want to practise fencing take lessons under him, I recommend."

Danjō was a man with a force of character. Hyōma was yet too young to understand all that the old samurai said, but he could not think that he was an ordinary man;

he thought that if only this man had not fallen into such paralyzing illness he must have risen high. And Hyōma began to think very highly of this old samurai.



### Chapter 22.

The sliding paper-door was a little open. The refreshing air of early summer and its sunshine entered the room. A young wife sat sewing summer clothes for a little son just old enough to crawl about who was seen at her knees. She knitted her brow a little as she took a look at a man who was reading sitting before a reading-desk:—

"It's Boys' Festival, the fifth of the fifth month, isn't it?"

"Yes, the third one since."

The man turned his eyes from the book to answer. He saw the comely nape of the neck of his wife who went busily on with her needle.

"I suppose a tournament will be held on the Mountain next year."

"Yes there'll be one."

"Who'll be the winners?"

"How can I tell?"

"You don't bout of late, do you?"

"No, no bout for a man who must remain in the shadow!"

The man sighed deeply in spite of himself. Upon this the wife stopped her hand and said smiling sadly.

"Yes, indeed; we have sunk to be creatures that must remain in the shadow."

"I must do something to break this spell," the man muttered to encourage himself. The woman put down her work.

"Come to me, darling," she said and took up a sweet little lovely son who had been on the floor about her knees.

"With your talent you can be the master of a school even in this difficult Yedo. But we are now creatures that must shun the public."

"No use in talking like that, is there? We've got only ourselves to thank for that."

"No, but....."

She turned, with the child on her knees, in the direction of her man and said:—

"We may very well resign ourselves to the lot of our own making, but sir, this child."

"Um."

The man cast his eyes down and remained pensive.

"Plan something for this child, won't you? I don't mind what becomes of me, but I must see him find a place in this world."

"You needn't tell me that."

The man seemed a little irritated.

"You quote 'creatures in the shadow' very often. Have

you become sick and tired of living with a creature in the shadow?"

"Why do you talk like that?"

The woman gazed upon the profile of her man sadly.

"Three full years now, I always sought the shade; not even once I walked out in white daylight. Neighbouring woman-folks often invite me to take part in a picnic or join them in going to plays, but I always decline. Don't you know that it is because I'm anxious to show you my sympathy? Yet you talk like that. You make me disheartened."

"Disheartened?! Well, you had better go to picnics or plays to cheer yourself," remarked the man curtly in a temper.

"You are angry with me, are you?" came from the woman who was now a little roused.

The man was Ryunosuke Tsukue, the woman Hama. The child was Ikutaro, their son, born in the previous year. They lived in a poor tenement house in the compound of Governor Tarozaemon Egawa's mansion at Shinzenza, Shiba, in the city of Yedo.

Full three years had passed since their elopement and their hand to mouth sort of living was supported by Ryunosuke's teaching fencing to the footmen in the governor's service, and by policing the compound.

"I'm disgusted."

Hama sighed with Ikutaro on her lap.

"Why disgusted?"

"I don't know why, I'm become sick of the whole thing, even life itself."

"Well, go to convent."

"Yes, I'd like to, if I can."

Ryunosuke looked highly displeased. His proud and dignified face was dark with seething vexation which he stifled with difficulty. He suffered himself to allow Hama, who had been turned sour, give vent to her feelings. Often unpleasant remarks, a sample of which the readers have just seen, had passed between them these three years; to-day the turn was for the worse.

"Well, sweet little thing, if only I had not got you, your mamma would go anywhere. Know that, dear, your dad says to your mah 'go to convent;' but because of you, I have no place to go but stay here and take meekly his insults."

Hama went on gazing in the face of Ikutarō.

"To-day is the fifth day of the fifth month, it is Boys' Festival Day. You are first-born, ask your father to buy you presents. Ask him to set up the banner. Your mother is a stupid woman, so has no means of buying you even a single war-doll."

Ryunosuke looked aside and said nothing. Hama reopened again:—

"Since no token of your felicitation is forthcoming, let's light a joss-stick for the dead. Let's light it for the sake of Mr. Bunnojo who died to-day three years ago. Ikutarō, you were born under an evil star."

So saying the woman rose and was about to go towards the shrine for the dead which was left in the house by the previous tenant. Now it was too much for Ryunosuke.

"Hama, halt!"

"Can't I offer a joss-stick?"

"Sit down here."

"Ay."

"You are a bad woman."

"Of course I am, that's why I live in such a miserable .....

"It's not only you who writhe in misery, I, Ryunosuke Tsukue, also have forfeited my whole future because of you. Can't you abandon yourself to fate and say nothing?"

"I have abandoned myself to fate long ago."

"Well then you ought to put up with it. I put up always with your open insults, insinuations as well as disparagements, it's because I've abandoned myself completely to fate."

"Those who have abandoned themselves to fate lead a gay life. It's not so with us; I've never been happy even once these three years."

And turning her head to look aside,

"If only I were with Mr. Bunnojo."

This seemed to be the last straw.

"Hama, you dare say that before me."

Ryunosuke's lips quivered.

"Yes, I say what I think before anybody."

"What?"

"Ah well, if only I were with him there would have been no occasion for shedding tears over this boy."

Hama was crying.

"Um....."

Ryunosuke clenched his fists to prevent anger from taking better of himself.

"Think twice before you speak, bring to your mind how it happened that you and I are here. Who sinned more?"

"Who was that rogue who ravished me in the mill-house?" Hama bit off the end of her stray hair determinedly.

"That was the beginning of our evil union, if only you did not do that to me I would be Mrs. Bunnojo Utsuki, and the issue of my womb would not experience such misery."

"Oh, treacherous is woman."

Ryunosuke seemed as if he realized for the first time the satanic nature of woman and said as if talking to himself:—

"I say that it was Hama, the woman, who drove the bout into a duel. Bunnojo's desparate 'point' bespoke that he was intent to kill his love rivalry; my counter must have been influenced with the thought of the satanic woman. The whole thing evolved from the will of one woman."

"How dare you talk in that strain!"

Hama closed up impetuously.

"If you were not there Bunnojo would have been safe,

I would have been all right. Both the Utsukis and Tsukues would have been left in peace. Yet you say that it is all because of me that things had taken this turn, how dare you talk like that?"

"Yes, all because of you, I'm positive."

"I'm the serpent!?"

"Yes, it was Hama, the woman, who killed Bunnojo, and wrecked the career of Ryunosuke Tsukue."

"Yes! ? All, eh?"

"Yes, all! I realize now your demonic nature."

Ryunosuke said all these unkind words rather out of spite on the spur of the moment. Hama was now in a state of perfect frenzy.

"You say that I'm a demon, very well, I will be one; yes, I will."

She threw Ikutaro and snatched the short-sword of Ryunosuke

"Die, child; for I die."

Ryunosuke grabbed her hand and after a struggle the sword was wrested from the hand of Hama. Ikutaro began to cry like one in acute pain.

"Please yourself, it's your life, not mine," Ryunosuke said and taking up his swords left the house alone going from the verandah hiding his face in a slouch sedge-hat.

## Chapter 23.

Where he had walked about he did not know, but when he knew he was at Okachimachi by Ujeno Hill. From Shinsenza to Okachimachi it is full two leagues. The summer sun was already casting its declining rays.

Presently something struck the ear of Ryunosuke and that brought to a halt the man who had been walking aimlessly. Looking up, what his eyes met was a fencing school of no mean structure. From within came interuptedly the soul-stirring sound of clashing bamboo practice-sticks and the piercing yells.

Oh, the sound of clashing practice-sticks and the swordsman's yells! How could Ryunosuke forget them!

Ryunosuke stood awhile still. The door-plate of the school was old and weather beaten, he could not read the inscription. Now, fencing was Ryunosuke's element; he could not leave the place at that. He got round to the ventilating lattice window of the school. Through the lattice he saw a man about fifty in age at the seat of honour. His face was a little dark, cheek bones slightly prominent, and he had his mouth closed. His carriage was upright and was firm at the hips. He had his eyes closed lightly and he appeared to be in nirvana meditation.

There were some dozen pupils all eagerly watching a pair of fencers who were on the floor.

Ryunosuke soon perceived from the tone of the school,

as well as from the master's personality that that school was different from other 'town' (non official) schools of fencing. Ryunosuke wondered who could be the master of such a fine school and what was his degree of achievement. He looked at the master once more. But then it seemed that he took a glance at the lattice window—Ryunosuke felt a glare.

Was the match then going on a bout or practice? One of the fencers was a man enormous in physique, the other was a boy of fourteen or fifteen.

The big fellow wore a cuirass lacquered vermilion and he held his stick eye high at the point, and his yells were loud becoming the size of his body. The boy wore rather a mean looking bamboo cuirass, his guard was the same as the man's, but as he stood so low it appeared as if one was assuming the guard of 'above head.'

Ryunosuke, who was struck with the bearing of the master of this school, was also much attracted by this match.

The big fellow yelled:—

“Leg!”

No other school but the Ryugo Ryu come at the leg. The style of the boy was after the manner of the Shinkage Ryu School fencer.

“Is it a bout between different schools?” Ryunosuke muttered to himself. Just then the boy shifted his left foot as if giving the floor a light kick and leaping forward delivered:—

"Side!"

The master signalled no decision. The fencers parted for distance and assumed again the previous guards.

Ryunosuke could not help taking note of the boy. The reason was that though the 'upper cut to the side,' the boy's counter, was not much, his manner of shifting the foot to prevent the 'leg' from taking effect was wonderful. Ryunosuke knew by experience how difficult it was to elude the 'leg' of a Ryugo Ryu School fencer. It was the forte of that school, and even the first class fencers found it not an easy task to dodge it. Yet this boy did it and had the skill of delivering a cut on the side as a counter.

"This boy is pretty good."

Ryunosuke admired him in mind and his interest in the match grew afresh.

The elder fencer threw his stick up to assume the guard of 'over head' and in the next moment brought his stick down heavily to deliver a cut on the head from right above the young fencer. The stick swished in the air. But the young man parried it to the left and countered with a cut on the face, but his reach was not sufficient. Recovering from the set back the big fellow thrust, seeing an opening. The boy took a forward step to elude it and again delivered a cut on the side of his opponent, but that was weak. Having received two cuts, at any rate, on the side, the big man seemed to have lost temper to some extent and began to shower 'head,' 'wrist' and 'side' in quick succession yelling furiously. Ryunosuke watched his rough manner

of fence with amusement as well as with a tinge of derision. The boy dodged every blow stepping aside, stepping forward or leaping back. Meanwhile he must have seen an opening, "Point" rang out a young and clear voice. His voice accompanying the action ran across the school. The big man came down thud on the floor on his seat; his plight was comical. Those who had been watching the match wanted to burst out laughing, and they would have done so but for the presence of the master.

Ryunosuke felt very happy to witness such fine fencing and forgot all the unpleasantness which had been heavy on his mind from the morning. Just as much as he was struck with the cleverness of the boy he began to think fondly of his own achievement as a man of the sword. He feared that he might be a little out of practice, certainly there could have been no improvement, for he had had no bout worth the name since the one on Mt. Mitake three years ago, being a creature compelled to remain in the shadow. His opponents had been since mostly footmen and petty samurai who came to him for instruction in fencing. Yet he thought he could not possibly had become inferior to the ordinary fencer as well as an ordinary master. He wanted to see how well the master of that school fenced. So he thought that it would not be a bad idea that he challenged the boy first for a friendly bout and then the master, and he grew irresistibly tempted to put this idea into practice.



## Chapter 24.

Ryunosuke called at the door of the school. He was shown into the presence of the master by a pupil. The master gave Ryunosuke a hasty glance and then seemed to have closed his eyes again. Ryunosuke knelt before him.

"I am Ryutarô Yoshida, in the service of Tarozammon Egawa, a babe in the art."

Since this time whenever Ryunosuke had to introduce himself he gave Ryutarô Yoshida as his name.

"I am Toranosuke Shimada."

This made Ryunosuke tremble with emotion. Was this man Toranosuke Shimada? ! Whenever Danjô, Ryunosuke's father, spoke of fencing, he used to mention this man. He used to speak of him as if he were the only fencer in the world. Whenever this man's name was mentioned he could not help feeling sneeringly at the man and the praise of the man irritated him. He longed to have a refreshing opportunity of meeting the man for a bout, when by his peerless skill and irresistible prowess he would erase the idea of his old and enfeebled father. But till now he had never met the man. To-day by chance he met the man at his own school and now he challenged the school for a bout—all by chance. He marvelled at the strangeness of the fate and rejoiced over the boon. At first Ryunosuke was so astounded to hear the very name that had been long on his mind that he shook with emotion.

But now his high spirit which had been long in suppression began to rise within him and attain a height which it had never soared to. To bout with Toranosuke Shimada, his pride was satisfied.

But of course he had to bout with his pupils first. He soon beat three of them. The fourth was the boy. He introduced himself:—

"I am Hyoma Katayanagi, a babe in the art, who occupies the last place amongst the pupils of this school."

Hyoma Utsuki was now calling himself Hyoma Katayanagi in order to hide his identity using the family name of his mother before she wedded his father.

It was now three years since; Hyoma was fifteen. He put on the cuirass, mask, loin pads and gauntlets of his own, Ryunosuke used those belonging to the school.

The pupils of this school were much struck with the peculiar manner of fence of this stranger Ryunosuke, or rather Ryutarô. Hyoma and Ryunosuke now proceeded to the middle of the hall, they both courteously declined the senior stand, but Ryunosuke accepting it in the end faced west accordingly and took his peculiar guard 'at-the-moment-of.'

Shimada, the master, glanced just then at Ryunosuke. He seemed to regard his guard a little strange and steadied his gaze upon it.

Hyoma took 'to the eye' and concentrated his whole self to fight, but the strange absence of concentration on the part of his opponent baffled him.

His opponent held his practice-stick rather drawn in, no yell, no move; nor did he seem to be impatient of the inaction. Hyoma had never had such a person to fence with; he could not gauge the mind of the opponent at all, so naturally he remained inactive. The two fencers, therefore, stood very quiet in the middle of the school stick to stick and eye to eye.

If Shimada, the master, were accustomed to go abroad attending tournaments held at different places from time to time, then he must have seen, or heard of, the peculiar style of Ryunosuke and would have noticed who the fencer was. But he did not frequent such public occasions, so he did not know, and was only looking at Ryunosuke regarding his style strange.

Hyoma never knew nor even dreamt that this was Ryunosuke whom he sought vengeance upon for the sake of his brother; he only chafed under the inaction, cursing inwardly the guard of the opponent. So taking a bolder step Hyoma, with a turn of his stick yelled 'head' intending to land a cut on the head. But then 'wrist' came sharply from Ryunosuke the moment Hyoma's stick moved for the cut.

"The 'wrist' good!" nodded Shimada.

Hyoma leaped back and took the guard of 'to the eye' once more.

Ryunosuke who hit Hyoma's wrist with a slight move of his stick, contrary to the expected follow up, fell back to the former guard of 'silent waiting.'

Hyoma failed beautifully in his experimenting offensive his move proving to be disastrous. He felt set back for a time, but now he seemed to have gauged pretty well the skill of his opponent. So he took a distance and remained still at the guard of 'to the eye.'

The contestants stood now precisely as Hyoma's brother Bunnojo and Ryunosuke stood on the occasion of the tournament on Mt. Mitake when they were intent to kill. Hyoma being now thoroughly roused out of irritation born of the annoying guard, yelled out 'point,' the most favourite of all his favourite moves. His point was always with both hands on the hilt. A while ago a big challenger from another school was defeated by this method.

However Ryunosuke's stick parrying Hyoma's to the left came 'head.' But soon, not done by that, Hyoma delivered a point, it went home further than the last point. It was a draw not to be over particular. However if a decision were to be sought the question was which move went home more thoroughly. Shimada, the master, pronounced no judgement.

After that the contestants remained inactive for a long time, and they stopped their match seeking no decision any further.

"I ask that Mr. Shimada will kindly instruct me in the art favouring me with a match," Ryunosuke said politely, kneeling before him after removing the mask and gauntlets. But Shimada:—

"Mr. Yoshida, I hope I got your name rightly, you

fence in a style very curious to my eye. Where did you learn that?"

"From father I was taught a little of the Onoha Itto Ryu style. Since I belonged to no school."

"Hum!" Shimada shut his eyes and seemed to be in dream again.

"I regard it a great favour if you will kindly—"

No response came from Shimada, he took no notice of Ryunosuke's words. He sat pensive with his eyes closed.

"I entreat you Sir, inexperienced as I am, for a brief bout with the famed....."

No use asking, it was discouraging to the extreme.



### Chapter 25.

When Hyoma Utsuki sought Shimada's school, the master taught him thus:—

"Fencing is really an art that one can only get by himself. There was one Susumu Oishi in the service of the Lord of Yanagawa, Chikugo Province. His nature was very slow, you might almost all call him an idiot. In every bout he was a loser, even juniors could mercilessly beat him. He was made a laughing stock of every time. Once, however, he was very much shamed, and since insensitive as he was, he hid away from the fencing school of his clan. He now hung a ball from the ceiling and practised to deliver point

at it every day for three years. He evolved by this method a way of thrusting that nobody could elude. Thus when he stood in the school of his clan, not only any one of his clan could face him but all over the land. (Toranosuke Shimada, the narrator of this episode, Susumu Oishi the hero of this narrative and one Shinosakanokami Otani were three most noted fencers—the 'trio swordsmen' of the period).

Hyoma practised thrusting with the same method and zeal as Oishi since he heard Mr. Shimada tell about the man, and he attained a proficiency nearly equal to the man.

It was about a month after Hyoma clashed sticks with Ryunosuke not knowing that it was his man, that he was walking on Tsunagoizaka slope in a sunny summer day after having passed Onari Road and Gokencho. When he left the school at Okachimachi the weather was threatening, and now it began to fall from the rain-clouds that had gathered. Hyoma was going to a friend's house for a bout and on his shoulder he carried fencing paraphernalia.

He looked around for a place of refuge for when he reached the top of the slope, the sky was as black as ink and big glass beads-like drops came like shots.

"I must pass rain here," Hyoma said and stood by the gate of a house, and looked up in the sky waiting for the rain to stop. Then it began to fall in bucketfuls accompanied by a strong blow of wind.

"Granny, shut the rain-doors upstairs, quick!" sounded from within the house in the voice of a young woman.

"Miss Matsui, the rope to shut the sky-light has snapped." It came in the voice of an old serving woman.

"That's too bad. I'll slide the upstairs shutters myself then," said the young woman. She climbed the staircase quickly and began to slide the shutters of the upstairs verandah smartly. Hyoma looked up just for nothing. The woman had slid all the shutters but the last one and was looking out at the stormy sky as well as the street. The woman and the young samurai so stood obliquely to each other above and below that their eyes could not have but met.

When Hyoma beheld that young woman, or rather girl something in his heart was touched. The girl also gazed at Hyoma for some time before she shut the slide. Hyoma still stood there waiting for the rain to pass.

It was only under the roof of a gate that he stood for protection from the rain. Only the wind did not blow upon him direct, but his sleeve-laps and skirts were wet with the spray. Presently the slide of the gate was opened by an old servant:—

"I say Mister, come in and have a rest."

"Thank you, indeed."

"The rain won't be long now. You needn't stand on ceremony, please come in."

"Thank you."

Yet Hyoma hesitated out of modesty.

"You are getting wet, I too, so come right in."

Urged thus Hyoma entered the house returning thanks for the kindness.

"Please come right in."

As Hyoma entered, there by the paper-paned slide stood the girl whose eyes and those of Hyoma met a while ago as she stood on the upstairs verandah. On closer observation Hyoma saw that the young lady was both in the style of her hair as well as in the attire done up like a lady-in-waiting in the daimio's or samurai's household. Her flowery gayness made Hyoma stare.

The rain seemed to be obstinate; the wind increased in force. Though he declined, out of modesty, several times Hyoma was finally prevailed upon to take rest in a room. There he sat ill at ease. He thought, judging from the atmosphere of the house that only women lived there, and saw that there were implements for tea ceremony and flower arranging and such like arts of refined taste about. Pretty soon he heard the rustle, rustle of lady's skirts and there entered the lady he had seen.

"Sir, you must be tired of waiting."

"Oh no," Hyoma answered awkwardly and said:—

"The shower ought to be over soon."

"Make yourself at home."

From outside came a noise that sounded like the snap of a branch of a garden pine. Hyoma who now grew impatient of the prolonged rain felt that it was not proper for him to sit with this young lady all by themselves.

Hyoma began to think of whose dwelling this house could be; this young lady must be the daughter of this house, but why then her gay attire like that of a court lady? .....

He began to be sceptical of the whole place, but he did not pursue his curiosity any further, and when the rain ceased he left the house after offering many thanks.



### Chapter 26.

Some time after, the rain ceased, so Hyoma left.

"Matsu, is that young gentleman your friend?"

"Oh no, he stood in the rain by the gate seeking shelter, so I....."

"Wasn't he a lovely youth?"

Matsu blushed for no particular reason upon hearing the young samurai so spoken of.

Matsu was the same Matsu who was rescued by Shichibei at Great Buddhisatva Pass, and the person who was speaking to Matsu, who had been called into her presence, was the widow-like woman past prime who had taken charge of Matsu from Shichibei.

"Well, never mind about the young gentleman, to-morrow you must begin your duty at the mansion."

"Yes."

"At the mansion please do your best to please the lord in my stead as I have repeatedly told you."

"I am doubtful if a clumsy woman like myself can satisfy the lord."

"He is rough and hard to please when he has taken drinks, but otherwise he is a kind man, so he is not a hard master to serve."

"Won't he be rough at times?"

"Yes, that is not impossible but then it is up to a servitor to appease him."

"But if such a poor creature as I should fail to honour him?" Matsu said, looking very much annoyed and in fear. The 'widow' smiled to dispel her fear and said, "Well it is not always that he is rough, besides, other maids will come to your rescue. 'Other maids' reminds me to warn you against them. They are more troublesome than the lord himself or his retainers. If you are not careful you'll soon make yourself an object of their jealousy and enmity."

"Yes, I fear that, too."

"To be able to give satisfaction to the lord and yet rouse no jealousy, nor invite an ill-feeling of her mates, is what a woman prides herself in. Well, it's your first battle in life, ride on fearlessly."

"I'll do my best by way of repaying for your kindness."

This very determined word of Matsu must have pleased the 'widow' very much; a smile brightened up her face. She then whispered to the girl, "See, you're the youngest among the maids, so first of all you make a fool of the

lord—ho, ho 'to make a fool of' is rather a rude expression, but anyway you must gain him over, see, what I mean?"

"Oh, I couldn't....." Matsuo looked down blushing to the root of her hair.

"You are still a child, eh?"

The household that Matsuo was going to serve was one Kamio, Shōgun's retainer of three thousand Koku (fifteen thousand bushels) of rice fief, who lived at Demmacho, Yotsuya. This widow-like woman was mistress to the last lord. Since his death the woman very touchingly cut her hair short and opened a little school for flower arranging for the time being. She had no pupil, not even one, but she was living high mainly by the yearly allowance stipulated by the late Kamio. She took the title suitable to a lady who taught flower arranging and tea ceremony, but her first name Kinu suited the woman far better.

The mansion of Kamio was a rendezvous for dissolute sons of the Hatamoto or Shōgun's retainers; it was their gambling den; there were over ten pretty looking maids there for ought one knew—and such like ugly rumours were about the house. Matsuo had consented to be sent into such a place now out of her obligation to Kinu, the woman. She was indeed sad. She thought if only she had a brother, and the thought brought to mind Hyōma who took shelter from rain at her house a while ago. It was only a brief meeting, but his image appeared before her in visions, and she could not forget him.

Hyōma also thought affectionately of the girl after

leaving the place. He passed before her house often since, but the girl of that afternoon never appeared before him any more.

## Chapter 27.

It was about a month later, when the lonesomeness of the long autumn evening began to tell upon a man, that there was a big fellow firing the boiler at the bath-house of Kamio's mansion at Demmacho. It was Yohachi, the miller. As usual he talked to himself, and his soliloquy serves us to discover why he was there.

"I've come to Yedo and am serving in this household to beguile myself of the sorrow of losing my grand old master. But the mill-house suits me better after all. I wish I had never left there. The relations of the master all very kindly told me to stay. I was a fool to leave the mill. Shall I go back to the mill.....?"

Yohachi seemed to long for the good old mill compared with his new life. He began again:—

"That dee-dee-but-thud of the pestles and the slow moving wheel as well as the rushing and gurgling river—I long for them. I set up the image of Jizo in the mill, I charged the man who took over the mill to perform due observances before it, I hope he is faithful. Perhaps by now Mitake Mountain as well as Bimbōyama Hill must

have begun to put on autumn colours. Often I saw deer come to drink out of the river before the mill—well, shall I go back? But then what's the good, grand old master is no longer!"

Yohachi's sallioquy ceased there; then it was all quiet save the sound of damp faggots burning.

In the mansion a big laughter was heard, a laughter not by one or two persons but by many—shrieky young voices of women mingling in the voices of men.

"They are at it again. An uncanny house is this," said Yohachi very disapprovingly. Then more boisterous laughers of women followed.

"Well, well, they are both to be blamed—the samurai as well as the maids. The service at a mansion is no good for a girl, she will soon become bad like them. A few days ago a lovely maiden came into service, poor girl! she soon will lose her modesty and become bad."

Another horseplay and boisterous laughter of men and women were heard and then it was all quiet again.

"Well, draw some more water, eh?" Yohachi said taking up pails and went out for the well.

Shuzen Karnio, the lord of this mansion, was a man just past thirty. After his father's death he began to give pretty free vent to his inclinations, and he turned his house into a bohemian club of incorrigible second and third sons of Hatamoto, or Shogun's retainers. Those young men were the most troublesome element of the Tokugawa Regime.

To-night he invited eight of the class and his maids; the latter seven in number; all assembled in the parlour lighting the room as bright as day.

"Bamboo Sprout Score, now!" shouted some one.

"O-h-h, we never like it," responded the girls winking at one another.

"Now, form a circle gentlemen, find your partner, I'll read out," said the host.

The samurai and the maids sat alternately like the westerners do when they hold a dinner party, and sat forming a circle. The maid seemed to have been used to this sort of thing and were not at all shy.

"This is no good to me, I've got no partner" said curtly a young samurai called Yoshimura.

"Oh, You're a widower, eh, this is fun."

The men and women who formed the circle made an odd number, so naturally there was one who could possess no partner. But the host rapped his knee and said, "Midori is not here, call her at once."

Midori means Matsuo who came into the service of this household three days before, and was still on probation.

"Miss Midori, Miss Midori" came three maid-servants Takahagi, Hanano and Tsukie running into Midori's room calling her name aloud, and saying "It's the command of the Lord, come and join us."

"Ay."

"The game of 'Each an Ode, Hundred Poets' is to begin now."

"Yes? But I do not feel quite well, this evening."

"Not well, do you say? Your slight illness will soon be over if you join the game with us, come along, come along."

"But I don't know those poems."

"Yes, you do, you are a learned woman."

"Oh, no! besides, I don't know how to play the game of 'Each an Ode, Hundred Poets,' so I had better not, I shall only spoil the fun."

The servants took her arms from right and left to carry her almost all, and one of them said, "You can't have your own way, it's his command."

"You excused yourself from taking part in a game once or twice already on account of illness or some such excuse. We won't let you have that to-night," said another.

Hanano, pulling Midori by the arm, said very much excited, "Don't you hear Lord is calling out? Be quick for goodness sake, he might scold us like anything after."

Midori had no other course open now but allow herself taken, or dragged, to the parlour by the three maids. She found the place as described before.

"Oh, Midori, have you come? Sit by Mr. Yoshimura, you must partake in the game, too," the host ordered, and the maids pushed Midori to make her sit down by Yoshimura.

"Miss Midori, you must play, remember your cards, and put them before you in this way. All right? When you hear Mr. Kamio read out, catch smartly, no hesitation," said Yoshimura and he put the cards in order before Midori.

"I don't know at all how to play."

"Oh, it's easy, you need only watch your front. But should any one carry away the card before you, you're done."

Midori had learnt all the odes of the Hundred Poets, but had never played the game of plucking cards in this manner, so she was rather ill at ease.

"Ready! I begin, you know," said Shuzen, the master, and he cleared the throat and looked around.

"Past beyond recall....."

"Got it!"

It was Yoshimura who plucked the card, which bore that ode, from the lot that was before Ota who sat next to him, hitting it up with the tip of his middle finger. Ota who lost a card, what was it for, undid his sash and threw it clean beyond.

Midori stared.

"All night long....."

"Found, Sir," shrieked Takahagi, one of the maids, her eyes glaring a little wild, and leaping forward to pluck it from the lot of Midori.

"Oh, Miss Midori," they all said and looked at her, her neighbours putting their hands on the sash of Midori.

"Take it off."

"You dare, sir?"

"Don't be angry. This is what we call the 'score of bamboo sprout,' an item of clothing must come off as one loses a card, and we begin with the sash."

Midori got thoroughly scared and tried to resist. But



the more she resisted the more amused was the company and her sash was soon wrested cruelly off the owner and was thrown pat into a corner.

Midori was utterly ashamed and disconcerted and she sat not knowing what to do nor what to say.

"Short spring night.....!"

"Yes, found it, sir," said Maid Hanano and hit a card before Takahagi 'pat' to one side.

"I've got Miss Midori avenged" she said.

"When evening comes.....!"

"Got him!"

This time it was Ota who lost one card in the beginning. His victim was unfortunately Midori.

"Sorry Midori, but you must peel a bark," said he and came upon Midori to take hold of her garment.

"Please, Sir, don't."

Midori was desperate, they liked it all the more for that.

"Midori, don't fret, it's only for fun, that is all."

Now the outer garment was stripped, what it covered was Midori's underwears.

"Let us all.....!"

"Found, sir" the nasty Takahagi who had been watching the cards before Midori scored again.

"Very, very sorry Miss Midori!"

Midori was stripped off one of her underwears and now was in linen.

"Please, Sir, don't" Midori whined and folding her arms she fell on her face as she sat.

"What's the meaning of this noise!" said Yohachi who had come out to draw water and stood by the well putting down the pails. He gazed, across the inner landscape garden, upon the confused shadows on the paper-paneled sliding doors of the parlour. Then his eyes caught something moving that seemed to be the figure of a man by the ornamental stone lamp-stand.

"What can it be? There couldn't have been anybody."

Yohachi released his hands from the bucket ropes and watched the moving figure in the garden. It skirted the miniature lake and was seen proceeding towards the verandah of the innermost house. He must be a thief, surely a thief Yohachi thought, and he yelled "Stop thief! Stop thief!"

His loud cry made the party in the house more perturbed than the suspicious figure itself. They kicked the slides out of the grooves and rushed out to the verandah.



## Chapter 28.

The next morning Yohachi was sweeping the yard with a bamboo broom. All the maids were still in bed tired of the overnight revelry. But the room of Midori had its slides open and she seemed to have been up already. Or

was it that she could not sleep at all overnight? Not noticing anybody was up Yohachi went on sweeping.

"Oh, is this Miss Midori, good morning!"

He stopped his work, and removing his headkerchief he nodded.

"You're an early worker."

"No, I'm not, but you are an early riser."

"We gave you extra work last night, come here and take rest," Midori said to Yohachi kindly, opening the slide more:—

"Have a cup of tea," and she brought forth to the verandah a cup of tea and some sweetmeat.

"This is very kind of you" said Yohachi who was much pleased.

"You're kind to me always, I am really grateful, I thank you, indeed," said Yohachi and he was trying to behave.

"Sit down here, Mr. Yohachi, I must thank you."

"You needn't thank me, I've done nothing yet that deserves your thanks. I'm an ignorant country bumpkin, I ask you to be kind enough to teach me and to correct me," said Yohachi and he bowed many times with his head-kerchief grabbed in his hand like on awkward bear.

"Tea is made, oh' do have!"

"Thank you, indeed."

Yohachi sat down at last on the verandah, took up the cup very awkwardly and held it up as high as his forehead offering thanks.

"Have you a sweet tooth? We have some 'jam-and-jelly'."

"Thank you indeed, this is excellent, thank you, indeed."

Yohachi thanked Midori repeatedly holding the cup in one hand and a slice of 'jam-and-jelly' in the other.

"Mr. Yohachi, you are enormous in physique, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am, and something of a tremendous 'rice-waster'."

"I suppose you have much strength since you are so big."

"Strength! Yes, so long as it is a matter of strength I can hold my own against anybody," Yohachi said and seemed to be much flattered in his child-like pride.

"In strength nobody can beat me, but I am no match to such a quick and smart thief as the one we chased last night. He was like a phantom, you see him there, and in the next moment he is gone. Such a thief gives you no chance, strength is of no avail, so I failed to catch him."

For Midori that thief was a benefactor, because the cry of 'stop thief' raised by Yohachi, broke up the party and Midori was spared of being put to further immodest treatment. She did not mention the matter to Yohachi, but to continue the conversation she asked:—

"I say, Mr. Yohachi, where are you from?"

Yohachi distorting his mouth for the sake of a big bite of jam-and-jelly that was still in it:—

"I don't know where I was born."

"Don't you know where you were born?"

"No, because I was a foundling, you see. I was left on the roadside before I began to remember things. So I can't tell you where I was born."

"Were you a foundling, indeed?"

"Yes, I was. I was found at a spot along what people call *Ome Road*, and the founder kindly brought me up, so I don't know where I was born."

"How sad! And who brought you up?"

"The person who brought me up was *Danjō Tsukue Esq.* of *Sawai*. *Sawai* is fifty miles from here along the upper-streams of the *Tamagawa* water-supply canal. *Mr. Danjō Tsukue* of *Sawai* brought me up."

"Then the place is by the upper-reaches of the *Tamagawa*, is it? I passed that locality when a child."

"Did you? That road leads one to *Great Buddhisattva Pass* of *Kai Province*."

"*Great Buddhisattva Pass*!?"

"Yes, it is a very difficult passage of fifteen miles up and fifteen miles down."

"Yes, I remember now. There were many monkeys in the mountain, and on the summit was a shrine for *Kwan-non* (or *Dame of Mercy*)."

"You know very well. Have you passed there?"

"Yes, four or five years ago."

"Four or five years ago? Then it was when I was keeping that mill."

"*Mr. Yohachi*, won't you take me there some day?"

"What, into the very heart of the mountains?"

"Yes, I like to visit that *Pass* once more."

"See, *Miss*, to open my heart I long for my good old mountains though I have found myself a place in the service of this household. So I am thinking of taking leave of the service and returning home."

"Are you tired of service already?"

"Ah yes, I'm fed up; the mill will do for me every time."

"Don't say that, *Mr. Yohachi*, stop with me here in the service all the time. And when you return, take me to *Great Buddhisattva Pass*."

There were tears in *Midori's* eye. *Yohachi* remained thinking for a while. "Well," he said, "if you talk like that I cannot go away leaving you alone."

*Yohachi* now became a great friend of *Midori*; he rendered her help openly as well as secretly, and *Midori* sought *Yohachi* on every occasion. Thus they became by degrees fast friends like brother and sister.

Fortunately *Midori* was much left alone in the mansion since, and so was quite safe, other maids monopolizing the master's attention. *Midori* occupied herself with work that was beyond the reach of her master's eye keeping to herself as much as possible, and many a day passed in this way.

## Chapter 29.

A that time there was a band called Shinchogumi, or New Levies, organized of bravoes to keep anti-Shogunate politics of various clans in check. Their duty was first of all to arrest politics and undesirables who entered Yedo; assassinate them if necessary.

At Yanagiwara, Kanda, a dozen levy-men were from morning assembled in the house of one Kaneko, a levy-man. They held counsel in whisper. In ones and twos they went out and then came back. They seemed to be planning something in secret.

It was towards the end of the eleventh month. The day was cold. The sky had been dull from morning. Powdery snow began to fall in the evening as expected.

From the belfry of the Kan-eiji Temple boomed forth the sunset bell. Then one of the levy-men who left the place last came back to report:—

“Captain, all’s well.”

“That’s good.”

The man who was called captain was one Kamo Serizawa of Mito.

“Two palanquins have left Sakyo Sugiyama’s residence; the second palanquin contains Hachiro Kiyokawa for certain.”

“Sure?”

“Yes, sure. I commissioned Buhei to see to things meanwhile, so you had better get ready, sir.”

“Very well.”

A dozen or so levy-men sprang to their feet anxious for the fray, and put on the black-mask dress.

There was, however, one who sat in a corner and held a huge goblet, full of strong drink, in hand. He now yelled out “Halt, the one behind is our man Kiyokawa, but who goes before?”

It was Isami Kondō, the dare-devil, second in command of the levies, who spoke.

“That was,” the scout turned towards Kondō, “For certain Isenokami Takahashi.”

“What, Takahashi!” they all stared at one another, for Takahashi was a man none could equal should he take up a spear.

In those days there was one Sakyo Sugiyama, a retainer to the Shogun, who lived in Maru-no-Uchi. Two or three times in a month rare birds of the time used to assemble there for a chat. Those who used to meet were Isenokami Takahashi; Tetsutarō Yamaoka, tutor to the Mikado in latter days; Shuzo Ishizaka; Gorō Asaka; Hachiro Kiyokawa; Yosaburo Kaneko and Toranosuke Shimada. The number was not big, but the members were men above the average; some were Shogun’s retainers, some were royalists—they were alike kept under surveillance of the levy-men.

Especially Hachiro Kiyokawa was unpardonable—the levy-men thought. He was an officer of the levy-men once, and now was in league with the royalists in secret—abominable traitor! 'Kill Kiyokawa first,' was their slogan and now their plan was going to be put into execution. From daytime Sugiyama's mansion had been watched and the scout reported a unique chance.

"Takahashi?! what is he! kill him, too," yelled Serizawa, the leader, much excited.

"But Takahashi holds an important place among the Shogunate retainers," objected Toshizo Hijikata from Ishidamura, County of Tama, Musashi Province, the same village as Kondô, the dare-devil.

"He is a Shogun's retainer and he traffics with the contemptible politicians. Scoundrel Takahashi! He, too— together with Kiyokawa, for this is a good chance. Or are you afraid of his spear?" said Serizawa, the leader, and looked round insinuating at Kondô, the dare-devil, and Hijikata. Kondô was hurt. He took *Kotetsu* his favourite sword famed for killing whenever it leaves its sheath, and staring back at Serizawa in high spirits said, "Kondô's *Kotetsu* is here, even if Takahashi becomes superhuman when he takes up a spear, I do not hesitate to give him battle."

"Hold on," said Hijikata to cool down excited leaders. "Our objective of the night is Kiyokawa, it's not wise that we waste our energy upon anybody else. We had better wait until the two palanquins part, and then set upon

Kiyokawa when he is alone. In that way we can behead him with the least fight. Isn't that the plan?"

"Um!" all nodded slightly, including Serizawa as well as Kondô, and they further listened to Hijikata.

"Let us now start to shadow the palanquins to put Kiyokawa to blood-offering when the palanquin containing Takahashi is parted from the one containing Kiyokawa. But if no such opportunity should present itself, we deal both with Kiyokawa as well as Takahashi."

"A good idea, will you take command of this enterprise?" Serizawa said.

"Very well, you and Mr. Kondô will stay here, I'll bring here the head of Kiyokawa," responded Hijikata promptly.

"Then the party will be thirteen in all."

"Very well."

At this juncture Kondô looking into one corner of the room called out "Mr. Yoshida, Mr. Yoshida," to a man who had been lying down and asleep intoxicated a little. He shook the man to wake him. The man got up abruptly and blinked, it was Ryunosuke Tsukue.

Ryunosuke had joined the Band of New Levies in order to obscure his trace, and because he came from the same locality as Kondô and Hijikata.

"Overslept, sir," Ryunosuke said and taking his sword up he came forward.

"We are all ready, Mr. Yoshida, as you see," Hijikata said.

"Very well, I'll get ready, too," Ryunosuke answered and girdled his clothes and put on leggings ready for action. Putting on the black mask he asked:—

"Is it Kiyokawa alone?"

"As we all understand it, there's a nasty companion."

"A nasty companion?!"

"Yes, Isenokami Takahashi, the expert spearsman, is with him."

"Both?"

"No, our objective is Kiyokawa only, but if necessary both."

"I see."

Ryunosuke looked at Hijikata and Okada in the face and asked:—

"What is your plan if Takahashi must be tackled?"

"We set upon Kiyokawa. If Takahashi interferes you and Mr. Okada will tackle him."

"All right."

Here Hijikata's plan, was that he would, with his men, attack Kiyokawa, and if Takahashi proved to be troublesome Ryunosuke Tsukue and Yaichi Okada would see to him.

The Shinchogumi, or the Band of New Levis was composed of free lance Samurai who were itching for action. The Shogunate charged them with the duty that needed what they liked most—fight. The policy may be called to counteract poison with poison.

Isami Kondô was a man leonine, excitable, and emotional, therefore quick to make friends even with the enemy once he saw reason to do so. His manner of fence was rough to the extreme. Of course he was a highly skillful fencer, but he usually won by virtue of his unique dash.

Toshizo Hijikata by comparison was a man of patience. Quiet but can become rougher even than Kondô when he is roused. He never forgave an enemy. The government circle was of opinion that Kondô was easy to manage but Hijikata was not, and he was dreaded by the officials.

Serizawa, the captain of the band, was worse still, later he was killed by Kondo. After the death of Serizawa the name of the band was changed from Shincho to Shinsen, or from New Levy to New Chosen, and Kondo was made captain. The reader will find that later.

The snow kept on falling. The night was after that of the fourth hour (ten o'clock). The wind had fallen and it was not so very cold but there was no traffic in the street.

A few notes of the pipe of a blind shampooer were heard in the direction of Neribeï Kôji. Bow-w-o-w came from Surugadai Hill. Except, it was all still. Then appeared two palanquins one after the other proceeding on Shoherbashi Bridge. By the side of front palanquin walked an attendant shouldering a spear. The badge on the

lantern that went by the rear palanquin was 'herb-gingers face-to-face.'

When the two palanquins passed the snow covered Shobeibashi the leading palanquin headed towards Kôbusho. Then something said in a loud voice by the one within the palanquin was heard. The one in the rear palanquin answered in a lower tone, and then the two palanquins parted their way.

The front palanquin, attended by the spear, headed towards the temple for Confucious. The rear palanquin accompanied by a lantern marked with 'herb-gingers' headed straight to Uyeno by way of Outer Kanda.

By Shobeibashi Bridge was a mass of objects which looked like so many 'sea-goblins.' They had been watching breathless the palanquins. Upon seeing them parted, they, grasping the hilt of their sword, crossed the bridge that was high and concave. Needless to say they were the party of levy-men under Hijikata.

The palanquin accompanied by the spear undoubtedly carried Isenokami Takahashi, and he was going home to his residence at Kagurazaka, Ushigome, in the compound of which was a giant camphor tree. For that reason people called his residence Camphor-tree Mansion. Evidently he was returning there.

The levy-men, as they had hoped, now had Kiyokawa by himself. They, the desperadoes of New Levy, were about to rush to the palanquin, hand on hilt and their swords loosed in the sheath ready to be drawn.

"Sh!" however said Hijikata stopping the men. Without his leave the men could not act. They grew blood-thirsty, the swords seemed wanting to leave the scabbard by themselves. Gokencho and Suehirocho streets were past, now it was Hiro Kôji, yet Hijikata gave no signal.

Kiyokawa's palanquin, oblivious to the danger, proceeded skirting Uyeno Hill.

The men thought that Hijikata's plan was to avoid the town for the fray, and allow the man to get into the hills and there to make a thorough job of him. And they followed the palanquin into the hill. But the likely wood patches of the hill had been all passed, they now descended to the foot of Shinsaka approaching Uguisudani. What was the meaning of this? Now the hill was nearly past!

### Chapter 30.

From Shinsaka to Uguisudani the road was lonely. Looking back the gloomy Uyeno woods blocked the view. Looking ahead towards Asakusa, taking in Negishi, only a few temple roofs and samurai residences were seen scattered here and there.

When Hachiro Kiyokawa's palanquin at last reached the open tract descending Shinsaka, the snow decreased. The night by now ought to have had the moon if the sky were clear, so it was not dark.

"Halt!" shouted Hijikata who had been singularly patient, and flash he drew his long sword. His men leaped forward like so many locusts, drawing their swords and surrounding the palanquin.

The bearers were taken aback.

"Who are you? No pranks," they said, still being under the influence of the drinks they were given while waiting at the mansion, but needless to say they were soon covered. When the lantern was cut down the bearers fell prostrate on the ground upon their faces begging for life:—

"Sir, please spare us, sir."

"Go!"

None of the men liked to take such mean lives as these palanquin bearers, so they were allowed to depart. Helter skelter they ran back towards Uyeno Hill. Now fifteen cold blades were ready for the palanquin.

From within the palanquin however came nothing, not even so much as some one moving. If the man had been sleeping he must have now awake, if had been awake he must have now sprung to feet.

"Come out," Hijikata shouted, but no response from within—the palanquin stood there as still as death. Then the black hooded head of Hijikata was seen nodding to one of the men, who were all alike attired. He nodded in return, and got round to the right side of the palanquin and raised his sword to assist Hijikata who had got to the left side changing the hold of his sword to get ready for his fresh move.

The remaining ten odd men took a few paces back and surrounded the palanquin. Then Hijikata lunged his heavy long sword through the palanquin—it was empty.

Just then "Ah" uttered one of the blacks and fell face down on the snow his sword falling after him like a leaf. Astonished were Hijikata and his men, but they were too late. Taking the fence of a temple as protection to the rear a man stood on the guard of 'to the eye, lower,' his sword-strap being used to tuck up the sleeves.

"Presumptuous, gentlemen! I am Toranosuke Shimada of Okachi-Machi. If you desire a bout, challenge properly. If it is for enmity state reason."

"By Jove!" escaped the lips of Hijikata.

Snakes poking the bush, goes the saying; the levy-men got a tiger by poking a palanquin.

This mistake was due to Shimada returning home in Kiyokawa's palanquin for the latter by mistake travelled home in the palanquin of the former.

A man who has thoroughly acquired an art seems to have keen intuition. Intuitively Shimada felt on the way that danger lurked about him. He never dreamt that levy-men in such a big number would come, but sat in the palanquin with his back close to the wall of the palanquin ready to foil a thrust so long as it was not from the rear. And by the time Hijikata shouted halt, the sword-strap had already been put over the shoulders and passed under the arm-pits to tuck up the sleeves, and the hilt-pin of his favourite sword, forged by Saburo Shizu, wetted. At the



same time as Hijikata's sword pierced the palanquin in vain, Shimada drew upon his sword as he sat his back still close to the wall, and cut the leg of the man who stood by the palanquin holding the sword above his head ready for Shimada, and then leapt out.

The reason that Hijikata exclaimed astonishment was not only because they had made a mistake in the man but because Hijikata surely knew that Shimada was the first class swordsman of the time.

But the men of New Levy were not such people as would cover for a name, nor there were any who would say 'oh, it was a mistake and so let us withdraw' when they found themselves in this predicament. They were all expert fencers of this school or that school; they had joined the band in order to find scope for their sword and bloodthirsty inclinations. Therefore a mistake in the man gave them not much concern. Some might have thought it was a piece of good luck that they could urge such a famous fencer as Shimada to fight.

Ryunosuke Tsukue, who was charged with the duty of standing by to the fray ready to give help if necessary, together with Yaichi Okada, was particularly much excited on hearing that the man was Toranosuke Shimada, as if he had met an age-long enemy whom he must kill. Ryunosuke felt the muscles of his arm quiver from excitement. He, however, sought a shade a little way off to watch how Shimada would act.

Hijikata now had to decide for the man had given his name to make it clear who he was.

"At him" Hijikata shouted, for now there was no other course open, he thought.

"Yei" came from Shimada rentng the air,—a yell that sounded as if something terrible was torn asunder. With the yell Shimada, who had been as still as night, leapt forward with lightning speed and with only one cut sent the soul of a levy-man Mizushima to the Better Land giving it at the shoulder as he took a step forward, his blood dyeing the snow red.

Shimada went towards a tree that stood beyond Mizushima to cover his rear and stood on the guard of 'to the eye, lower,' again.

Really it was like a ferocious tiger roar at the moon in the dead of night in the heart of high and wild mountains to hear Shimada yell. It made the levy men, rough and fearless as they were, shudder.

Presently one Otsuka fell doubled up on the snow with his one arm cut off; and Shimada was back to his original position before the fence, and again at 'to the eye, lower.' In a very short space of time two of the desperadoes were put to death.

Toranosuke Shimada thoroughly mastered the sense of fear by means of the Zen sect meditation in addition to the mastery of swordsmanship. He was from Nakatsu of Buzen. When young he was not at all gentle in temperament; he used to abuse people and quarrel with them, and

seemed rash and light-headed. But as for swordsmanship he was a genius, at twenty he was past master.

Resigning from the service of his lord he travelled all over Japan to gain experience and broaden his views—calling not only on every fencing master and masters of other military arts but also on scholars and persons celebrated for art or lore, and thus improved himself. His original style of fencing was Jikishinkage. Later he found that there was uncanny something relating to swordsmanship that was to be acquired only by meditation on nature of things. So every day for five years he attended the meditation practice at a certain Zen sect Buddhist temple at Shinagawa. There he underwent a thorough respiration and mental training, and made a thorough swordsman of himself.

Since his taking to the meditation sect, it was said that his disposition underwent a change, the former rash and light-headedness completely disappeared and began to show the mellow and tranquil thoroughness of a finished man.

When he fenced he used to take the guard of 'to the eye, lower' and watching the eye of the opponent would advance into an opening scarcely raising his foot. Something was there in his silent advance, for even the most ferocious fencer would find his hair stand on edge to see him advance into him in that manner. Masterfully yet gently, step by step Toranosuke Shimada would fence. But if the opponent were inclined to be rude and haughty, the gentleness fell off all at once and ferocity, that even

gods would shirk to face, would manifest itself. Then those who watched the bout would clench their fists and hold their breath for anxiety. Perhaps this fencer was not only the best one of his time, but is also one of the few leading swordsmen throughout history.

Leap in, cut and leap out or leap in, be cut and fall down, are the only possible courses open for a fencer when a superior number surrounded him.

When Shimada shouted 'yei,' he was found on the opposite side breaking through the cordon, and one or two of the levy-men were cut down.

Those who surrounded Shimada were no mere figures, they were young desperadoes in addition to being well trained how to use the sword in this school or that. Yet none of them could parry Shimada's cut or thrust even once; the contest was too one-sided.

Toranosuke Shimada who had death out dealt to already five of the levy-men was back again to the fence and stood calmly again on the guard of 'to the eye, lower.'

For the credit of the levy-men, it must be stated that none of them flinched though man after man of their comrades were down before their very eyes. If Shimada were a tiger, the levy-men were blood thirsty wolves eager for a dead body.

But Ryunosuke Tsukue alone did not take part in the fray. He stood a little way off in a shade and watched this scene absent-mindedly.

The report that Shimada was waylaid reached Isenokami Takahashi as he sat talking with Kiyokawa having returned to his own mansion at Kagurazaka.

"Strange! Could there be any dare-devil in this present-day world who would venture to assault such a fencer as Shimada?" Kiyokawa said.

"The Levy-men had no cause to waylay Shimada; possibly they had made a mistake," responded Takahashi.

"You see, through my mistake Mr. Shimada had to return in my palanquin. The levy-men regard me their enemy, so I am certain that they assaulted Mr. Shimada taking him for me," Kiyokawa said and rose to go to render assistance to Shimada.

"Shimada is not the sort that needs help, but....." rose Takahashi, too.

Soon the gate of the Camphor-tree Mansion opened wide to allow Isenokami on horse-back in a light helmet and riding coat, accompanied by Hachiro Kiyokawa on foot pass out. After them followed the spear carrier who held the famous spear of Isenokami Takahashi that bore the rank of the fifth junior court grade. The party hurried on dashing the snow.

### Chapter 31.

When Isenokami Takahashi and Hachiro Kiyokawa arrived poste haste at Shinsakashita, they found the place turned into a battle-field. The yells echoed from the woods like the beasts of prey barking over a carcass. The snow was trodden muddy and five or six bodies were seen at a glance lying right and left on the snow, and the smell of blood filled the air of Uguisudani or Warblers' Dale.

When the figure of Shimada in the guard of 'to the eye, lower' with a wall behind came into sight, Hachiro Kiyokawa drew upon his sword to cut into the levy-men. But Takahashi who had now dismounted and taken the spear in hand stopped him saying "Shimada is a man unassailable. Remain here looking on. We must not disturb him. Sensuke, hold up the lantern."

Sensuke held up the lantern; it made its neighbourhood as light as a spring night moon would illumine.

"Yei" yelled Shimada—two of the levy-men were seen falling thud on the snow.

"Yei-yah!" yells in response were heard from the levy-men who rallied again to close on Shimada once more. As many as six levy-men were counted in the dimness of the night.

By now Shimada cut down seven of the levy-men. No matter how well a man might be trained in swordsmanship, if he had dealt with as many as seven, he ought to

show some sign of fatigue. Likewise, no matter how well a sword might be forged it must, by using so often in quick succession, be damaged now. But strange to note Toranosuke Shimada never differed his guard, nor carriage nor respiration because he had dealt with several opponents one after another in succession. If it were daylight one would have seen Shimada's face perfectly normal and it must have looked as if he were tacking children.

The levy-men on their part deserves a praise, too. If they were men of less courage they ought to have taken to flight before so many of them were cut down. Shimada would not chase one who ran. A half of the number down, yet none flinched! Possibly they would fight to the last. The reason of their brave tenacity was that all were well trained swordsmen and they were all anxious to win the laurel of putting the famed Shimada to sword.

Watching the scene from a little way off it was now seen that the contestants were for a while quiet in watchful silence, and the stillness of night reigned again.

"Yei!" The contestants must have been roused to action again. Figures leaped forwards and backwards and some side-ways. Clashing blades sent forth flashes and sparks. After a while it was all quiet again to watchful silence, and the number that confronting Shimada dwindled down to only three.

Shimada again was seen on the guard of 'to the eye, lower.' The bodies that lay on the snow now numbered

eleven. The remaining levy-men now numbered only four, but were all first-rate swordsmen.

Yaichi Okada who was, with Ryunosuke Tsukue, detailed to keep Isenokami Takahashi in check was a famed fencer of Onoha Itto Ryu School. Chikara Katō was of Mizoguchih School, famous for 'school-breaking' in the city of Yedo, being a powerful and daring fencer. He must have now thought that it devolved upon him to oust Shimada, he leapt in with the sword forged by Shinkai Inoue ready for a blow. Shimada's sword by Saburo Shizu stopped it lightly and the two fencers pressed each other by the sword that crossed a few inches above the sword-guard.

Chikara Kato breathing fire and yelling like a demon pressed on. Shimada turned gradually to the right yielding to the pressure. Kato was the only man who could close in with Shimada as close as 'sword-guard pushing.' Seeing that Kato had closed in and Shimada's rear open, Yaichi Okada got behind the latter lifting his sword ready to deliver a cut. Isenokami Takahashi seeing this felt a thrill of fear for the safety of Shimada for the first time.

Shimada now had a powerful contestant both in front as well as in rear.

Katō who was in front pushed with a yell. The crossing swords seemed to break at the guards.

"Yei!" Shimada yelled disentangling himself—flash his blade worked.

"U-u-um," Katô fell cut at the shoulder, his sword by Shinkai Inoue breaking at the guard and the blade flying off. At the same time Okada delivered a cut from behind Shimada, but a trifle quicker Shimada's sword cut him through at the waist. Shimada cut side-way to the rear not recovering from the cut for Katô. It was one clean continuous motion and Okada lay cut into two.

To cut two persons who pressed upon one from front and rear in one sweep of the sword! If this were not called an act rather belonging to gods than man, what would? Isenokami Takahashi was now thoroughly struck with the achievement of Shimada. It is said that Takahashi used to say that the feat was beyond the skill of swordsmanship; it was due to the cool serene mind of Shimada who acquired it by means of Zen Sect meditation and respiration exercises. Takahashi, it is said, was never tired of praising Shimada since.

What was Ryunosuke doing all this while? Had fear mastered him? Had he ran? No, he was still standing where he first stood.

Ryunosuke not taking action, the only one left now was Toshizo Hijikata, the leader. Hijikata had been informed of Shimada's skill, but he had never thought he could be so highly skilled as this. But the temperament of Hijikata was such that he would not flinch even with all the examples of his men before him. He leaped in, sword in hand, giving no respite to Shimada who was much struck with his courage.

"He's Toshizo Hijikata, I take," said Takahashi turning to Kiyokawa.

"Yes; what a pity!" Kiyokawa answered. He knew the personality of Hijikata well and respected him as one qualified for leadership. Therefore though it was his own fault, but Kiyokawa thought it was pity that Hijikata must now die. While the two onlookers were talking about Hijikata, he exclaimed "Oh" despairingly. That was because his sword was struck off his hands. While he hesitated for a next move, Shimada twisted him down on the snow and before he could get up Shimada's knee was on his back like a heavy rock.

"Who are you?" Shimada asked.

Hijikata held peace.

"Name!" said Shimada.

"Kill!" replied Hijikata.

"You must be the leader. What excuse have you for causing so many able swordsmen die like dogs, and compelling me to kill for no better cause than self-defence. All is out of rash thoughtless stupidity common to young blood," said Shimada.

"I have erred, I deserve death," Hijikata said in bitter tears, "I regret, as one sought the mastery of swordsmanship from childhood, that I've been ignorant of the existence of such an accomplished fencer as you, sir."

"It is mental training that gives you what you want; not fencing itself. The correct minded alone can attain perfection, bear that in mind if you seek swordsmanship."

So saying he took hold of Hijikata by the collar and gave him a hard push. Hijikata staggered a few paces and fell thud.



### Chapter 32.

Looking in the wake of Takahashi, Shimada and Kiyokawa who strolled away in pleasant chat Ryunosuke Tsukue stood, still in the original position. He had been enthralled heart and soul by the swordsmanship of Shimada. He had never seen such fine fencing before, possibly he would never see the like in the future. First he thought what could Shimada do; next well, he fenced better than expected; then marvellous, and in the end what could he be, a god or man?

The ever increasing admiration of Shimada in the mind of Ryunosuke found no words, no thought to express when he saw Shimada cut two fencers one in front and the other in rear in one sweep of the sword. The conclusion that Ryunosuke arrived at was that he could not attain the same level as Shimada had. The finding was as bitter as gall to him, he felt like an ignominious death coming over him, but he could not think otherwise.

Hijikata now got up shedding bitter tears over the blunder. He picked up the sword that was struck off his hands, and sat erect amongst the thirteen corpses of his

men. He now took hold of the sword a few inches from the point, point inward to dig it into his abdomen.

Ryunosuke now woke up from his reverie and ran to Hijikata to stop his sword.

