

*Yanagita Kunio*  
Japanese Folk Tales

Translated\* by

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE REVISED EDITION

A desire to collect folk tales of our country has become noticeably active since about the time this book was first presented to the public.\* A number of folk tales which had never been put into written form before for people to read were reported from districts which until then had not indicated the existence of a single story of this kind. This demonstrated that Japan is a country in which an unusual number of folk tales have been preserved, and that the innate love of the people for folk tales which has been transmitted cannot be suppressed so easily. We have tried, of course, to take advantage of this favorable circumstance. We set up an association, sought the cooperation of men with similar interests all over the country, published a magazine for the study of folk tales, and tried to send these out to the public in book form as soon as we had collected enough material. However, had the taste of the public not already been aroused in this direction, our enthusiasm would not have had any goal and the *Nippon no Mukashibanashi* 日本の昔話 (Japanese Folk Tales), which we published with such care, would not have been so widely read.

The author wishes to emphasize once again to everyone that the greater part of these old tales in this collection can be found in every nook and corner of Japan. Further, these various localities are each unaware that these stories exist in other places, handed down through oral tradition with only slight differences. Although there are many stories from Tōhoku (north west), scarcely any of those can be said today to be found only there and nowhere else. We can safely say now that these are folk tales of the Japanese nation. It may be said that in some places some of these tales have not been heard before because they were forgotten and not because they were not transmitted. With the passing of time, tales that remain in a given place or family gather certain variations. Although they are obviously from a single origin, it is not simple to determine in a short time which version is the earlier nor under what circumstances it was altered. This is a matter of greatest interest in the study of folk tales. While we should continue our efforts in quest of folk tales in the regions, a wide circulation of a publication like the present volume, serving as a collection of examples, should render us great value in our research.

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\* *Nippon Mukashibanashi Shu* 日本昔話集 (*A Collection of Japanese Folk Tales*). Tokyo: Arusu Arusu, March 20, 1930.

It might be better to publish a new standard volume of folk tales representing the entire nation, but at this point selection of such material would be difficult. There are, also, in this volume several tales which should be included in such a work, but it would be a pity to discard this collection and scatter all its contents for that purpose. Thinking this *Nippon no Mukashibanashi* 日本の昔話 (*Japanese Folk Tales*) would be read widely by young people, I have selected stories which are clear and without complications. If we pursue this policy, not many new tales can be added and, for the time being, this will be left in its present form. For those who, after reading this volume a number of times, wish to know folk tales which are different, I expect to set up a plan and publish a book in which details will be compared. A pamphlet called *Mukashibanashi Saishû Techô* 昔話採集手帳 (*A Guide for Collecting Folk Tales*) was written by our circle a few years ago, and it was distributed to those who wanted to begin collecting folk tales. I explained the legitimate scope of the folk tale and illustrated what, in particular, were of the commonest types in Japan. Taking this guide as a standard, there are seven or eight in this book which would fall into a different category. “*Kojiki no kane* (The beggar’s money),” “*Hiroi sugi* (Picking up too much)” and “*Sanzoku no Otôto* (The mountain bandit’s younger brother)” are such. These are, in other words, old folk tales which have been handed down from olden times, but were later dressed up to seem as though they actually happened. We have included them for the interest of the reader, but these do not really belong within the bounds of the folk tales of which we are making a study. I did not feel that there was any need to clarify their distinction, because the purpose was to lead young people to realize there are many entertaining tales to hear among the old folk tales.

August, Showa 16 (1942)

YANAGITA KUNIO

## FOREWORD\*

Dear readers, that some of you have heard some stories in this collection of Japanese folk tales before is not strange in the least. By folk tales of Japan, we mean stories which have always been repeated to young people from generation to generation.

Most of these Japanese folk tales are stories which little folk hear even now in some house or in some corner of Japan, but the stories that a single boy or girl knows will not be very many. That is because people who tell stories are busier now and do not have the leisure to take time to tell you all kinds of stories. If there is a child who knows one third or one fourth of the stories in this book, it is because at his home there is a grandfather or a grandmother with a good memory and who tells stories well. Or perhaps there is a mother, a big sister, or an aunt who understands the heart of children well. There are not many such homes from olden times, so you should remember this and thank those again who tell you stories.

It is not strange, either, that in the folk tales in this collection there are some stories which are a little different from the ones you hear in such details as names of people or places, things, birds, animals, or words of the poems or in the order of events. It does not mean that one or the other is a mistake or that your memory is wrong. At first only a few people heard folk tales and one or two of them could tell the next generation. There was no need to make up things, but if they should unintentionally make mistakes, there was nobody to correct them. During a long period of time it was quite natural for the stories to change little by little at various villages and houses. While the same story is being recalled over and over, it is only human that the parts that are entertaining or interesting are changed. Those interesting parts are told in special detail and the rest are gradually overlooked or changed.

I did not look around for especially unusual stories for this little book of Japanese folk tales. Rather than doing that, I tried as much as possible to gather up stories which children all over the country have heard and know. At any rate, I tried to select only those tales which are preserved in two or three widely scattered places in Japan, although those various localities may not realize they share them with each other. From among these several versions, I have selected the one which has as much of the old form as pos-

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\* The Foreword is reprinted from the first edition.

sible. There are four or five stories included which are well constructed in a later style. These represent the two opposites in Japanese folk tales. Perhaps you can see the difference between the new and the old ones right away.

What I enjoy thinking most of all is how many millions and millions of children all over Japan from olden times have been brought up, hearing the same stories. Even now there are many who know these tales. This fact will become clear gradually as you read them. Another interesting fact is that while you are reading exactly the same story as the one you know, you are suddenly aware of something different about it. I hope that all of you will think about why the stories have these differences once more when you have grown up.

YANAGITA KUNIO

# JAPANESE FOLK TALES

(Nippon no Mukashibanashi)

## 1. Why the monkey's tail is short (*Saru no o wa naze mijikai* 猿の尾はなぜ短い)

Ages and ages ago the monkey's tail used to be thirty-three fathoms long. Because of a trick the bear played upon him, it turned into that short kind of tail.

One time the monkey called at the bear's house and asked, "What is a good way to catch lots of river fish?"

After talking it over, the bear advised, "On a cold night like this, sit on a rock above some deep place in the river and try putting that tail of yours down into the water and leaving it there. Many kinds of little fish will be sure to come and fasten onto it."

The monkey gladly did as he was told. As night deepened, his tail grew heavier and heavier. That was because the ice was spreading, but the monkey thought that the little fish were fastening onto his tail.

"This is enough to catch," he decided at last. "I want to go home because it is too cold."

He tried to pull up his tail, but no matter what he did, he could not get it loose.

"This is awful," he cried, thrashing around. At last, when he gave a desperate tug, his tail was snapped off at its base.

There are some people who say that the reason the monkey's face is so red is because he strained too hard as he pulled so frantically.

—Izumo\*

## 2. Why the jellyfish has no bones (*Kurage bone nashi* 海月骨無し)

Long, long ago the consort of the king of the Dragon Palace was about to have a baby, and she had a strange craving to eat monkey liver. Wanting to help satisfy her desire in some way or another, the Dragon king called for the turtle, one of his subjects, and asked if he could think of a good way.

The turtle was a wise creature. He set out immediately and came across to the island of Japan and found a monkey playing in the mountain near a seashore.

"Master Monkey, Master Monkey, don't you feel like going to the

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\* See note: page iii.

Dragon Palace as a guest?" he asked. "There are big mountains there and all kinds of feasts. If you go, I will give you a ride," he offered, displaying his huge back.

The unsuspecting monkey was carried away by the fair words of the turtle and set out to see the Dragon Palace with a light heart. He found that it was indeed a far more splendid palace than what he had heard of.

While the monkey stood at the entrance of the inner gate waiting for the turtle to come to guide him, the jellyfish, who was the gate keeper, looked at the monkey's face and burst out laughing.

"Master Monkey, you don't know a thing, do you? The royal consort is going to have a baby and she says that she wants monkey liver to eat. That is why it happened that you were invited to come as a guest," the jellyfish declared.

"This won't do," thought the startled monkey, but he was clever, too. He waited as if he didn't catch on to a thing.

Presently the turtle came out and said, "Now, come this way."

"Master Turtle," exclaimed the monkey, "I have done something terribly foolish. If I had known it was going to be such weather as this, I would have brought my liver along, but I forgot and left it hanging out on a tree in the mountain to dry in the sun. If it starts to rain, it may get wet and it worries me."

"What, you came off and left your liver behind?" cried the turtle. "Then there is nothing to do but go back and get it."

Thereupon, he took the monkey onto his back once more and carried him back to the former shore. As soon as they reached land, the monkey quickly leaped onto it and scrambled up to the top of the highest tree. Once there, he began looking around as if nothing had happened.

In great alarm the turtle asked, "What is the matter, Monkey, old chap?"

With a laugh the monkey answered, "Inside the sea there can be no mountains; outside the body there can be no liver."

"This was surely because that loose-tongued jellyfish talked too much while the monkey was waiting at the gate," complained the turtle when he returned to the Dragon King.

"That unruly fellow!" shouted the king. "Peel all his scales off! Take all his bones out!"

That is why the jellyfish came to have the shape which he has now. It was a punishment for his talking too much.

### 3. The sparrow and the woodpecker (*Suzume to kitsutsuki* 雀と啄木鳥)

Long, long ago the sparrow and the woodpecker were sisters. When a message came that their mother was sick and she was about to die, the

sparrow was just blackening her teeth, but she flew quickly to her mother to take care of her. That is why even now her cheeks look soiled and the upper half of her beak is still white. The woodpecker, however, took her time, leisurely putting on rouge and powder and getting dressed up before she set out. Consequently, she was too late to be there when her precious mother breathed her last.

That is why, although the sparrow's appearance is not beautiful, she can always live where people are and eat as much as she needs of the grain people eat. Even if the woodpecker's face is beautifully made up, she can only fly around in the woods from early morning, hammering away, *gakka-mukka*, on the back of trees, barely finding three worms to eat in a day. When night comes, she goes into the hollow of a tree and cries, "*Owae, hashiga yameru daya* (Oh, my beak hurts)."

—Tsugaru

#### 4. The pigeon's obedience to his mother (*Hato no kôkô* 鳩の孝行)

Long, long ago the pigeon was really a perverse fellow who would not do a thing his mother wanted. If his mother said to go to the mountains, he would go to the field. If his mother said go to the field, he would go to the garden to work.

His mother wanted to be buried on a quiet mountain side after she died, but she thought if she said so, her son would do the opposite again, so she purposely asked him to make her grave in the sand bar of the river.

Now it happened that after his mother died, the pigeon realized for the first time how wrong it had been for him not to have listened to what his mother said. This time he did just as she said and made her grave in the sand bar along the river. When the river began to fill up with rain, however, the pigeon became frantic for fear the grave would be washed away.

That is why even now, when it looks like rain, he recalls this and cries, "*To-to-poppo, oya ga koishii* (*To-to-poppo*, poor, dear mother)!"

It would have been better if he had obeyed his mother a little sooner.

—Noto

#### 5. The cuckoo brothers (*Hototogisu no kyôdai* 時鳥の兄弟)

Long, long ago the cuckoo had a very kind-hearted younger brother. Every year in May the younger brother went to the mountains to dig lots of wild yams and cooked them. The very best ones he gave to his elder brother to eat.

The elder brother distrusted him, in spite of that, and was sure that his brother saved the better yams to eat by himself. Finally in a burst of hate, he brought a big butcher knife and killed his gentle little brother. He ripped open his stomach to see, but only coarse wild yams, full of holes,

came out. Filled with remorse and grief over the terrible thing he had done, his form at last was changed into what it is now.

That is why, when the time comes even now to dig wild yams, the cuckoo flies around everywhere, calling. If you listen well, he seems to cry,

*Otôto koishi*  
*Hotte nite kuwaso*  
*Otôto koishi*  
*Imo hotte kuwaso*  
 "Poor little brother,  
 I'd dig and cook and let you eat ;  
 Poor little brother,  
 Yams, I'd dig and let you eat."

—Etchû

#### 6. The cuckoo and the shrike (*Hototogisu to mozu* 時鳥と百舌)

There is also a story how, long, long ago, the cuckoo was a shoemaker by trade. The shrike in those days was a pack-horse leader. The shrike would always order the cuckoo to shoe his horse, but he never paid the bill.

The cuckoo remembered this and forever would call, "*Kutsu no dai wa dôsbita* (What about the shoe bill)?"

Then, because he was ashamed, the shrike would hide somewhere and not show his face when the time came for the cuckoo to come out and call. He would catch all kinds of little insects and fasten them onto twigs and leave them to keep the cuckoo in a good humor.

—Kishû, Naka-gun

However, there is also the following story, and it is hard to know which is true.

Long ago the shrike liked to drink wine. The cuckoo left money with him with which he had agreed to buy an image of Buddha for his family altar, but he used all the money up on wine.

So the cuckoo is reminding the shrike when he comes around every year at that time and calls, "*Honzon kaketa ka* (Have you set up the image)?"

When he hears this, the embarrassed shrike keeps as quiet as he can and does not come out.

Some say that the shrike's face is red because he drank the wine, but it may be because he is ashamed.

—Kishû, Arita-gun,

#### 7. The owl dyer (*Fukurô someya* 梟染め屋)

Long, long ago the owl was a dyer. He received orders from many birds and dyed all kinds of outfits for them as a business. In those days, the



crow was quite a dandy and flew around in a pure white suit.

That crow came to the owl dyer one day and said, "Dye my suit a color which cannot be seen anywhere else."

The owl took the order and dyed his suit as black as charcoal. "In all the world there is not another color like this," he said.

The crow was furious, but there was nothing he could do about it. He never forgot his grudge against the owl. Whenever he sees the owl's face, the crow acts angry and bullies him. That is why even now the owl not only hides deep in the forest, never coming out while the crow is awake, but if the crow sometimes finds where he is hiding, he maltreats the owl.

—Rikuchû, Iwate-gun

#### 8. The cicada and Daishi Sama (*Semi to Daishi Sama* 蟬と大師様)

Long ago when Kôbô Daishi put on soiled robes like a beggar and was traveling through country districts in various regions, he came to a farmer's house in a certain village and asked for a night's lodging.

The appearance of Daishi was so miserable that the farmer curtly refused all help and sent him away. After he had done it, he realized that the beggar must have been Kôbô Daishi.

Hurriedly he climbed to the top of a huge *keyaki* tree and called, "Ho there, Kôbô Sama! Ho there, Kôbô Sama!"

But Daishi must have gone too far and he could not be called back. As he continued to call with heart and soul, the farmer gradually changed into a cicada called *chibahime*.

Even now, when the twenty-third of August comes, these cicada gather in the great *keyaki* tree and call with shrill voices. People say this is because it is probably the day on which Daishi Sama came by and asked for a night's lodging.

—Hitachi

#### 9. The wren counted among the hawks (*Misosazai mo taka no nakama* 鶇鷯も鷹の仲間)

Long, long ago, a little wren came up to where all kinds of hawks had gathered together for a drinking bout.

"Take me into your band," he asked.

The company of hawks snubbed him and said, "If you want to be one of our crowd, catch a wild boar. If you can catch a wild boar, we will let you join our drinking bout."

The wren promptly flew away and hopped into the ear of a wild boar asleep in a thicket. The startled boar dashed off with the little wren beating around in his ear. It hurt the boar so much he could not stand it, and he began whirling around blindly. Finally, striking his head on the corner of a rock, he died.

Then the little wren went back with a great swagger to the company of the hawks and joined their drinking bout.

Now a huge hawk called a *kuma*-hawk (bear-hawk or bold eagle) felt that he could not fall behind. He rushed off to where two boar were running together and tried to take them both at a single stroke. He grasped one boar with his left talons and the other with his right. The two boar ran off in opposite directions and the greedy hawk's body was torn in half.

—Harima

**10. The badger and the mud-snail** (*Tanuki to tanishi* 狸と田螺)

Long, long ago the badger went by for the mud-snail and the two went off on a pilgrimage to Ise.

When the last day of the trip came, the mud-snail turned to the badger and said, "How about it, old Badger? Just walking along this way is no fun. Why don't the two of us run a race from here to the Great Shrine of Ise?"

The badger agreed.

While the badger was getting ready to start, the alert mud-snail opened his shell and fastened himself onto the end of the badger's tail. That was how, without any effort at all, the mud-snail could run along just as fast as the badger.

At last, when he arrived at the Great Gate of the Shrine, the badger, who felt very happy, shook his big thick tail. With a click the mud-snail's shell struck the stone wall and half of it broke off, and he fell rolling onto the ground.

But because he was a show-off, the sly mud-snail covered his pain and said, "Say, old fellow, you are late, aren't you? I got here first and have slipped off a shoulder to rest."

—Kishû

**11. The badger and the monkey and the otter** (*Mujina to saru to kawa-  
oso* 貉と猿と獺)

Long, long ago the badger and the monkey and the otter set out together to visit the shrine at Yahiko. On their way they picked up things that had been dropped along the road. These were a piece of matting, a bag of salt, and about two quarts of beans. They talked over how to divide these things, but they couldn't agree at all upon a plan.

Then the shrewd badger suggested, "Master Monkey, how about your taking this piece of matting and climbing up to the top of a tree over on the mountain? You could spread it out there and enjoy the view in all directions, couldn't you? Master Otter, how about your taking this salt to some pool where there might be fish and scattering it there? You could make the fish float up and then catch them, couldn't you? Then I would

take the beans that are left and eat them.”

The other two thoughtlessly agreed.

The monkey cheerfully carried off the piece of matting to the top of a tree and spread it out. He was about to enjoy the view, when he slipped and fell out of the tree, wrenching his legs.\* The otter found a pond and poured the bag of salt into it. Then he went into the water to look, but the salt burned his eyes, making them red and sore.

“We both certainly have a bad bargain on our hands. It’s all because that badger wasn’t fair,” they complained as they set out for his house.

In the meantime, the badger had eaten up every one of the beans. He and his badger-wife had fastened the husks of the beans into his fur and he pretended to be groaning.

“I ate all the beans and now I have broken out with boils. It hurts, it hurts!” he whined.

The monkey and the otter were fooled again. They went away saying, “We are all in the same fix. There’s nothing to do about it.”

—Echigo

## 12. The monkey and the cat and the rat (*Saru to neko to nezumi* 猿と猫と鼠)

Long, long ago an old man and an old woman lived in a certain place. The old man would wrap up the cotton cloth which the old woman wove busily, and he would go about from town to town selling it.

One day, after selling the cloth, the old man was going home along a mountain path alone. He saw a hunter, who was about to shoot at a female monkey in a tree on the mountain far in the distance. The monkey was clasping her hands and seemed to be praying him not to fire. The old man thought it a heartless thing for the hunter to do and went up to try to stop him. The gun missed the mark accidentally and wounded the old man in the shoulder. Thinking he had done a terrible thing, the hunter ran away.

Then many young monkeys appeared from somewhere and took care of the old man the best they could. They led him to the monkey’s home and gave him a big feast.

The old man said, “My old woman will be worrying and I had better be going back.”

The monkeys then brought out a treasure and gave it to him to show their gratitude. “This coin is called a monkey farthing,” they said. “It is a very great treasure. We want to present it to our rescuer. If you place this upon your altar and worship it, you will become rich.”

It was truly the way the monkeys said it would be. At home, the old

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\* A Japanese proverb: Even a monkey can fall from a tree.

man was scolded hard by his old wife for returning without selling all of the cloth when it was so close to the end of the year. However, through the help of the monkey farthing, they became rich in a short time.

Now there lived a bad man in the neighborhood. After he learned why the old couple had become rich so suddenly, he stole the treasure away when they didn't know. The old man and his wife were frantic and asked everywhere about it but could't find where it was.

Then they called Tama, the cat they kept at their house. "Now, Tama," they said, "you must look for the monkey farthing and bring it within three days. If you find it for us, there will be a big reward for you. If you fail to find it for us, it will be this," they concluded, drawing out a bright dagger.

As soon as he heard this, the cat dashed off and caught a rat and told him about it. "Now, Rat," he said, "My old master's treasure is missing. You must go and find it in three days. If you find it for me, I will spare you. If you fail to find it for me, I will eat you up, tail and all."

The rat thought it would be awful to be eaten, so for three days he went from house to house in the neighborhood looking for the monkey farthing. Finally, he found it in a chest of drawers at the house of the bad man next door.

The rat gnawed a hole in the drawer and took out the coin, which he carried to Tama. In great delight, Tama picked the coin up in his mouth and brought it to the old man.

The old man, the old woman, the cat Tama, and the rat, all rejoiced together and prospered for ever after. *Medetasbi. Medetasbi.\**

—Inaba

**13. The rice-cake race of the monkey and the bullfrog** (*Saru to biki to no mochi kyôso* 猿と蟾の餅競走)

Once upon a time a monkey and a bullfrog met in the mountains. With the approach of New Year's, the cheerful sounds of mallets pounding rice-cakes could be heard here and there in the village.

"Say, old Bullfrog, isn't there some way we could manage to get a mortar of that rice-cake to eat?" suggested the monkey.

The two of them made up their plan there in the mountain and then they took their way carefully down into the village.

First, the monkey went to the gate at the back yard of the village mayor's house and hid. A little later, the bullfrog came up and stole into the garden. Suddenly he flopped into the spring pond with a big splash.

The young people, pounding rice in the yard, heard the noise and shouted, "How awful! Our Little Master must have fallen into the pond."

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\* *Medetasbi. Medetasbi* is an exclamation of approval or pleasure at the conclusion of a tale.

Everyone deserted the mortar and rice-cake and rushed to the edge of the water. With the stage thus cleared, the monkey grabbed the mortar with the rice-cake in it in his arms and came carrying it easily back up to the top of the mountain. The bullfrog made his way up slowly after him.

"Now, Bullfrog, old chap, rather than for the two of us to divide the rice-cake to eat, wouldn't it be better to roll it down from here, mortar and all?" proposed the monkey. "We could run after it, and the one who reaches it first could eat the whole piece. How about it?"

The bullfrog knew his feet were slow and that he would probably lose out, but he agreed.

With a shout of one, two, three, the mortar of rice-cake was sent rolling down to the bottom of the slope. The swift-footed monkey went flying right after it. The heavy-footed bullfrog went shuffling down one step at a time. As luck would have it, however, the rice-cake pitched out of the mortar unnoticed and was left dangling on a clump of bush clover on the way.

"This is a good stroke," said the bullfrog, and he promptly squatted down beside the rice-cake and began slowly chewing on it all alone.

Finding he had only chased an empty mortar, the monkey scrambled back up dejectedly. Looking on with his mouth watering, he said, "Bullfrog, old boy, how about starting to eat it from this corner?"

"Why, this is my rice-cake," answered the frog. "I can eat it from wherever I like."

—Echigo

#### 14. The monkey bridegroom (*Saru muko-iri* 猿婿入り)

Long, long ago an old man from a village was working alone in a patch of garden on the mountain side.

The garden was so big and he had to work so hard that he declared, "Oh, even a monkey would do! If he would only come to help me, I would give him one of my three daughters as a bride."

Just then a monkey appeared and began helping the old man briskly in the garden.

"What an impossible promise I've made!" thought the old man.

After going home, the old man talked it over with his three daughters. The eldest daughter and the second became very angry, declaring they couldn't be made to marry a monkey.

Only the youngest daughter was a tender hearted girl and said, "If it was a promise, it cannot be broken, so I will go as the bride. All I want to prepare for my wedding is one big earthen jar. Please put lots of needles in it."

On the next day, the monkey came in the morning, all dressed up exactly

like a bridegroom to take his promised bride. On his back, he put his bride's belongings, the earthen jar and needles, and they went off together, talking in a friendly way, toward the mountain where the monkey lived.

At the foot of the mountain there was a deep mountain stream with only a slender log across it for a bridge.

While they were crossing it, the monkey bridegroom spoke up and said, "If we have a boy child, what shall we name him? Since his father is a monkey lord, we could call him Saruzawa (Monkey Dell). If we have a little girl, let's call her O-Fuji (Wisteria) because the wisteria flowers in this valley are so lovely."

As they went talking along, the bridge was so narrow that with a bare touch of the hand, the monkey fell into the stream and was carried away with the jar of needles still on his back.

Crying as he went, he sang a song like this, the word of which are still left.

—Bitchû

*Saruzawa ya, Saruzawa ya,  
O-Fuji no haha ga nakuzo kawai ya.\**

"Monkey Dell, Monkey Dell,  
Wisteria's mother weeps. Oh, the pity."

#### 15. The quiver of the Mountain Spirit (*Yama no kami no utsubo* 山の神の鞆)

In olden times there was a blind lute player. While he was making a trip alone with his lute case on his back, he strayed from the path, and he was overtaken by night in the mountain. All he could do was to set his lute case down at the foot of a great tree and spend the night resting in the open.

He turned to the big tree and said, "O Mountain Spirit, since I have lost my way and night has come on, please let me stop here just for tonight. Therefore, although it may not be very pleasing to you, I will play a number on my lute, as is the custom of blind minstrels on a journey."

He then took out his lute and recited a passage from "Heike Tales" to its accompaniment.

When he had finished, he heard a voice from overhead cry out, "Well, well, that was fine. Please let me hear another episode."

He thought it was strange, but the blind priest played another passage from the Heike as he had been requested.

"I am very much obliged to you," the voice said. "You must be very tired now."

\* The text is one of several songs.

Presently there were footsteps of some unknown person and a tray covered with all kinds of food was brought and set down before the blind man. This surprised him even more, but he was not only a trusting minstrel, he was really hungry. He ate his fill of the meal, and then turning to the tree, he offered his hearty thanks and lay down for a night's sleep.

The next morning a hunter appeared and said, "I have been told to guide you to a place where people live. Hold onto this quiver firmly and follow me." The hunter put something like a furry case into the hands of the blind man.

With great joy the lute player made ready to go. He gripped the quiver firmly and gradually climbed down the mountain. Soon the sound of a mountain stream grew louder. He heard the distant voices of dogs and chickens, and he knew that he was nearing a village.

The minstrel was thinking he heard the voices of a crowd of children as they came into the mountain when, suddenly, one child shouted, "There! There! Look over there! That blind minstrel coming down the mountain is hanging onto the tail of a wolf!"

As soon as he heard these words, the hunter, who had been guiding the lute player down, pulled the quiver away excitedly and ran back over the path down which they had come. Afterwards, the minstrel heard that what he had thought was a hunter was really a wolf.

Then the lute player asked a man who was cutting grass to take him first to the house of the village head. After the minstrel had told in detail all that had happened since the day before, his host struck his hands together and exclaimed, "That was it! Now I can understand everything. My little child suddenly spoke out strangely last night.

"I am the Mountain Spirit of this mountain. I have a special guest here tonight so make a feast and bring it to the mountain. Give it to the man resting under the great tree. If you are slow about it, I will take the life of this child," he said, as he lashed around.

"The whole house was worried but somehow they hurriedly prepared a tray and sent it out to the mountain. Then you were the one he said was the guest of the Mountain Spirit. I can see that you are quite skillful with the lute," the village head concluded, and he showed great reverence to the blind minstrel.

#### 16. The eagle's eggs (*Washi no tamago* 鷲の卵)

Long ago there lived in a village a farmer who had an only daughter who was very beautiful. At the time to transplant rice, he was looking over his bed of rice sprouts. He saw a snake chasing a little frog and crushing the young plants.<sup>1</sup>

"Stop, Snake. Don't chase it," he called. "I will give you my only

daughter if you'll stop."

The snake stopped chasing the frog and went away quietly.

From that night a handsome young bridegroom began coming to the daughter, arriving late each night and leaving early in the morning. Not knowing what kind of a man he was, the father was uneasy. He called to an unknown soothsayer who was passing one day and had him tell a fortune.

The stranger said, "Your daughter has taken a bridegroom who is not a real human being and she is bearing him a child which is not really human. It may be that she will die very soon. There is only one way to save her. An eagle has built a nest in the top of the great tree on the mountain back of here and is laying three eggs in it. I advise you to ask your son-in-law to go and get the eggs and try feeding them to your daughter."

That night, when the young man came, the daughter said to him that she wanted to eat the eagle's eggs. He gladly agreed to climb up and get them for her, but while he was doing it, he unmistakably changed into the shape of a real snake. After he had brought two eggs down in his mouth, and when he went up for the third, the mother eagle pecked the big snake to death.

When the old man came home to see, the fortune teller of the day before was there again.

After he heard what had happened, the fortune teller said, "Then your daughter has been saved. The next thing to do is to give her wine sprinkled with peach blossoms on the coming festival of the third of March. She will gradually grow stronger. I am the little frog whose life you saved. I wanted to repay your kindness." Saying this, he went away with a hop-pity-hop.

People began drinking peach-blossom wine at the festival of the third of March from that time.

—Hizen, Kishima-gun

**17. Kôsai Oshô and the sea turtles** (*Kôsai Oshô to umi-game* 弘濟和尚と海龜)

Long ago in Bingo province, there was a great temple called Mitani-dera. When the temple was first built, there was no gold for gilding the image of Buddha and the Great Hall. The people around there asked a priest called Kôsai Oshô to take many kinds of produce by boat and to carry them to Kyôto to trade for gold.

After he had finished his errand, Kôsai went to the part of Naniwa, now known as the port of Ôsaka. When he was about to board the boat for home, he noticed that the fishermen along the shore had caught four big turtles and were about to kill them. A deep pity stirred the heart of Kôsai Oshô. Paying money to the fishermen, he bought the turtles and turned



all four of them loose in the sea.

He set sail soon after that, but when he had returned as far as the open sea off the island called Kotsu-jima in Bizen, a pirate ship appeared in the twilight.

First of all, the pirates came leaping aboard and, seizing two of priest's attendants, they threw them into the sea. Turning to Kôsai Oshô next, they said. "You go into the sea, too. If you won't go by yourself, we will throw you overboard."

Although he tried to speak quietly to them about many things, the wicked men would not listen. With no way to turn, he climbed overboard, and the pirates rowed off somewhere with the boat loaded with gold.

As he stepped into the sea, Kôsai landed upon something like a rock just below the surface of the water, which kept his body from sinking. All night long he stood this way. When dawn came, he looked closely and could see that what he thought was a rock was a huge turtle shell.

Before he knew it, he had passed the channel off Bizen and Bitchû. Then he came to the shore of his own land of Bingo. When he returned to his own village, he told this strange story. Everybody admired the genuine goodness of the turtles who had repaid his kindness.

A short while after that, it became known that a big temple had been built at that village, and some men came bringing gold to sell. Kôsai Oshô hurried out to see. Among them were six of the pirates whom he had seen the other day.

When the pirates recognized the face of Oshô, they were astounded and turned pale. Tongue-tied, they hung their heads and began to tremble.

Kôsai was aware of all this, but said not a word. He only laid out the price of the trade and gave it to them. The wicked men received the payment and departed silently with a look beyond description.

### 18. **Monkey Masamune** (*Saru Masamune* 猿正宗)

Long, long ago two couriers from a feudal lord in Kyûshû were going along the Tôkaidô to Edo carrying a letter of importance.

They had left the stop-over at Okitsu before it was daylight and were about to take the road from the sea over the long Satta Pass, when they happened to look back to the seashore and there they saw an unusually large octopus had come out. It had a long arm wound around something and was trying to drag it into the sea. They looked closely and could see that it had a monkey. The monkey was clinging with all its might to the edge of the rock, struggling to keep from being pulled away, but the octopus seemed to be proving to be stronger.

"Let's help the monkey!" the couriers exclaimed.

They began throwing small stones and things, trying to scare the octopus

off, but it paid no attention and would not let go. Then the two couriers left their packet at the side of the road by the entrance to the pass and ran down to the shore. They drew their short swords and slashed at the octopus. At this, it released its hold and slipped into the water.

The monkey seemed overjoyed with his narrow escape and, scrambling from the place, he started toward his rescuers. But for some reason, it suddenly picked up the letter box which had been left by the side of the road and went leaping away straight up to the top of the mountain.

A letter of greatest importance was in that box. There was no footing on the mountain other than the road through the pass. The men tried desperately to push their way after the monkey, but they could not see a sign or trace of him. With their letter case missing, there was no point to their continuing their trip. An exasperating thing had happened. Overcome with worry, the two men sat down in the pass and stared blankly ahead.

Presently, far away on the mountain, the form of that same monkey appeared again. "Look. Oh, look" the two men cried as they watched it. It was holding their letter case high with one arm and with the other it embraced something like a long bundle wrapped in straw matting. While the men were still wondering about it, the monkey gradually drew nearer and put the two things down before them.

Most of all, they certainly were relieved that they had their valuable letter case back safely. They wondered what the other package was. When they were about to take it up in their hands, the monkey climbed back into the mountain. The two men then realized for the first time that the monkey had carried away their letter case to get them to wait while he could bring them a gift of thanks. When they opened the package wrapped in straw, they found a sheathed sword in a long plain wooden box.

After they reached Edo, they took the sword to an expert in that line to have it appraised. He said that it was unquestionably an original masterpiece of Goro Masamune. He polished it and found it was without a single mar. It was a splendid antique sword.

The men decided to present the sword to their feudal lord. In style and length, it was exactly what he wanted at the moment. The lord bestowed a generous reward upon the two couriers. The sword he named Saru Masamune (Monkey Masamune), and it was kept among the treasures of the family for generations. *Medetashi, medetashi.*

#### 19. From a meadow lane in spring (*Haru no nomichi kara* 春の野路から)

Long, long ago, a poor old man lived alone. By working hard day by day, he barely managed to get along.

"Today is the eighth of April (Buddha's birthday), so I think I wil

take it easy at home for this one day," he thought.

However, something came up which made it necessary for him to go out, after all. "Since I bought this bottle of wine especially for today, I will hang it at my side and take it along and perhaps have a drink on the way," decided the old man as he set out alone.

The weather was bright and clear, and around him in the fields and on the mountains all kinds of flowers were bursting into bloom. When he started to cross a broad meadow, the old man felt that, since the weather was so fine and he was getting a bit tired, this would be a good place to stop for a cup of wine.

Selecting a stone of the right size, he sat down on it. As he did this, he discovered a skeleton, fallen on the ground by his feet.

"Well, well, I don't know what sort of person's bones you are, but this is just right because I don't like to drink alone," the old man exclaimed. "I'll give you a cupful, too, and while we look at the view, let's enjoy the bottle together."

With these words, the old man filled a cup to the brim and poured it over the skeleton. Then, after enjoying himself for a while, drinking and singing songs, he stood up and started on.

The old man finished his errand and came back through the same field that day toward twilight on his way home.

He heard a voice from behind call, "Old Man, wait a bit."

He looked back and saw a beautiful girl, seventeen or eighteen years old.

"Today you have made me very happy," she said. "I have been waiting for you to come back, so I could thank you. "Three years ago, on the twenty-eighth of this month, I suddenly became sick and died while I was crossing this field. My parents have been looking for me in all sorts of places, but the spiritual bond between us is too faint, and they haven't been able to find me. Until today I have passed very lonely days. On the twenty-eighth, when my memorial rites will be held, I want you to leave whatever work you have and come here. I want you to go with me to my parents' home," declared the girl.

At last the twenty-eighth arrived, and, because he had promised, the old man went to the meadow to see while it was still morning. There the beautiful girl was waiting. Then they went together into the village near the meadow.

The girl's home was a big mansion. A crowd of people from the village had gathered there on that day for the ceremony.

"I can never go into a place like this," protested the old man.

"If you hold onto my clothes as you go in," the girl assured him, "nobody can see either of us."

They slipped into the house easily and sat down in front of the family altar.

Trays of dinner were brought into the parlor, complete with soup and wine. Since the old man liked the wine, he drank it as fast as the girl poured it for him. He drank the wine and took all kinds of his favorite dishes.

The priests in the parlor and the invited relatives began to say to each other that it was strange how the food and wine were disappearing from their trays before they knew.

It finally came time to clear away the trays, and a little maid servant dropped a plate. The master of the house scolded her hard and said that it was an outrageous thing to do to a valuable dish.

When the ghost girl saw this, she turned to the old man and whispered, "I don't like such scenes. I'm going back."

"Then I'll leave, too," answered the old man.

"It's all right for you, so please stay on," she replied and slipped away alone.

After the girl went out, everybody immediately began to see the old man's form. They all began asking him questions at one time.

"What sort of a person are you?"

"Where did you come from?"

"Why are you here in this parlor?"

Since he could no longer hide anything, the old man held back nothing and told everything that had happened.

The relatives were all very much astonished and the master and his wife wept. "We pray you, lead us quickly to the meadow where our daughter is," they begged.

Thereupon the old man led the procession of all the company, even the priests, out to receive the bones. Then they performed the funeral rites once more.

The old man gave up his poor odd jobs, and with the kind assistance of the people at that house, he got along comfortably for the rest of his life.

—Rikuchû, Kamihei-gun

## 20. The little hand-mill that ground out gold (*Kogane kousu* 黄金小白)

Long, long ago there lived two brothers near the pond called Mizoroga-numa in Ôshû. The elder brother was rather dull-witted, and the younger was quite shrewd. The younger brother made his elder brother go to the edge of the pond every day to cut grass.

Now it happened one day that a beautiful maiden came up out of the pond with a letter in her hand. "Please take this letter to the pond called Hachirô-go-numa at the foot of Mt. Okomagatake," she said to the elder brother. "When you reach Hachirô-ga-numa, stand by the margin and

clap your hands, and a beautiful maiden will rise up out of the water. All you have to do is to give her this letter.”

The young man promptly did as he was told. After he arrived at Hachirô-ga-numa with the letter, he stood on the margin and clapped his hands. Immediately a beautiful maiden appeared from the pond and received the letter, which she read.

“My elder sister at Mizoro-ga-numa is always receiving kindness from you, it says. Wait here for a little, while I go to get something mentioned in the letter,” she said.

She went back into the pond and soon returned with a little stone hand-mill. She said, “There are not two such treasures in all this world but since my elder sister has said so, I will present it to you. If you put only one grain of rice into this and turn it, a grain of gold will come out. Only be sure, when you go home, dig a little pool, even a little one will do, in a corner of your yard. Every morning and evening, dip some water from it and offer it to the little stone mill.”

After saying this, she gave the hand-mill to the young man and went back into the pond.

The elder brother took the hand-mill and went to his own house. Every day he ground out a grain of gold and began to live an easy life.

Noticing that his elder brother did not go out to cut grass any more, the younger brother thought it strange that he was spending his days in ease. He spied on him and saw him turning that strange hand-mill.

While his brother was away, the younger brother found the tiny hand-mill in the corner of the family altar and brought it out. He put a grain of rice into it and began turning it and was surprised to see a grain of gold come out. However, because he was greedy, he could not stop and leave it at that. Thinking he would take a lot of gold at one time and keep it, he poured a whole bowl of rice onto the little hand-mill and tried grinding.

The little hand-mill tipped over and began rolling and rolling. It rolled out of the house and into the little pool in the corner of the yard, and completely disappeared from sight.

—Rikuchû, Esashi-gun

## 21. Little Runny-nose Boy (*Hanatare Kozô Sama* はなたれ小僧様)

Long, long ago there lived an old man in Mayumi-no-sato, far back in the mountains of Higo province. Every day, by going into the mountains to cut firewood and taking it to sell in the town of Seki, he barely managed to make a living.

One day it seemed that he could not sell the wood, no matter how hard he tried. He crossed and recrossed the bridge of the river which ran through the middle of the town as he went around trying to sell the wood,

but there wasn't a single person who would buy it. Worn out at last, he stopped to rest at the middle of the bridge. He threw the bundles of wood one at a time into the deep channel of the stream. Then he said a prayer to the River Goddess and started to go home.

Strangely enough, just as he did this, a young maiden, more beautiful than he had ever seen, rose up out of the deep water and called the old man to stop. On her arm she carried a little child, a truly little child.

"You work hard every day and are honest," she said. "And today you brought and offered your firewood to the River Goddess. She is quite pleased and she places this little child in your care as a reward. Take him and go. He is called Little Runny-nose Boy. He will give you anything you ask for, but, in exchange, you must be sure to prepare for him a dish of fresh shrimp served with vinegar three times a day."

After handing the child to the old man, the maid sank again to the bottom of the river.

In great delight, the old man carried Little Runny-nose Boy to his home at Mayumi-no-sato. He placed the child on his altar shelf and tended him with great care.

Whether it was rice or money or anything else, whatever he could think of that he wanted, when he would barely ask for it, Little Runny-nose Boy would make a noise like blowing his nose and bring it out before the old man's eyes.

"This house has become too dirty. Please bring me out a bigger new home," the old man said.

Even such things as a house would come forth with a single noise from the child's nose, and it would be a finer house than he had been wishing for. A store house and all kinds of furnishings gradually came out, until in the space of a single month, the old man was a rich man, quite different from what he had been.

No longer having to gather wood in the mountains, his only work was to go to town every day to buy shrimps for the dish. However, as the days and months went by, this single duty grew to be a bit of a bother.

At last he lifted Little Runny-nose Boy down from the altar shelf and said, "Little Runny-nose Boy, since I have nothing more to ask of you, please go back to the River Goddess. Give her my kind regards."

When he heard this, the little boy went out without a word. For some time he could be heard outside, blowing his nose. In the meantime, the house and store house and all the things in them began disappearing one by one, until all that was left was the shabby old house which had first stood there.

Frantically the old man rushed out to drag Little Runny-nose Boy back, but he could not see his form anywhere. —Higo, Tamana-gun

## 22. Matsuko's pilgrimage to Ise (*Matsuko no Ise-mairi* 松子の伊勢参り)

Long ago a young man and a young woman who said that they were from the village of Tokko in North Akita arrived on a pilgrimage together at the Great Shrine of Ise. The girl's name was Matsuko and, for a country maid, she was an unusually refined and beautiful girl.

The innkeeper noticed that the two were quite worried because they did not have enough money left for their trip.

Feeling sorry for them, he gave them as much as they needed and said, "Next year when a group comes on a pilgrimage from your village, you can send the money back."

Since many villagers came from Tokko the next year, the innkeeper asked, "Did you bring that money back to me?"

They said, "There is no such beautiful girl named Matsuko in our village. What can be the reason for this?"

The host and guests were quite mystified.

After the Ise pilgrims reached home, they told the rest of the villagers about the story.

Then, somebody exclaimed, "Now that explains it! There has been something white, which looks like a prayer strip from Ise, up at the top of a tall pine in the Suwa-*jinja* grove for the last three years. I'll take it down and look at it."

Climbing up the pine tree, he got the white thing, which he examined and found that it was for certain a charm from the Great Shrine. It was apparent that the two pine trees had changed into human forms and had gone on the pilgrimage to Ise.

"The money for the lodging must be returned immediately," they all agreed. The money was promptly collected at the village and sent to the innkeeper at Ise. It was also understood from that time that one of the two pine trees was a woman and that her name was Matsuko San (Miss Pine).

—Ugo, Kitaakita-gun

## 23. The water spider (*Mizu-gumo* 水蜘蛛)

Long ago in Ōshū a man went fishing in a pond at Handayama one summer day. He caught an unusually large number of fish and filled his fishing basket to the brim in a short time.

Since the day was very hot, the man soaked his bare feet in the pond. A water spider, which came out from somewhere, ran over the surface of the pond and fastened his thread onto the man's big toe. Very soon it came back and fastened another thread on the same place. Thinking this was strange, the man cautiously unfastened the thread from his toe and wound

it around the willow stump beside him.

Presently a voice from the bottom of the pond shouted, "Jirô and Tarô and the rest of you, come here!"

To the man's amazement, all the fish in his basket leaped out together and got away. Then many voices joined in with a shout of *en-to-en-yara-saa*,\* and right before man's eyes, the spider's thread began to be pulled and that thick stump was broken off at the root with a snap.

From that time to this, not a single man has cared to go fishing in that pond.

—Iwashiro, Date-gun

#### 24. The chief of the snapping turtles (*Suppon no oyakata* 泥龜の親方)

Occidentals say that a person who says nothing is as mute as a fish, but in Japan we occasionally hear of a man who has heard a fish speak. It is also said that snapping turtles talk.

Long ago when the old pond in the village of Nakatsu, about two and a half miles east of Mino-no-Ôgaki, was being emptied and fresh water was to be put in, an enormous snapping turtle was caught. The man who caught it loaded it onto his back and carried it off to sell at a fish store in Ôgaki.

Walking along the bank of another big pond on the way, he heard a deep voice from the pond shout, "Say, where are you going?"

"I'm going to Ôgaki," called back a voice from the basket on the man's back.

The startled man then heard the same voice from the pond ask, "When are you coming back?"

To this the snapping turtle in the basket by the man's ear yelled, "Oh, I won't stay long. I'll be back tomorrow."

The man thought that this was probably something called a Pond Spirit, but, being a plucky chap, he decided that it wouldn't do to show a faint heart at such a time. He carefully examined the basket again and fastened the ropes across the lid more securely. Then taking the turtle to a fish store, he sold it for a good price.

"He said himself that he is going back tomorrow, and I doubt if he can be killed so easily, anyway," the man thought. "I'll see what happens."

First, he took the money from the sale to the temples in the neighborhood and paid for chants to be said. Then, he resolved that from that day he would stop this business of catching living things.

On the next day he went to town and tried to appear to be just passing

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\* A rhythmical chant accompanying the pulling.



the fish market where he had sold the turtle on the day before.

The bewildered store keeper called out to him, "That snapping turtle was something uncanny. I don't know how he did it, but he escaped from the fish trap which no man could have torn open without a sharp edged tool. He's nowhere to be seen."

This very likely was a chief among the snapping turtles.

—Mino

**25. The "Yaro-ka (Here-goes)" flood** (*Yaro-ka Mizu やろか水*)

Long ago at the village of Ibori in Owari, the Kiso river rose higher and higher from rains which fell every day in mid-autumn. Worrying for fear the dikes might break, the villagers set up a watch by the flood.

One night toward midnight, from the deep channel below Mino-no-Ikiyama on the opposite bank, a voice seemed repeatedly to call, "Yaro ka! Yaro ka! (Here goes! Here goes!)"

The men could only think how wierd it was. They just stared at each other uneasily, but they couldn't think of a thing to do about it.

The voice went on and on, "Here goes!"

Finally one of the terrified workmen unconsciously shrieked in spite of himself, "If you're going to let go, let go!"

As soon as he did this, a great wall of water came rushing through, and before their eyes, the fields all around were covered by the flood.

Even nowadays, that flood is spoken of as the *Yaro-ka* flood. This happened about two hundred and fifty years ago in the fourth year of the Jôkyô Era, some people say. In the country along this big river, similar stories are told in several villages.

—Owari, Niwa-gun

**26. Goshinrô (You've-all-been-to-great-trouble) Pond** (*Goshinrô no ike 御辛勞の池*)

One time long ago in the village of Yawata in Higo province, an old pond near the shrine was going to be drained and the fish taken out.

It was on the first of August they say that the villagers, one and all, gathered early in the morning and busily began dipping the water out. No matter how long they worked, however, they couldn't empty the pond. At last, when night was coming on they thought they had at almost reached the bottom.

All of a sudden, a man such as they had never seen before rose up out of the water. He no sooner bobbed a little bow and said, "You've all been to great trouble," than he disappeared.

The water then promptly rose back up to the brim of the pond.

From that time the pond has been called Goshinrô and nobody tries to catch fish in it.

—Higo, Tamana-gun

**27. The best lacquer of Mera** (*Mera no jô urushi* 米良の上漆)

Long ago in the little mountain village of Mera in Hyûga, there were two brothers called Yasuzaemon and Jûbê. The two of them had made their way in life by going far back into the mountains beyond Mera and gathering lacquer.

One day Yasuzaemon, the elder brother, was going along the road in the mountains and dropped the sickle he was carrying into the deep channel of the mountain stream. Being a good swimmer, he quickly stripped off his clothes and jumped into the river. As he gradually went down deep into the river, he was surprised to find the bottom of the channel was entirely lacquer. The sap from lacquer trees on many mountains had been washed down by the rains since long ago and had collected there without anyone's knowing about it yet.

Gloating over happening upon this rare good fortune, Yasuzaemon went every day all alone and took the lacquer out, a little at a time. He sold it at a good price and gradually made money.

All the neighbors wondered how such fine lacquer came into his hands. Everybody thought it most strange. His younger brother, Jûbê, felt particularly uneasy because he noticed that his brother never went with him any more but always seemed to leave stealthily.

After trying many ways to follow his brother without being noticed, Jûbê at last found out his secret. Then he himself began going to the bottom of the river to take out the lacquer to sell.

All this annoyed Yasuzaemon, the elder brother. In some way he wanted to stop Jûbê from taking it, so that he alone could go on taking it. He thought of many things to do, but at last he went to the wood carver in the town and ordered him to make a big dragon with special care. The horns and scales were painted red and blue and the eyes drawn in gold and silver, until it looked exactly like a live dragon. Carrying it secretly to the place where two mountain streams joined, the elder brother put the dragon where it would move in a natural way by the force of the cross currents.

The younger brother Jûbê, not knowing about this, came along on the next day and stripped off again and went into the water. There from the bottom of the stream a frightful looking serpent was rolling its eyes and glaring at him. Without going any nearer, he rushed off, his nerves thoroughly shaken.

The elder brother, looking on from a distance, was delighted that at last he could gather the lacquer to suit himself. In high glee he went into the water. Although the dragon was certainly the same wooden one which he had ordered the wood carver in town to make, it had actually come to life and was really moving. When Yasuzaemon started to take

the lacquer, the serpent faced him with a big open mouth as though it was determined to swallow him at a gulp.

"There's no reason for this," thought Yasuzaemon, going back time after time to look, but the dragon was so formidable that he could not go near it.

Although there was still a lot of lacquer at the bottom of the deep part of the river, he could never take any more out. Since it had come to this, Yasuzaemon regretted that he had not come every day with his brother as a partner to get the lacquer.

**28. Crab Pool and Princess Yasunaga** (*Kani-buchi to Yasunaga-hime* 蟹淵と安長姫)

Long ago there was an old wood cutter at the village of Motoda in Oki-no-kuni. One day he went for back along the Yasunaga river to cut wood in the mountain above the waterfall. Accidentally he let the ax which he had in his hand slip, and it sank from sight into the little round pool in the basin at the foot of the falls. Immediately waves began to stir up in the pool, a thick mist rose, and all around became pitch dark. Then something like a big black stick covered with thorns came rising up from the water.

Terrified at what had happened, the old man started for the foot of the mountain as fast as his legs could carry him. Then from behind him somebody called him with a very gentle voice, "Old man, please wait a bit."

Looking around, he saw a lovely damsel, as beautiful as a picture, standing at the waterfall.

"I am Princess Yasunaga," she said. "I have lived in this pool since olden times. Since some time ago a huge crab began living here, too, and he has tormented me day and night. Today you dropped your ax, and it cut off one of the arms of this wicked crab, weakening him. You probably saw that big arm with thorns float away. Although I should thank you for that, he still has another arm left, and I cannot feel safe. The crab is hiding in a ledge at the bottom of the pool, groaning with pain. Please let the ax fall again into the pool from the top of the waterfall."

With these words, the maiden handed the old man his ax which had just fallen into the water.

Frightened as he was, the old man still wanted to rescue the Water Spirit. He turned back once more to the mountain and threw his ax from the high place into the basin at the falls.

"Riches and honors and long life or whatever you ask shall be yours, even as you ask it," declared the delighted Water Spirit, and she returned to the forest.

A few days later the villagers discovered the shell of a dead crab,

nearly six feet around and with both arms missing, which had washed down to the mouth of the river at the sea. They decided that the wood cutter's story must have been true.

The river was then called Yasunaga River and the basin of the waterfall was called Crab Pool. No matter how dry the season, the water in the river never disappeared. Furthermore, if prayers were offered to the Water Spirit for rain, it always rained.

—Oki, Suki-gun

**29. The bell from the Dragon Palace** (*Ryūgū no kane* 龍宮の鐘)

Long ago there was a brave *samurai* named Awazu-no-Kaja in Ōmi province.

He built a temple, but having no bell to hang, he decided to go and buy the iron needed for it. He set out in a boat from Echizen to look for iron in Izumo province.

While he was sailing the Japan Sea, the wind suddenly rose and the waves came washing over until the boat could make no headway. The crew and passengers were all worrying when a very little boat appeared from somewhere. Only a little child was steering it as it drew up along side.

"There is a man named Awazu-no-Kanja on that boat, I think," he said, "Will he please hurry and get into this little boat."

Awazu-no-Kanja didn't know the reason, but he went over, as he was asked, into the little boat which had just appeared. Then the wind and waves disappeared and the big boat did not move a bit.

"Wait here for a while," the little boy ordered the big boat.

No sooner had the little boat started to the bottom of the sea than it was already in front of the gate of the Dragon Palace.

The Dragon King came out to meet Awazu-no-Kanja and said, "Knowing that you are famous in all the world for your skill with the bow and arrow, I come to ask you to undertake something urgent for me. At present this Sea Palace is threatened by a great enemy, who comes with his followers every day to attack. Save us with that power of your bow and destroy the enemy today."

This was an adventure of great honor to Awazu-no-Kanja, and he accordingly accepted it. He climbed to the high tower of the palace to make his preparations and waited.

Presently in the distance a huge serpent appeared with a host of followers coming to attack. With his eyes fastened upon that great open mouth coming toward him, Awazu no-Kanja stood exactly before it and sent his shaft, piercing it from the root of its tongue to the base of its throat. Filled with consternation, the serpent tried to flee, but this time Awazu-no-Kanja sent an arrow to the center of its body.

From the Dragon King down to all his subjects, all were overjoyed. They asked how they could reward Awazu-no-Kanja for his great feat of that day.

He answered, "The only reason for my trip is that the temple which I built has no bell to be hung. I have set out to buy material and am crossing the sea to Izumo for it. Beyond that I have no desire."

"That is a simple matter," said the Dragon King.

He quickly took down the bell which hung in the gate of the Dragon Palace and presented it as a gift to Awazu-no-Kanja.

It is said that the bell of the Kôkô-ji at Awazu in Ômi was the gift from the Dragon Palace, but the temple has completely disappeared. It is also said that the bell which hangs at Mii-dera and which, according to legend, Musashibô Benkei carried half way up Hiei-zan and sent rolling down, is that Dragon Palace bell. But nobody knows for certain what the truth is.

### 30. What the *Yama-chichi*\* observed (*Yama chichi no satori* 山父のさとり)

Long ago there was a cooper in a certain palce. While he was working outside one morning after it had snowed, a frightful monster with only one eye and one leg appeared from the mountain and stood in front of the cooper.

Seeing him, the cooper began to tremble and thought, "This must be the thing called a *yama-chichi* which I have heard about in stories for a long time."

The apparition then said, "Say, Cooper, you're thinking I must be the thing called a *yama-chichi*, aren't you?"

The cooper thought, "How awful. He observes right away what I think."

Then the monster said, "Say, Cooper, you think it is awful because I observe right away what you think, don't you?"

After that whatever the cooper thought was observed until he was confounded. With nothing he could do about it, the man kept at his work, trembling violently all the time. Suddenly his numb hands slipped accidentally. The bamboo hoop sprang out in front of him and slapped the *yama-chichi* in the face.

The *yama-chichi* was taken by surprise.

"These human beings are dangerous because sometimes they do things they are not thinking about," the startled apparition thought. "There's no telling what will happen if I stay here."

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\* The translator has deliberately left in *romaji* for further study the term *yama-chichi*, and the three terms *yama-haha*, *yama uba* and *ama-no-jaku*, which appear in following tales. They represent supernatural creatures with characteristics which Western terms only partially indicate.

He went stumping pellmell back to the mountain.

—Awa

**31. The wife who didn't eat** (*Meshi kuwanu nyôbô* 飯食はぬ女房)

This is also about a cooper who lived in a village long, long ago.

One day toward evening, when he went outside to relieve himself, he said to himself, "Oh me, I wish I had a wife, one who didn't eat."

That very night a woman such as he had never seen before came and asked, "Is this where the cooper lives who wants a wife who doesn't eat? I am a woman who doesn't eat. Besides, I work very hard. Won't you please make me your wife?"

No matter how much the cooper refused, she would not go away. He had no choice but to let her stay as his wife.

To be sure, she worked well and she did not eat any meals, but for some reason or another, the supply of rice dropped fast before he noticed.

The cooper grew suspicious and decided to look things over. He prepared to go to work, but only pretending to leave the house, he climbed up into the loft to hide and spied on his wife, instead.

Soon his wife put a kettle on the stove, dipped out measure after measure of white rice from the sack into it, washed it and began to build the fire to cook it. Then she went to the store room and brought out lots of bean paste and heated a big pot of bean soup and dipped it into a bucket. After that she took a board from the door and laid it across the entrance of the kitchen. From one end of it to the other, she arranged a row of huge rice balls on it which she made from the boiled rice.

After setting everything out, she took her hair down. There in the middle of the top of her head was a huge extra mouth. She tossed the rice balls into it one by one and then poured in the bean soup, a dipper full at a time. Right before the cooper's eyes, every bit of the rice and soup was eaten up, slick and clean. Then she tied her hair back up neatly and once more she looked like a nice kind of wife. This was a *yama-baba*.

"What an outlandish wife I have taken," thought the cooper. "I must run her out quickly, by all means."

Toward evening the man covered his sandals with dust and came home as though he knew nothing.

"No matter if you don't eat, you aren't the right kind of a wife for me," he said. "I'll give you anything, but please do go away."

"Then I'll go, but please make me one big tub," his wife answered.

"A tub is easy enough," the cooper agreed, and set about immediately to make one, which he gave her.

The *yama-baba* caught the cooper off his guard and grabbing him, threw him into the tub. Then she lifted the tub onto her head and strode back

up into the mountains. The cooper tried to get out of the tub and run away, but it was so deep that he couldn't jump out of it.

Gradually the path led into the mountains where big trees grew on one side, the branches brushing along the edge of the tub. Presently the *yama-baba* stopped in the shade of a great tree to stand and rest a while. Thinking this was just the chance he needed, the cooper reached up and caught a hold of the overhanging branch and he pulled his body up out of the tub.

Without noticing this, the *yama-baba* started on into the mountains carrying the empty tub. The cooper had to take advantage of this to get away, and he started running back as fast as he could. The *yama-baba* seemed to notice this and turned around and started right after him. He was afraid she would catch up with him before he could get home, and he looked around for some place to hide.

Just there the iris grew thick in the sand bar of the mountain stream, and with them there was a dense growth of mugwort. The cooper crawled in among the two kinds of plants, the *yama-baba* leaping in after him. Very fortunately, the leaves of the iris stuck her right eye and the stems of the mugwort pierced her left eye, blinding her on the spot. She fell into the mountain stream and drowned, her body washed from sight down the current.

That happened on the fifth of May and from that time it became an annual May Festival. On that day, without fail, the two plants called iris and mugwort are placed in the thatch of the roof and the leaves are placed in water in which people bathe. This is to prevent another such terrible experience like the cooper's.

—Rikuchû, Izawa-gun

### 32. The ox-driver and the *yama-uba* (*Ushikata to yama-uba* 牛方と山姥)

Long, long ago an ox-driver put a big load of salted mackerel on the back of an ox and started for a mountain village to sell them. Unfortunately, he met a *yama-uba* in the high pass on the way.

"Ox-driver, Ox-driver, give me a mackerel," she called.

Reluctantly he pulled out a mackerel from the bundle and threw it to her and hurried past. The ox was so slow that the *yama-uba* soon finished eating the mackerel and, catching up with the driver, she teased for another. One by one, he had to throw them to her until all the big load of salted mackerel on the ox were eaten up.

When the mackerel were gone, she next demanded the ox and threatened to eat the man instead if he refused. Overcome by panic, the poor man left his ox behind and bolted. In less than no time the *yama-uba* crunched up the ox and swallowed it and began chasing the driver.

"Now I'm going to eat you," she shouted.

This much, at any rate, the driver could not yield. He ran like mad until he came to the edge of a big lake. A huge tree was growing by the margin. He scrambled up the big tree to hide, but unfortunately there were no leaves below him, and his form was reflected on the surface of the water.

The *yama-uba* came rushing up breathlessly. In her excitement, she thought the reflection in the lake was the ox-driver and plunged in, looking everywhere for him.

Taking advantage of the time offered, the ox-driver came down out of the tree and started running again.

At the foot of the mountain there was a house into which he dashed only to find it was where the *yama-uba* lived. He climbed carefully up into, the rafters and hid himself.

Soon the *yama-uba* came out of the pond and came home. "I'm all worn out from teasing the ox-driver today," she said to herself.

Then she built a fire on the hearth and began toasting rice-cakes which she brought out. While the rice-cakes began to bake, the *yama-uba* fell into a doze. The ox-driver, hiding in the rafters, pulled out a stalk from the thatch, reached down, and picked up the rice-cakes one at a time and began eating them.

The *yama-uba* woke up and roared, "Who took the cakes!"

With a tiny voice the ox-driver answered, "Fire God! Fire God!"

Picking up one piece of rice-cake which had fallen off the rack and was burned black, she muttered, "If it was the Fire God, it can't be helped."

Then she put a kettle on to heat some sweet wine. While she waited for it to heat, she fell asleep again. Taking another stalk from the thatch, the ox-driver sipped up all the wine.

The *yama-uba* woke up and roared, "Who drank this up!"

The ox-driver answered again in a tiny voice, "Fire God! Fire God!"

"On a night like this, it is better to sleep," declared the *yama-uba*. "Shall I sleep in the stone chest or the wooden chest? Stone is cold, so wood is better, I guess." Lifting the lid of the big wooden box, she climbed in and soon was fast asleep, snoring.

The ox-driver, who had been looking on, now came down cautiously from the rafters. He built up a fire on the hearth and put water on to boil. Next he brought out an awl and drilled holes in the lid of the wooden chest.

Inside the chest, the *yama-uba* heard the sound and said to herself, "Tomorrow will be good weather because the drill-bugs are singing."

In the meantime, the ox-driver got the hot water and poured it through the holes and thoroughly revenged himself upon the *yama-uba*.

—Echigo



33. "O Sun, the iron chain!" (*Tentô san kanen tsuna* 天道さん金ん綱)

Long, long ago a mother lived in a village with her three children. After she had left the three children to take care of the house while she visited the temple one day, a *yama-uba* appeared, disguised like their mother. She pretended to be the mother who had come back. A *yama-uba* can be known as soon as her hands are touched, but to fool the children she wrapped them in dried *taro* stems. Thinking they were their mother's hands, the children opened the door and let her in.

The *yama-uba* took the littlest of the three children into her arms and went into a back room and lay down. Then she chewed him up and ate him. The two children lying in the next room heard that noise and asked what the "*yama-uba*-mother" was eating. She took one little finger and threw it to them. When they saw this, the children knew right away that she was a *yama-uba* and began to plan how to run away.

To begin with, the second child said he had to go to the privy. The *yama-uba* told the older brother to open the door for him. In this way the two of them went out of the house. Then they cut notches with a hatchet in the peach tree by the well and climbed it.

The *yama-uba* came after them. While she was looking all around, she looked in the well and discovered the children in the peach tree overhead.

"How did you climb that tree?" demanded the *yama-uba*.

The older child lied and said, "We rubbed hair grease on the tree and then climbed it."

The *yama-uba* got the hair grease and rubbed it on the tree, but she couldn't climb it because she kept slipping.

The second child, watching her, laughed and exclaimed, "How can anyone climb a tree with hair grease rubbed on it! The way to do it is to cut notches with an ax and then climb!"

When she heard this, the *yama-uba* cut notches in the tree and started climbing.

Cornered at last, the two children lifted their eyes to the sky and cried out, "O Sun, the iron chain!"

A rumble sounded and from heaven an iron chain came down. Catching onto it, the two children climbed up to heaven.

From behind them the *yama-uba* roared the same thing.

This time a rotten straw rope came down from the sky. When the *yama-uba* caught onto it and started to climb, she fell from a high place into the buckwheat patch. Bursting her head on a rock, she died.

The stalks of the buckwheat were stained by the blood of the *yama-uba*, and that is why they have come to be such a bright red.

—Higo, Amakusa-gun

**34. The demon and Shinriki-bô** (*Oni to Shinriki-bô* 鬼と神力坊)

In olden days there was a house in Sakamoto Hachiman belonging to Shinriki-bô, a mountain priest. Every day a demon from Chichibu mountains came to visit, demanding quantities of wine and feasts and making so many unreasonable orders that the priest was hard pressed.

Thinking of a plan to teach the demon a lesson and to stop his coming, Shinriki-bô asked the villagers to be ready to cut all the wheat in a single day if the demon should come along. Then, for a relish to serve with wine, he cut white stones into squares and bamboo roots into rings and set them out. He cooked some white bean curd and bamboo sprouts, setting them on a separate dish for himself.

Unaware of this, the overbearing demon came along in his usual way, intending to eat a big feast, but the bamboo rings and the stones were so hard his teeth could not bite them. Shinriki-bô, the host, sat there before the perplexed demon and casually ate up his bean curd and bamboo sprouts, smacking his lips.

"How about it, Mr. Demon?" he remarked. "With such strong teeth, human beings can chew anything they feel like eating. And that isn't all, either. Men can turn land upside down and skin it, too. Come out, at any rate, and look!"

He led the demon out of his house to show him. What had been a field of ripe golden wheat when the demon came that morning was completely harvested at some time during the day, and one half of it turned up by the plow, leaving only black soil.

Seeing this, the demon thought to himself that men really were greater than demons and that demons could not risk parading around before them carelessly.

The story does not say whether the demon ran away to his home or not. At any rate, it is certain that he quit coming to this village a long time ago.

—Musashi, Chichibu-gun

**35. Kongô-in and the fox** (*Kongô-in to kitsune* 金剛院と狐)

Long ago there was a mountain priest, who was an ascetic called Kongô-in. He had been away on a trip and was returning to his village after a long absence, full of good spirits. In the shade of a small hill by the entrance of the village he discovered a fox taking a nap comfortably. Kongô-in stealthily went over by the sleeping fox and putting the conch shell he was carrying by its ear, he blew a blast. The fox leaped up in fright and fell over himself as he ran away into the grass in the distance to hide. All this mortified the fox very much and he promptly plotted his revenge.

It happened that on the evening of the following day, ascetics were to have a meeting in town, and Kongô-in, who had just returned, was to attend. The mountain priests from all directions gathered together. Along the road which led them into town, they saw a strange sight. A fox, which seemed unaware that men were passing, was standing at the edge of a pond. While he gazed into the watery mirror, he repeatedly put grass or twigs on his head and across his shoulders. Looking on and wondering what he was going to do, the priests presently saw him shake his body briskly and, in a twinkling, change into the form of Kongô-in. Then with hurried feet he went off somewhere and hid.

"That damnable fox!" they all exclaimed. "He is doing that, intending to come along soon and fool us. If he comes, we will catch him and give him a smoking with pine needles."

The priests got all ready and were on the watch for him.

Now the true Kongô-in, not dreaming of such a thing, arrived at the meeting place a little late.

"Welcome, Kongô-in, welcome!" all greeted him together.

Then they took him by the hands and pulled him into the middle of their circle. The young priests began feeling his buttocks for his tail and pulling his ears. Before he had time to ask what they were up to, somebody brought out a rope, coiled it around him, and struck him. Then they fired up a big heap of pine needles and smoked him until he could scarcely breathe. Kongô-in, realizing they suspected him of being a masquerading fox, gave them all kinds of proof to show he wasn't a fox until the crowd untied him at last.

It was probably all because that he had frightened the blameless fox with his conch shell while on his way home on the day before. The fox had resented it and revenged himself by deliberately pretending to become Kongô-in so that they would all rough handle him.

From that day, Kongô-in resolved that he would never blow a conch shell if he ever found a fox taking a nap.

—Kishû Nishimuro-gun

### 36. Tricked into becoming a priest (*Niwaka Nyûdô* 俄か入道)

Long ago at a village a bad fox used to keep coming out and doing mischief.

"No fox can ever disguise himself to me," one man boasted.

When that man was coming home from somewhere, he saw a fox below the road on the sand bar of the river. It put broad magnolia leaves on its head and turned itself into a woman, and then pulling duckweed from the river, it rolled it up into the shape of a baby and held it in her arms.

"You dirty beast! You're trying to make a fool of me, aren't you?"

the man said. "All right. Just see what happens."

He picked up a rock from the side of the road and threw it below at the child, hitting it squarely on the head and killing it with the single shot.

The mother cried and raged, "Give me back my child the way it was!"

"Why, you're only a fox, aren't you?" he retorted.

That only made the woman angrier and she would not be pacified.

No matter how long the man waited, she didn't turn into a fox again, and the more he watched, the more they seemed to be a real mother and child. He was finally convinced that he had done an outrageous thing. Although he apologized to her until he ran out of words, she couldn't be persuaded to forgive him in any such ordinary way.

"Then if nothing else will do, I'll become a priest to atone for this," said the man.

The two of them went to a temple nearby, where he explained things to the priest and had his head shaved.

The way in which the priest shaved his head hurt the man so much that he came back to his senses and looked around. The woman and her child were gone, and there was no temple, no priest. The man's hair, which he thought had been shaved off, had really been chewed off his head by a fox.

—Musashi

### 37. The acolyte and the fox (*Kozô to kitsune* 小僧と狐)

Long, long ago there was an acolyte called Zuiten at a mountain temple. Whenever the priest went away and left Zuiten to take care of the temple alone, a fox would come to the entrance of the priest's living quarters and call, "Zuiten, Zuiten!"

Once it was so provoking that Zuiten went around to the window of the Great Hall to look out. The fox was standing with his back to the entrance. When he would brush his fat tail on the door, it made a noise, "zui," and when he would knock his head on the door, it made a sound, "ten."

Being a clever acolyte, Zuiten quickly went back and stood by the side of the entrance. When he heard "zui," he yanked the door back, so the fox, who was about to hit his head on the door for "ten," came tumbling onto the dirt floor of the quarters.

Shutting the door quickly, Zuiten went for a stick and started chasing the fox. While he was running after it, he lost sight of the fox. He went to the Great Hall to look, and the main image of Buddha seemed to have turned into two images. He could not tell which was the fox in disguise.

"Oh, well, you can't fool me that way," said Zuiten. "The main image at our temple always sticks out his tongue whenever we have services, so

I can't make a mistake."

Then he began beating the wooden gong and reciting the sutra and the fox-Buddha hurriedly stuck out a long tongue.

"Now then, I'll serve the food offering to our Buddha over at the quarters," announced Zuiten. "I'll leave the fox behind."

He hurried back to the kitchen and the mock-image came walking brazenly after him.

"First of all, I must give him a bath," said Zuiten, lifting the image into the cauldron over the hearth.

Then Zuiten tied the lid on securely and built up a good fire. By the time the priest returned, the fox was cooked whole and ready for him.

—Uzen

### 38. The old one-eyed man (*Katame no jiji* 片目の爺)

Long, long ago there lived an old man and an old woman in Ōshū. The old woman had two eyes, all right, but the old man was one-eyed.

Late one day the right-eyed old man changed into a left-eyed old man and came home saying, "Now, Granny, I'm home!"

"This must be a fox," thought the old woman. Aloud she said, "You're home drunk again, aren't you? You always want to get into the straw rice-bag when you come home drunk, you know?"

"Oh, that again!" answered the old man and climbed into the straw bag by himself.

"After you're in the straw bag, you tell me to tie it up on the outside, don't you?" the old woman said.

"Oh, that again?" replied the old man and meekly let her tie him up.

"When I get a rope on this way, you always say to put you on the fire shelf and smoke you, don't you?" said the old woman.

"Oh, that again!" answered the fox again.

Then the old woman swung the fox onto the shelf over the hearth and built a big fire and plagued the fox. She deliberately broiled fish and ate her supper alone, so he could smell the good things.

While she was doing this, the real right-eyed old man came home, and the left-eyed one on the shelf was cooked into fox soup. —Rikuchū

### 39. The fox at Hijiyama (*Hijiyama no kitsune* 比治山の狐)

Long ago a Nō actor lived in Hiroshima. One day he had gone to a festival at a village by the seashore and was returning alone late at night on the road at the foot of Hijiyama. There was such a cold north wind blowing that he pulled out the mask which he had tucked into his clothes and put it on for a protection against the wind. Then he walked on.

Suddenly a man came down from Hijiyama. "Hello!" he called and stopped the actor. "You are wearing something very unusual on your

head. What do you call that thing?" he asked.

"This is a Nô mask" answered the actor. "This is worn when one does a dance."

"By just wearing that, do you always turn into that face?" asked the stranger. "To tell the truth, I am a fox that lives on Hijiyama. I would like to try disguising myself like you. Please, let me have that thing called a mask."

He begged so earnestly for it that finally the actor agreed. He took off the mask and gave it away and then went home.

Some time after that the feudal lord of Hiroshima set out hunting with a great company of followers. As he led them along the road below Hijiyama, a funny looking fox came out on the mountain. He didn't seem to be the least bit afraid of men, and he made his way down at a leisurely gait.

"Look! A fox has come out," the men all shouted.

A crowd of *samurai* gathered around and promptly shot it down. Looking closely, they noticed it was wearing the mask of the former Nô actor. It looked as though he thought that by just putting on the mask, his whole body would turn into the form of a man.

It was said that this fox at Hijiyama was probably the most stupid of all foxes.

#### 40. Shibaemon Badger (*Shibaemon danuki* 芝右衛門狸)

Long ago, Hage Badger of Awa came to propose that he and Shibaemon Badger compare their ability to disguise themselves. Shibaemon agreed and crossed the sea to Awa province.

To begin with, Hage Badger displayed a disguise which looked like the feudal lord of Awa crossing the sea. Many ships, far and near, were lined up in fine array with all sorts of banners and pennants flying in the wind. The voices of sailors could be heard singing on the state barge.

Shibaemon was full of admiration. "I have never seen such a clever disguise before," he declared. "In return, I want to show you the illusion of a feudal lord's procession. On a certain day, before noon, go to the beach at Maiko and look on from the top of that pine tree."

This was settled and Hage Badger crossed over to Banshû shortly, according to the agreement. Climbing up the pine tree on the beach at Maiko, he waited.

Soon from the west came a feudal procession with countless feather decked lances upraised and with the word, "Down on your knees! Down on your knees!" passed along before it. The horses and sedan chairs were all glittering with ornaments, and the accompanying *samurai* looked ferocious.

Hage Badger was completely carried away with admiration. Without

thinking, he clapped his hands up in the pine tree and cried, "Splendid! Splendid, Lord Shibaemon. It is exactly like the real thing."

The admiration of Hage Badger was not without cause. It actually was a real feudal lord's procession. Shibaemon had known for certain of the excursion beforehand and exhibited it to Hage Badger.

The *samurai* in the procession discovered Hage Badger and exclaimed, "Look, a badger is scoffing at us from a high place like that!"

No sooner had they called him an ill-mannered fellow, than they came rushing up and brought him down with their lances.

The renowned Hage Badger of Shikoku was thus fooled by Shibaemon Badger and died, so the story goes. At Awa, however, this is questioned. It is said that he is still alive and getting along quite well. Since it is a matter dealing with a badger, it is not possible to be exactly sure.

—Awaji

**41. How the mountain priest overcame the badger** (*Yamabusshi no tanuki taiji* 山伏の狸退治)

Long ago, all kinds of tools came up missing day after day at a farmer's house in the village of Sakakikôya in Iwaki. The farmer thought it might be a badger's prank. He asked ascetics from here and there to say prayers for him, but they had no effect. Even such things as rice bowls and chopsticks would suddenly be missing, until the mountain priests were at their wit's end.

The very last priest who was called upon said, "If it's left to me, it will be easy work. Just see if I don't get rid of it. However, to drive it off, I need just a few things. I'll go in a hurry to buy them."

So saying, he set out to the town of Taira to do his shopping. Excitable ascetic as he was, after he had left, members of the household noticed that he had gone off, leaving a little parcel wrapped in a cloth.

"It may be a bother for him if he does not have this. Let's hurry and let him know," somebody said.

They went out of the house and called loudly and sent someone running after him, but he failed to catch up with the priest. When they went back into the house, the little parcel had disappeared somewhere in the meantime.

The priest showed up all of a sudden while they were waiting. The people at the house said that they were sorry and told him the little parcel had disappeared.

"That's fine. That's fine," laughed the priest and did not seem worried in the least.

They all searched through the house together. In the farthest corner under the porch an old badger lay dead. Most of the things that were missing

were around him. The badger was holding a half-eaten rice-ball when he died.

“I put badger poison called *machin* in the rice ball tied up in the package and left it behind on purpose,” explained the priest, laughing.

—Iwaki, Iwaki-gun

#### 42. The pile in the harbor (*Minato no kui* 湊の杙)

Long ago in the harbor of Heisaka in Mikawa there was a bad badger who was always worrying boatmen. The worst trick which the badger played was to disguise himself as a pile at which boatmen would moor their boats. When they went ashore to have a good time, he would take their boat off somewhere. There really were no piles in the harbor at Heisaka, but when boatmen and such came from somewhere else in the evening, they would not know of the badger's trick. They would think that there was a pile in just the right place and unwittingly tie up their boat, which later would go floating off.

Learning their lesson from the tricky badger, gradually fewer and fewer came to Heisaka for their fun. Some brave spirits at that place, however, decided that they would stamp out the badger once for all.

One night when there was a full moon, a party of three or four young men hid ropes and sticks in a boat and rowed out. Only in the shadow along the embankment it was dark. Otherwise, it was a night in which the whole surface of the water spread out shining and white.

“This is a good place to land, but there aren't any piles here,” one of the young men said in a loud voice on purpose.

Suddenly a fat pile appeared near the embankment.

The young men exchanged glances, but pretended not to notice it at all. They rowed near it and made believe they would pass.

A tiny voice from the water piped up, “Pile. Pile.”

The badger is naturally a bit stupid, and he was impatient because nobody seemed to notice. That is why he called in such a way.

“Oh! There is a thick pile, isn't there?” the young men said and laughed. “We did not notice it before.”

So saying, they got the rope out of the boat and quickly tied up the pile. The rope was twice as long as the one they usually used and they wound it round and round the pile, tying it securely to the boat. Next, they took out the sticks and gathered around the pile, hitting it.

Suddenly the pile began to cry and the fact that he was a disguise came out. At last the bad badger was dispatched. *Medetashi. Medetashi.*

—Mikawa, Hazu-gun

#### 43. Foxes laugh (*Kitsune ga warau* 狐が笑ふ)

Long ago there was a single house, which was a rest-house, in the pass



on the top of a certain mountain in Mimasaka. A man named Kihê and his wife lived there.

Late one night a splendidly dressed traveling *samurai* stopped at Kihê's rest-house. If one looked closely, he could see that it was a fox in disguise. Only his clothes, his pleated skirt, and his pair of swords were like a real *samurai*. He still looked like an inexperienced fox with hair still on his face which came to a point, and his pointed ears stood up. Not aware of this himself, he thought that he was well disguised and tried to look very important.

Kihê was so amused that he could hardly stand it. Barely holding back a laugh, he thought that he would watch and see what would happen. He brought out a metal basin full of water and leaving it in front of the *samurai*, he said, "Please make use of this."

When the fox decided to wash himself after a while, he leaned over the water and saw his face reflected. For the first time he realized that his disguise was not complete. With a shout of surprise, he leaped out of the rest-house and went off somewhere.

On the next day, Kihê went alone to the mountain to cut wood. When he was getting ready to go home, someone called from the woods all at once.

A tiny voice said, "Kihê San! Kihê San!"

He couldn't see his form, but he answered.

The little voice said, "Wasn't it funny last night?"

Then Kihê San knew right away that it was last night's fox.

In olden days, even foxes were honest like this and could laugh with men in this way, many people in the mountains used to think.

#### 44. Sanya, the rich man who bought a dream (*Yume of kôta Sanya Daijin* 夢を買うた彌大盡)

Long ago when the rich man of Hyûga province was still a poor travelling merchant, he and a friend were going along a lonely mountain road on a summer day and came into the village of Takachiho.

One of the men said, "It's too hot. Let's rest a while."

They stretched out on the ground in the shade of a tree by the side of the road, and the friend fell asleep immediately. Sanya, who was still awake, noticed a bee dart out of one of the man's nostrils and fly away toward a mountain in the distance. While Sanya was thinking it very singular, he saw the bee return presently and come around the man's face again and disappear.

Then the friend awoke and said, "I had a very curious dream just now. It might have been in a mountain near here that I found a valley which was full of gold while I was walking around."

“That was truly a good dream,” said Sanya. “Would you be willing to sell me that dream?”

“What does a dream amount to?” exclaimed his friend. “What you say doesn’t make sense!”

Finally, with wine or something which the man liked, Sanya purchased the dream from his friend. He returned to the region alone and went over mountain after mountain, searching every day as carefully as he could. At last he made a discovery. It was the gold mine called Toroku. During Sanya’s generation it yielded as much gold as had been dreamed. He became the richest man in Kyûshû.

The strange thing was that when that man died, there was an earthquake immediately, and the mountain crumbled down. At present there is only a swamp left there.

—Hyûga, Nishiusuki-gun

#### 45. The horseflies at Takoshima (*Takoshima no abu* 蛸島の虻)

It also happened long ago that a man named Yanagi something or other at the port of Takoshima in Noto province went out in a small boat with a youth to catch mackerel.

There was such an unusual run of mackerel that he could not stop fishing, but stayed on and on. The youth, who had nothing to do but to row the boat, had such a dull time of it that he fell asleep.

After a while the master suddenly became aware of three horseflies which came from somewhere and were flying around the sleeping boy’s face, busily going in and out of his nostrils. He thought that it was strange for horseflies to come so far from shore. With a good shake, he wakened the boy.

When the youngster awoke, he said, “I have just seen a very strange dream. The three images of Buddha at the Marudô in the village turned into three horseflies and flew out. Just when I was going to make sure where they went, you woke me up.”

When the master heard this, he declared, “That certainly was a strange dream. I’ll give you these fish, every one of them that I have caught today, if you will sell me your dream.”

“If you want to buy such things as dreams, you can have mine at any price,” answered the youth.

He accepted the big catch of fish and returned delightedly with the man.

Yanagi went right away to the shrine called Marudô to see. Sure enough, just as in the story of the dream, three horseflies were flying in and out of a crack in the plaster of the wall. He took his sedge hat in his hand and waited and caught the three horseflies carefully. After he hurried home, he took off his hat in his parlor and discovered that they were not horse-

flies, but three lovely carved images of Buddha, not quite two inches high.

It would be too greedy to keep all three at his house Yanagi thought, so he presented Amida Sama to Shôan-ji in his village. He took Benten Sama to the little island outside the harbor, which is known as Bentenjima even today. The one that was left, which was carving of Bishamon, he kept carefully. It is worshipped at his house even now.

—Noto, Suzu-gun

#### 46. Damburi-chôja だんぶり長者

Long, long ago, in the farthest region inland in Ôshû, there was a fabulously rich man called Damburi-chôja. His household numbered three thousand and at his house nearly five hundred bushels of rice were cooked each day. Because the water which washed the rice was drained into the Yoneshiro river,\* even now that river's water is a clouded white.

Damburi-chôja went to the capital city to apply for a *chôja's*\*\* seal.

“To be a *chôja*, you must possess a treasure which has been bestowed by heaven. The greatest treasure that a man has is a child-treasure. Do you possess such a child treasure?” he was asked.

“Through my faith in Dai Nichinyorai of Azukizawa, I was blessed with an only daughter,” he replied. “I have brought her with me on this occasion to see the sights.”

When she was called out and presented, the maid was indeed as beautiful as a rare jewel. It is said that later she became a high ranking consort.

In his youth, Damburi-chôja was just an honest, hard working farmer. He went into the mountains and set up a little hut in which he and his wife lived, and together they farmed little patches of garden which they dug on the mountain side.

It happened one day that while they were resting at noon, his wife was watching him lying asleep with his mouth wide open by the side of the garden. She saw a dragonfly come from the foot of the mountain opposite, two or three times, and circle above the man's head and around his mouth. She thought it very strange.

Then Damburi woke up and said, “I was dreaming just now that I was drinking such good wine. I can't think how to tell you how good it was.”

His wife then told him about the dragon fly.

They wondered what the meaning could be. The two of them went around the mountain to look, and there they found a clear spring flowing

\* A pun on the river's name, Yoneshiro-gawa 米代川, and rice-white river, Yoneshiro-gawa 米白ろ川.

\*\* The term *chôja* has a meaning beyond that of rich man. It is left in *romaji* to help call attention to its significance in this and the following tales.

from below a rock. Dipping some up, they discovered that it was a spring of wine. Furthermore, the same mountain yielded an endless amount of gold. They dug and dug it and carried it home. Soon they became such great, rich people.

“Damburi” is a word in Ōshū which means dragonfly. People called Damburi-chôja the Dragonfly-chôja because one had showed him how to become a *chôja*.

—Rikuchû, Kazuno-gun

**47. A straw that brought riches** (*Warashibe chôja* 藁しべ長者)

Long, long ago there was a hopelessly poor man. He went to worship the Kannon Sama at the temple at Hase in Yamato and begged to be helped. He prayed with all his heart from morning till night and night till morning for days and days. Then at dawn one day he had a strange dream.

Kannon came out from the interior of the Hall and said, “Your conduct in a former life was bad, and you are receiving the punishment now. Without knowing that, your endless prayers are foolish. You do not deserve a single blessing, but since I pity you, I will grant you a very small blessing. Now, go on your way home, and the first thing which comes into your hand, whatever it is, consider a divine gift.”

The man thought that this dream was a manifestation of Kannon Sama. He resigned himself and decided to return to Kyôto on the following day. However, just as he was going out of the gate to the temple at Hase, he took a false step and accidentally fell. After he got up, he noticed that he was holding a piece of straw in his hand unawares. Was this then the gift mentioned by Kannon Sama in the dream? He thought it rather unpromising, but he was a man of deep faith at heart, so he carried it along carefully.

It was a warm day in spring. A single horsefly came flying along the way and began flying around his face, bothering him. He broke off a twig from the tree and brushed it away, but it came flying right back. He finally caught the horsefly with his hand and tied it onto the twig with the straw he was carrying. The horsefly began buzzing around, tied as it was to the end of the twig.

Just at that time some people came riding in a beautiful ox-drawn carriage, accompanied by many servants, on their way from Kyôto to worship at Hase. A little boy was riding with his mother in the carriage, and he was looking out of the window.

Looking through the blinds, he discovered the horsefly which was in the man’s hands, and he said, “I want it! I want it!”

An attendant on horseback hurried up to the man and said, “Young Master says that he wants that horsefly. I wonder if you would be willing

to present it to him.”

“This happens to be a straw which I just received from Kannon Sama, but if the little boy wants it, I will present it to him,” answered the man and handed it over.

Much delighted, the mother inside the carriage said, “You must be thirsty. Please eat these.” She gave the man three beautiful oranges wrapped in pure white paper.

The poor man thought, “I have walked only this little distance and one straw has become such beautiful oranges as these.”

Thankful for the divine grace, he carried the oranges carefully in his hand as he continued on his way home. Now, by the side of the road a young woman with two or three attendants was resting.

“It is so hot and I am so thirsty that I just cannot take another step. Isn’t there some water around here?” she asked the man.

There was no well nor stream nearby and the lady, suffering so much from thirst, was about to faint. The attendants were at a loss to know what to do.

“Well, then,” offered the man, “here are three oranges which were just given me by a lady from Kyôto. Take these and offer them to the young lady.”

The young lady was overjoyed. She took the oranges and ate them right there.

“Oh, if this man had not come and given me these oranges, I could never have gone on my pilgrimage to Kannon Sama at Hase. Perhaps I would have died on the way. I should give you something in thanks,” she said gratefully, “but I am on a journey. I have nothing else, but please have something to eat,” she urged.

They brought out the lunch which they had with them and let him eat his fill. When they were ready to start on, the young lady took three rolls of beautiful cloth from her baggage and handed them to the man.

“This is to show how I feel, at least,” she said.

The man held the three rolls of cloth under his arm, and walked along the road with a light heart.

Gradually twilight came on. From the opposite direction a *samurai* came riding along at the head of a band of followers. He was mounted on a splendid horse. Just as the poor man was thinking what a fine horse it was, it suddenly fell over in a heap, exactly in front of him.

“Now what shall I do?” cried the *samurai*. “This horse, which had nothing the matter with it, has died. There’s nothing to be done about it, so stay behind and dispose of it,” he ordered his attendants.

The *samurai* hurried on. He and his followers had come from a distant place and the servants were at their wit’s end to know what to do. They

squatted around the fallen horse, discussing what to do next.

"Let me take the horse and dispose of it," offered the poor man. "I don't want to take it for nothing, so I will give you this." Here he pulled out one of the three rolls of cloth and gave it to them.

The attendants exchanged glances and looked relieved. They accepted the cloth and hurried after their master.

The blessings of Kannon Sama cannot be questioned. In a single day, a piece of straw turned into three oranges, the oranges turned into three rolls of cloth, and now the cloth turned into a fine horse.

"I implore you, Kannon Sama, if it is possible, bring this horse back to life once more," prayed the man devoutly.

As the man prayed, the horse opened its eyes and began to stir. Then the man with great joy took the reins and pulled the horse onto its feet. After it stood, it shook itself and began to walk.

Thinking that if he were seen, people would think he had stolen the horse, the man led it into the shelter of a forest and tied it up to a tree to rest. After dark he went to the village. With the two bolts of cloth he bought grain and hay for the horse and some old harness and things from a farmer. Well equipped for the journey, he got onto the horse and rode out of the shadows of the forest in the middle of the night.

It was morning of the next day when the man returned to Kyôto. Near the entrance to the city was a big house. A great bustle was going on all around it, baggage was being gathered, and people were shouting to each other. Evidently they were getting ready to move a great distance.

"At a time like this, a horse is useful. Maybe they will buy this one," thought the man. He stood in front of the gate and asked, "Do you need a horse?"

The master of the house came out and said, "What a good horse this is. I have just been thinking that I needed a riding horse like this, but I am short of money because I am setting out on a trip. There is some rice-land over there nearby. I wonder if you would take it in exchange for the horse. Furthermore, there is nobody to stay in the house while I am away. I'll leave it in your hands and you can live in it until I come back if you wish."

The poor man agreed and handed over the horse. The master mounted it gladly, and before the day was over, all of the people of that household set out on their trip to far away Kantô.

The horsefly man lived at the house in the owner's stead and cultivated the rice field which had been given him. Soon he became a fine farmer and year by year his days became brighter. Because of some circumstance which overtook the former owner of the house, he never returned. Therefore, the

big house became the property of the man through the natural course of events and his descendants flourished for a long time. They were thankful for the gift from Kannon of Hase in Yamato.

**48. Kogorô, the charcoal maker** (*Sumiyaki Kogorô* 炭焼小五郎)

The famous *chôja* at Mano in Bingo province long ago, was formerly a humble, hard-working youth called Kogorô, the charcoal maker. He built a little hut at Uchiyama in Mie and lived alone, baking charcoal for a living.

A beautiful maiden from the capital came to call at the lonely little hut of Kogorô, the charcoal maker, one day.

"I have received an oracle from Kannon Sama at the Kiyomizu temple, and that is why I have come to your house to be your bride," she said. "Please let me stay at this little house now from today."

"I am very happy that you have come all the way from the capital especially to be my bride," answered the young man, "but there is not even enough rice for the two of us to eat tonight in this little house."

"Then please go to town and buy some rice," the maiden said, and she drew out two gold coins from a brocaded bag and gave them to Kogorô.

Holding the gold coins in his hand, he went down the mountain to town to look for food. A brook ran at the foot of Uchiyama. On its banks a forest of purple willows grew thick, and in their shadows lay a quiet pool. A pair of mandarin ducks were playing on its surface as Kogorô walked along the path through the forest. When his eyes lighted on them, he stopped still. Using the coins which he had in his hand as pellets, he threw them at the birds. He aimed well, but the ducks flew away, and the coins sank to the bottom of the pool.

Kogorô went back up to his little hut in the mountain because there was nothing else for him to do.

"I found some water birds on the way," he said to his bride. "I thought I would catch them for you, but I missed them."

When she heard this, the young bride was dismayed.

"Those were valuable treasures called *koban*," she explained. "With only that many you could have bought lots of rice and fish and fowl. What a pity you did it!"

This was the first time that Kogorô, the charcoal maker, had even heard of such a thing. He was very much surprised. "I had no idea that those stones were such priceless treasures," he declared. "In the hills behind this hut there is any amount of little stones of that color scattered about."

Hurriedly, the two of them lighted pine torches and went to see. It was exactly as Kogorô had said. All the little stones in the whole valley were pure virgin gold. They gathered them and carried them to the little

hut and put them inside. In a short time the house was so full of them that they piled them up on the outside.

When the people in the town and village heard of it, they all came one after another, bringing all kinds of things to sell. In order to get a share of the gold, they all came to work for Kogorô and his wife.

Then Kogorô established the big estate at Uchiyama in Mie. He also built a temple for Kannon and worshipped her. Just as with Damburi-chôja, the *chôja* of Ôshû, a little girl as beautiful as a rare jewel was born, and later she was sent to the capital as a consort.

The household continued to prosper, but because Kogorô had been a charcoal maker formerly people called him the Charcoal-maker *chôja*.

49. **Nijikki-ga-hara. Field-of-Twenty-Mounted-Warriors** (*Nijikki-ga-hara* 二十騎が原)

Long ago there was a prosperous, successful *chôja* in Nishiyama of Kôshû. His householders planted many rice fields and gardens for him. Besides, he had big forests and meadows in which he would spend his days in hunting and the like.

This man and his wife had ten sons, all of whom grew up to be splendid, sturdy young men. One day the ten brothers went out into the field to enjoy archery. The *chôja* and his wife accompanied them, and from a high stand which was set up, the two of them sat and watched. The young people, gaily dressed in their best clothes, were riding all kinds of horses,—black, bay, or cream colored. They galloped around with perfect freedom, all equally matched, as they spiritedly showed their parents their skill with the bow.

The *chôja* looked at the sight in great pleasure. Then turning to his wife who sat by his side, he said, "Ten children are by no means just a few. However, if in addition to these we had still another ten sons, and they could all be sporting with the bow, mingling with these, what happiness and a feeling of security we would have."

When his wife heard this, she answered, "Then I have something which I would like to confide in you. The truth is that when these children were born, every one had a twin brother. I thought that there were too many, and I hesitated to let you know. In fact, the rest have all been brought up at a different place. I will send for them right away. Please wait and meet them."

The wife hurriedly sent someone running on the errand. After a while, from the farther side of the field, another ten young *samurai* came, all riding fine horses. Looking like a field of flowers in their various colored hunting suits, they came carrying arrows at their backs and bows in hand. They all rode up before the *chôja* and paid their respects to him.



Each one of them was a manly, gallant young son. These then mingled with the former ten brothers, joining them in sports, riding back and forth across the broad meadow, and shooting their arrows until the day grew dark.

That *chôja's* house has been gone for a long time, and what was left became only mountains and meadows, but the field where the twenty sons gathered for their sports was called Nijikki-ga-hara (The Field-of-Twenty-Mounted-Warriors). The name has lasted a long time.

At the foot of a small mountain a little way off, there is also a place called Akagozawa (Babe's Marsh). There are people who say it is called that because in that valley the *chôja's* wife built a house and brought up one half of the twins.

**50. The *chôja's* treasure match** (*Chôja no takara kurabe* 長者の寶競べ)

Long ago, the Yonabaru *chôja* at Kikuchi in Higo and the Danobaru *chôja* at Yamamoto-gôri held a treasure match. The Yonabaru *chôja* laid out stepping stones of pure gold across the rice paddies for a distance of over seven miles, from where he lived in the village of Yonabaru to a place called Sakaguchi at Magano-Ura in Yamaga. Then he crossed over them to meet the other rich man.

The Danobaru *chôja* came out to meet him without a thing in his hands, but leading his twenty sons. The Yonabaru *chôja* did not have even one child. When he saw this, he declared that he was envious.

After that, the hill there came to be known as Urayama (Envy Hill).

**51. The Stork Barrow in Aizu** (*Aizu no Tsuruzuka* 會津の鶴家)

Long ago there was a *chôja* called Tsuneyasu in Aizu of Ôshû. Although this man had hundreds and hundreds of storehouses, and those storehouses were full of gold and silver and rice and all kinds of treasures, he had no child to whom he could give these things and make happy.

He was so lonely that he could not bear it, so he kept a stork which he loved as a child. A stork is a bird with a long life, and thinking that it would live long after he died, he raised it like his own child. For some reason, however, the stork died. The *chôja* and his wife were so despondent that they had a barrow raised for it.

This was called Tsuruzuka (Stork Barrow), which remains even to this day. No trace of the man's house, however, is anywhere to be found.

**52. Koyama (Lake-Mountain) Lake** (*Koyama no Ike* 湖山の池)

Long ago, the *chôja* of Koyama in Inaba province was a big land holder with a thousand *chobu* of rich paddies. The tradition, handed down for a long time in that family, was to hire thousands of field workers

and planting maids on the day for transplanting in May and to finish planting the entire one thousand *chobu* in a single day. Something very strange happened, however, when the day came for transplanting one year, and it seemed impossible for the thousand *chobu* to be finished by nightfall. The following story is about the strange thing that happened.

The young girls went down to the fields from early morning, just as in other years, to do the planting, raising their voices together in the beautiful planting songs as they worked in a happy mood. Then a female monkey came down from some mountain, carrying her baby upside down on her back, and walked along the border of that broad rice field.

Hundreds of men carrying rice shoots and thousands of maidens who were planting them turned around and looked at the strange figure of the mother monkey and her child. It seemed that it was only for a short time that they stood looking, but the work was greatly delayed, at any rate, when every single one of that great throng rested his hands and stretched his back. The sun was already nearing the mountain peaks in the west, but wide stretches of rice paddies were still shining white. There seemed no way to finish planting them while it was still light.

The *chôja* of Koyama, looking on from a high place, saw what was happening and said, "From times of old, there never has been once that these fields were not transplanted in a single day. If just this one year it takes two days to do it, the honor of this *chôja* will be lost. If a *chôja* carries out whatever he wills in his heart, then this day the sun shall be halted in its setting."

Unfolding wide his fan painted with gold, he beckoned to the sun three times. Then exactly according to the rich man's will, the sun, which had already touched the tops of the mountains, receded with each gesture until it had climbed back the length of three poles up the sky. Under that light, the transplanting of the thousand *chobu* was carried out completely within that day.

But for the man to attempt to show his power in such a way was a sacrilege and he promptly received retribution from heaven. His fortune at that time was at its highest, but from that time it gradually faced a decline. At present his descendents have entirely died out, and no trace of his house can be found.

Some say the house was destroyed by an earthquake, but at some time the thousand *chobu* of rice fields became a big lake. The beautiful, broad Koyama Lake, which can easily be seen from the train window, is what legend says remains of the rice paddies where the *chôja* of Koyama waved back the setting sun.

—Inaba, Kedaka-gun

**53. Plumb-tree Estate** (*Ume-no-ki yashiki* 梅木屋敷)

There was, also, a *chôja* named Sukeemon at Nameshida village in Ôshû. The tradition handed down from generation to generation in that family was that no matter how poor they might become and although a time might come when they would have to sell the estate, they were admonished that the plum tree which grew in the front yard should not be sold. They were to be sure to dig it up and take it with them, whatever happened.

Although Sukeemon thought that he would never become poor, his circumstances grew bad, making it necessary finally to sell his estate. Nevertheless, the master did not forget the teaching of his forefathers, and he decided to dig up the plum tree to take it to the little adjoining estate where he was moving.

When they were digging, the spade suddenly struck a huge old earthen jar with a click. Taking off the lid, they found a heap of *ôban*. The people of the house were overjoyed and promptly took out the big gold coins to pay their debts. They not only did not have to sell their estate, but they built an even more splendid house than they had formerly. Once again they were rich.

Now it happened, unfortunately, that there were still other old plum trees on this estate of Sukeemon. Remembering the story of the gold coins which came out of the jar under that tree, the descendents passed their days in luxury, feeling quite easy about matters. Then after some time, they began to become poor. Hurriedly they dug at the roots of different plum trees, one after another, but this time no *ôban* came out.

In the end, the house and all the plum trees disappeared. Now there is only a large patch of garden where the house was, but people continue to call it Plum-tree Estate.

**54. Mototori (Clearing-the-Old-Score) Mountain** (*Mototori-yama* 本取山)

Long, long ago there was a cave, nobody knew how deep, in the mountains far back in Tonami-gôri of Etchû. People who lived in the village at the foot of the mountain always came to this cave to borrow sets of trays and dishes needed at their houses. For example, when somebody was going to have guests on the following day and the set at home was not big enough, he would come to the cave on the evening before and ask for some.

"I am from Somebody-Zaemon's home," he would say, "and tomorrow I will have guests for some occasion. My set at home is not big enough, so please let me have a service for ten."

Early in the morning of the next day he would go again, and the exact number of beautiful tray sets which he had asked for would be set out at the mouth of the cave without fail. After they were used, the man would wash and wipe the things carefully and leave them at the same place on the

following day, returning them with a word of thanks. Somehow the trays and dishes would disappear, and nobody who had borrowed them could say who it was that loaned them. They were beautifully lacquered red or green trays.

Now it happened that a greedy man borrowed those things, but wanting them very much, he decided not to return them. He knew that there was nobody to insist upon it, so he continued to use them without scruples. Naturally, those who had gone to the mouth of the cave to ask for dishes never could receive them any more.

Nevertheless, the dishonest man seemed to have no punishment in particular. He and his wife went on working together, and little by little the house became prosperous. In addition to this, whereas they had been lonely because they had no child, a baby boy was even born to them, pleasing them very much. The only trouble was that the one child, born after all those years, could not stand and walk even when he was five and then six years old.

While the parents waited, saying that he would surely walk one of those days, the year arrived when he was ten years old. The autumn harvest of rice had been finished, and the man and his wife carried it into the yard in front of their house. They were busy threshing it and tying it into straw bags when their child, still not able to stand on his feet, came crawling out and began playing around there. Suddenly he crawled between two rice bags which were at the far end of the yard. Grasping a bag in each hand, he stood up for the first time.

"Oh, he is standing," cried the two parents, clapping their hands in great joy.

While they were watching, the little boy, who had never walked until then, started scurrying off, still holding the bags in his two hands. At first, the couple looked on, thinking it very strange, but then they were frightened to see how the child's legs had so suddenly grown strong and the way he hurried out of the estate, carrying the two bags of rice. They ran after him, but they couldn't catch up with him because his feet were so fast. Before their very eyes, he climbed right up the mountain path in the distance, and finally he went into the cavern where they had borrowed the sets of trays and dishes.

The father hurried after his child and came to the mouth of the cave. He could see nothing when he looked in because it was pitch dark. It looked so forbidding that he could not go in to search. Not knowing what to do, he stood there full of awe.

Then he heard voices talking far, far back in the cave. Someone with a great voice said, "At any rate, I brought two sacks of rice. This clears the old score."

This is the end of the story. From that time, the mountain where that cave was has been called Mototori-yama (Clearing-the-Old-Score Mountain).

### 55. Uguisu-hime 姫鶯

Long, long ago there was an old man in Suruga province. He made his way in life by going into the mountains to cut bamboo and making it into all kinds of trays and things, which he sold. In old books, he is called *Takekuri-no-Okina* and *Mizukuri-no-Okina*.

This Mizukuri-no-Okina went into a bamboo grove one day, and there he found an especially radiant egg in a nightingale's nest. After he carried it home carefully and set it down, it broke open by itself. From inside there was born a very tiny, lovely princess. Because she was born from a nightingale's egg, the old man named her Uguisu-hime or Princess Nightingale. He brought her up as his own child.

As Uguisu-hime began to grow, she became a most beautiful maiden and her beauty shone so radiantly that she was also called Kaguya-hime or Princess Radiant. The sections of bamboo which Mizukuri-no-Okina cut and brought home, he always found filled with gold. In a short time the old man who had been so poor became very rich.

All kinds of men came seeking to marry the beautiful daughter of the rich man, but they would have to go away disappointed because they could not answer difficult questions which had been put to them by the father and his child. The ruler at that time heard about the lustrous beauty of Kaguya-hime. Taking advantage of a hunting trip, he went to Suruga province to see the princess. Although he tried to persuade her to come to the capital to be his consort, for some reason in her mind, the princess declined even this offer.

In the autumn of that year on the night in August when the whole sky was luminous with the pure light of the full moon, a fleecy white cloud came to meet Kaguya-hime and her father, and from the summit of Fuji-no-yama they rose up to heaven.

At that time she composed the following poem and attached it to a potion of immortality and sent it to the emperor.

“Now I needs must don my spirit robe of light,  
Yet in my heart, alas, I think of thee, dear Prince.”

When the ruler read this poem, he was grieved and declared that he had no use for the potion of immortality. He ordered it to be taken to the summit of Fuji-no-yama, which was nearest Heaven, and to be burned. For a long time after that the summit of Fuji was burning and its smoke was called the Smoke of Fuji, but legend says that it was because the smoke from the burning potion lingered there ever so long.

**56. Uriko-hime** 瓜子姫

Long ago there was an old man and an old woman. The old man went to the mountains to cut wood and the old woman went to the river to wash clothes.

One day when the old woman went washing as usual at the river, a melon came floating down from upstream. She picked it up and took it home to divide with the old man. When she cut it open, a very beautiful little girl was born. Because she was born from a melon, they named her Uriko-hime or Princess Melon. Little by little she grew up and at last she was a good daughter who wove at the loom day after day.

Thinking that they would take Uriko to the festival of the village shrine one year, the old man and the old woman went to town to buy a sedan chair for her. Uriko fastened the door tightly and wove at her loom in the house while they were gone.

An *ama-no-jaku* came along and, disguising his voice, he said, "Open the door just a little for me."

Unsuspectingly, Uriko opened the door a crack. Then the creature thrust a terrible hand through and opened the door with a clatter.

"I'll pick some persimmons for you from the garden behind the house," he said and led Uriko out into the back garden.

There he took off her clothes and tied her up to a tree. Putting on her clothes, he then disguised himself like her and boldly sat down to weave.

The old man and the old woman came home with the chair. "Now, Uriko, get into the chair," they said as they lifted the *ama-no-jaku* in and started away to the festival at the village shrine.

"Don't, don't let Uriko in the sedan chair!" the real Uriko cried from the shadow of the persimmon tree in the back yard. "Only let the *ama-no-jaku* ride!"

When the old man and the old woman heard that voice, they were frightened and turned back. Then the old man swung his sickle and cut off the *ama-no-jaku's* head and threw it into the millet patch.

The stalks of the millet turn red in Autumn because they were stained with the blood of the *ama-no-jaku*.

—Izumo

**57. Komebukuro and Awabukuro** (*Komebukuro Awabukuro* 米囊栗囊)

Long, long ago there were two girls, an older sister and a younger sister. The mother of Komebukuro, the older sister, was dead, and the mother of Awabukuro, the younger sister, was the new mother. The step-mother hated Komebukuro and abused her.

One day, when the two sisters went with the village girls to gather chestnuts in the mountains, the older sister was given an old straw bag with

a rotten bottom, and the younger sister was given a new straw bag. By evening, all the other girls had filled their bags and wanted to start home, but Komebukuro's bag could never be filled because the bottom had come off.

All of her friends went home, leaving Komebukuro alone in the mountains. She was so hungry that she climbed down to a little stream to drink water. While she did this, a beautiful little white bird came flying toward her.

"Dear girl, I used to be your mother," it said. "You are gentle hearted and obey your present mother well. As a reward, I will give you this padded silk dress. Keep it hidden in the ground unless something special happens, and then wear it as your best dress."

With the dress, she also bestowed upon Komebukuro a flute made of hollyhock and a new straw bag. The girl soon filled the new bag to the brim and went back home in the night.

Four or five days after this, there was a festival in a neighboring village. The step-mother dressed Awabukuro in a good dress and set out with her to see it.

When Komebukuro said that she wanted to go, too, the step-mother said, "After you have spun three skeins of flax, you may come."

A crowd of Komebukuro's friends called for her while she was spinning the flax as fast as she could.

"My mother said that I had to do this work and I cannot go," she said.

Her friends felt sorry for her, and because they all helped, she finished her task much sooner than she had thought. Then she took out the silk dress which she had received from the little white bird, and she put it on and set out looking quite beautiful with her friends.

As she went along the road blowing the hollyhock flute, the tune seemed to say,

"Whoever hears this little flute,  
Birds in flight across the sky,  
Rest your wings and listen;  
Worms which crawl upon the ground,  
Halt your feet and listen."

When they reached the shrine in the neighboring village to worship, they saw Awabukuro and her mother looking at the dancing dolls. Komebukuro peeled off the covering of a *manjû* and tossed it lightly at her younger sister, landing it on her cheek.

"Why, big sister threw a *manjû* covering at me from over there," she said.

The mother would not believe her and said, "I made Komebukuro do work. How could she possibly be here by now?"

When the younger sister was looking the other way, after a little while, Komebukuro tried throwing a strip of bamboo husk which had been wrapped around a piece of *ame* at her sister.

This, too, the younger sister told her mother.

"That is only somebody who looks like her," said her mother. "When somebody throws things at you, just turn away."

Presently it looked as though the mother and younger sister were going to start home, so Komebukuro hurried back ahead of them. Changing her clothes, she looked as though nothing had happened.

On the next day somebody who said he wanted to marry Komebukuro came from the next village. The step-mother wanted him to marry Awabukuro instead. At last, he decided that he would compare their personal charms and decide on the one who was the prettier.

"What shall I put on my hair?" asked the younger sister while they were getting dressed.

The mother said to her, "Get the oil from the shelf and try rubbing it on."

When the older sister asked what she should use, the mother replied, "I don't care if you use the water from the kitchen."

The comb kept catching and snapping in the knots of Awabukuro's hair, which was kinky.

Her mother said, "It sounds just like the sound of the *koto* or *shamisen* being plucked."

Komebukuro's hair was thick and smooth and the comb slipped through it easily.

The step-mother sneeringly said, "It sounds exactly like a fowl snake gliding into its hole."

For all this, when their hair was combed, anyone could see that the older sister was far more beautiful, and Komebukuro was the one taken as a bride.

The younger sister, so jealous that she couldn't stand it, teased her mother, "I want to ride right away in a beautiful sedan chair like that and go as a bride."

Nothing else would satisfy her, so the mother put Awabukuro onto a cart. Pulling it around, the mother called out at the top of her voice, "Anyone want a bride? Anyone want a bride?"

The cart tipped over and the girl fell into the rice paddy below and turned into a mud snail. The bad step-mother fell into the water above the dam and turned into a sluice shell-fish.

—Tsugaru, Nanatsuishi



58. The magic straw cloak of the *yama-uba* (*Yama-uba no takara-mino*  
山姥の寶囊)

Long, long ago a beautiful only daughter lived out in the country in a region full of mountains. One summer day, she went playing in the mountains with the people of the village. She strayed away from the rest and couldn't find her way back. It gradually grew dark and, while she worried about which way to go, she saw a single light in the distance. Quite happy, she went to the house and knocked. It proved to be the house of a *yama-uba*, who was sitting alone, warming herself at the hearth.

"You've come thinking you could stay, I know, but this is a man-eater's house, so I can't let you stop here," she said. "It would be better for you to look for an ordinary person's house."

The girl shuddered when she heard this, but she replied, "I don't care if you eat me up, if you will only let me stay. On a dark night like this, I would be sure to be eaten up by a bear or a wolf, anyway, if I walk on the mountain path. It would be much better to be eaten up here."

When the *yama-uba* heard this, she took pity on the girl and said, "In that case, I will give you my treasure coat, although it is one of my greatest treasures. You had better wear this and go further on. If you put on this straw coat and repeat the *Nyôhô* three times, you can change into any form you chose, an old person or a little child. Furthermore, if you hold this coat and shake it, whatever you wish will come out." With these instructions, she handed the coat to the girl.

The girl gladly accepted the coat and immediately turned herself into a tottering old woman. Then she left the house of the *yama-uba*.

Along her way dreadful demons gathered in ambush at one place.

One demon said, "Look, a woman is passing. How about catching her and eating her?"

Another demon answered, "Why eat a thin, dirty old woman like that?"

At last when it was about dawn, she came out into an unknown village and stood by a rich man's gate. "I am somebody with no place to go. A corner anywhere will do, but please let me stay here," she begged.

When the kind hearted rich man heard this, he let her stay. "Let her stay in an empty place in the worker's long house," he said.

From that time she stayed in the long house. The days she spent spinning thread and doing such things, but in the evening, because she was bored, she would secretly change back to her real form and practice writing and such things without anybody's knowing.

Late one night, the rich man's son went outside and saw a single light burning in one room of the worker's house. He looked in and saw a beautiful girl quietly practicing brush writing all alone.

“I certainly want that girl for my bride,” he thought.

The next day he looked all over the estate, but the girl was nowhere. While the young master was thinking there were strange things going on, one of the men who worked there, also, happened to find her. He thought that she might be a ghost and told the master.

The rich man had the old lady called out immediately and pressed her with one proof after another. Finally the girl reluctantly told about the treasure coat which she had received from the *yama-uba*. Taking off the coat, she changed back into the form of a girl and told in detail about her home and its place.

“Please take this home,” she said.

Through the rich man’s power, they searched for the girl’s home and soon found it. Her people thought that she had died by then and were holding a service for her. When they heard that she was to be sent back, there was a great clamor and rejoicing.

Some time after that, the girl went to the home of the rich man as a bride and the whole family prospered. *Medetashi. Medetashi.*

—Kai

### 59. The origin of the God of the Kitchen Hearth (*Kamadogami no okori* 竈神の起り)

Long ago there was a farmer in a certain village. He was overtaken by a sudden shower one evening when he was coming home from a trip, and he took refuge for some time in the grove of Dōroku-jin by the side of the road.

There was a man passing by the grove on horseback who called, “Are you in, Dōroku-jin? There are to be two confinements at a certain village tonight. Let’s go together and read the fortunes of the babies born.”

“You have come by to invite me, but I have a guest just now who has taken shelter from the rain, and I can’t get away. I leave it to you,” a voice in the grove replied.

“Then I’ll go on alone,” the first voice said, and the hoof beats of the horse grew faint in the distance.

Now this certain village happened to be the farmer’s village, and thinking it was a bit strange, he was all ears.

In a short time the horse rider returned and again from the front the voice of somebody passing called, “At the main family it was a boy and in the branch family it was a girl. The girl’s luck is good, but the boy has no luck. If they are married, the couple’s luck will flourish on the strength of the wife’s luck.”

Never dreaming of doing such a thing, the farmer had overheard the forecast of the fortunes of the children born that day. Hurrying home to

his village, he found that a boy baby had been born at his house and a girl had been born at the branch family next door. He was completely taken by surprise. He immediately talked it over with his neighbor, and the two decided to contract a wedding settlement from that time.

After the two children grew up, they married and the household became better and better. But the husband could not bear to think this was because of his wife's good fortune. After a while he began to find fault with everything. Finally, he cooked red rice and tied it onto a red cow. He then put his wife on the cow and, leading it off to a distant meadow, he turned it loose and chased it away.

Crying as she rode the red cow, the wife let it carry her wherever it wanted to. It went gradually into the mountains and finally came to a stop in front of a solitary cottage far back in the mountains.

The kind hearted man who owned the house helped the woman in many ways. Since she had no place to go, she stayed there and finally became his wife. After that, the fortunes of this house visibly mended, and eventually they came to employ many men and women and lived in perfect comfort.

From exactly the same time, the house which had turned out the wife had nothing but loss. At last the man's fortune was completely wrecked and he lost even the fields which he had inherited from his forefathers. Thoroughly ruined, he became a bamboo basket seller.

As the basket seller went about here and there with his baskets, he happened to come across a splendid house situated by itself, far back in the mountains. He got the people there to buy all of his baskets. After that, since he could not sell them anywhere else, he would go almost every day to that one house in the mountains and get them to buy his baskets.

One day the wife at the house looked at the face of the basket seller intently and exclaimed, "Why have you fallen so low? Have you forgotten even what your former wife looks like?"

For the first time, the basket seller recognized in the woman of the house his former wife, whom he had put on the red cow and driven away the year before. He was so stunned that he fell foaming at the mouth and died.

The wife took pity on him when she saw this. Before anyone could find out, she buried his corpse in the dirt floor behind the cook stove. Then with her own hands she made *bota-mochi*, which she gave as an offering.

When her family and workers came home, she said, "I have set up Kôjin Sama, God of the Kitchen Hearth, behind the stove today. I have made *bota-mochi* to celebrate. Eat as much as you want."

That was the beginning, and even now at farm houses *bota-mochi* is made for the festival of the God of the Kitchen Hearth.

—Kazusa, Chôsei-gun

60. **Yasuke of Yamura** (*Yamura no Yasuke* 矢村の彌助)

Long ago there was a young farmer named Yasuke, who was a faithful son at Yamura in Shinshû. Although he was honest and hard-working, yet the home was poor.

One year he set out with only a little money to buy things for New Year's at the year's end market. On the way he found a copper pheasant fluttering in a snare by the side of the road.

"I must save it," he thought, and loosened the cords of the net and set the pheasant free.

He decided that it was not right to the owner of the snare just to set the bird free, so he fastened the string of cash which he held in his hand to the net to take the place of the bird. Since he could no longer do any shopping, he went back home empty handed.

His mother, who was a gentle hearted woman, said that he had done something good. The mother and son then spent a bleak New Year's Day with nothing to eat.

Now an unfamiliar young woman called at the house saying, "I am a traveler. I am cut off by the snow and having trouble. If you would only let me stay here until spring, I would be willing to do any kind of work."

She did all kinds of work around the house for the mother. She was, indeed, a gentle and beautiful young woman.

When Yasuke's mother had talked things over with her, she said, "If you have no parents and relatives, wouldn't you rather stay here and be my son's bride?"

The girl gladly agreed and married him.

For some years they had lived together happily. Then a terrible demon began to haunt Ariake-yama. Tamura Shôgun received orders from the Imperial Court to go and destroy it. Because Yasuke of Yamura was skillful with the bow, he had to accompany Tamura Shôgun in the attack upon the demon.

At that time Yasuke's wife called him quietly and talked with him. "The demon at Ariake-yama is called Gishi-ki. You can never bring him down with an ordinary arrow. If you shoot him with an arrow feathered from the tail feathers with thirteen bands of the copper pheasant, you can shoot him down with a single arrow. Because it is the greatest task which a man can do in his life, I will give you those feathers," she said. "I am the bird which was caught in the snare and which you saved long ago at the close of the year."

So saying, she flew away crying. Yasuke saw that she had left behind the wonderful tail feathers with thirteen bands.

That is why the demon at Ariake-yama was subdued and the Japanese Alps became pleasant mountains. It was solely due to the feat of Yasuke.

He was richly rewarded for his exploit and his fame has lasted long in the mountains of Shinshû.

—Shinano, Minamiazumi-gun

**61. The fox-wife** (*Kitsune nyôbô* 狐女房)

Long ago there was a man named Saburobê at Mangyô in Noto province. When he went to the privy one night and came back, he found two wives in his room. One or the other had to be a goblin, but there was absolutely not a hair's difference in their appearance nor in what they said. He tried all kinds of puzzles for them to solve, but they both answered everything easily and he didn't know what to do. At last, since there was a slight doubt about one, she was driven out and the other was allowed to stay in the house.

The house began to do well after that, and even two sons were born. When the two children had grown a little bigger, they played hide-and-seek at their house one day. By chance, they discovered that their mother had a tail. She could no longer remain because they found out what she really was.

"The truth is that I was a fox," she said, and leaving her two children behind, she ran away crying.

After that, when the time came for the rice grains to form every year, the fox-wife would walk around Saburobê's rice field and chant, "Be fruitful, but hide the ears."

And when the rice assessors would come to see, they would always excuse this family from payments because the rice grains at only that house never seemed to fill in well. But when the rice was harvested and brought into the house to thresh, there would always be a greater harvest than at any other house, and the family became richer and richer.

—Noto, Kashima-gun

**62. The blind Water Spirit** (*Mekura no mizu no kami* 盲の水の神)

Long ago a young doctor lived alone with his mother at the village of Fukae in Hizen. One day on his way, he saved the life of a white eel and let it go after some children had caught it and were about to kill it. Just as in the case of Yasuke of Yamura, a beautiful wandering girl arrived and became his bride.

Her real form was discovered after her baby was born, and she had to go away. The mother-in-law had gone to the bride's room on some business and had found a great snake coiled around the baby and snoring as it slept. The bride could no longer remain after that, so after begging them to take good care of the child, she left.

"In case you cannot find a good wet-nurse and have difficulty in bringing

him up, please come to the edge of the lake at Fugendaki and call me," she said.

From that time the baby was brought up under the father's care, but they were troubled because there was not enough milk. The father carried the little child in his arms to the lake at the top of the mountain to ask for help. The woman appeared as she had agreed and brought out a beautiful jewel, which she let the child suck.

"This is my eyeball, but if you let him suck this instead of milk, you can bring him up to be strong. Carry it carefully," she said and left them.

On the way home, unfortunately, the inspecting officials noticed that the father's bosom bulged and they became suspicious. They discovered that he had a precious jewel and seized it from him and presented it to the feudal lord. The little baby began to cry because there was no more milk, but there was nothing the father could do.

On the next day the father went back to the same lake to ask for help. This time the woman appeared with only one eye.

After listening to all that had happened, she said, "When I give you the other jewel which I have, I will become totally blind, but if it is for my child, it does not matter."

She handed the eye that was left to the child's father and went away weeping.

Although the jewel had been sacrificed so lovingly by the mother, it was taken away, too. The feudal lord and his officials were unspeakably cruel. "If it is such a fine jewel as this, it would better to make a pair of them and present them to the *shōgun*," they said.

With these words, the second jewel which the father had received was also taken away by the officers.

The big serpent of Fugendaki became greatly enraged when she heard about that. Many people say that the big earthquake and tidal wave at Shimabara in the Kansei Era was because the anger of the blinded lake god was aroused. In that case, it would be one hundred and forty or fifty years ago that the mother snake gave her eyeballs, but the story probably happened longer ago than that.

—Hizen, Minamitakaki-gun

### 63. The old man showered with gold (*Jiji ni kane* 爺に金)

This is a story of how somebody became rich suddenly by just standing absent-mindedly and letting gold and silver come flying.

Long, long ago there lived a good old man and a bad old man in a village. Once when the good old man went into the mountains alone to work, he heard voices from somewhere calling.

"Shall we hold fast to you or stick fast to you?" the voices repeated

over and over.

Finally the old man unthinkingly answered, "If you're going to hold fast, hold fast! If you're going to stick fast, stick fast!"

Immediately, lumps of gold and silver came flying and landed on his shoulders and back until it made him grunt.

He carried this all home and spread it out in the house. While he and his old woman were gazing at it together, the bad old man came over from next door and became very envious.

"I want to do that, too, and bring home treasure on my back," the bad old man said.

He set out on the next day into the same mountains. Just as he had expected, voices came calling from both sides of the mountain.

"Shall we stick fast to you or hold fast to you?" they called.

In great glee, the bad old man answered, "If you're going to stick fast, stick fast! If you're going to hold fast, hold fast!"

This time pitch came flying down from the tops of the pine trees and landed on the old man's shoulders and back until he was loaded heavily.

"Granny, granny, I'm home! Hurry! Bring a light and let's see," he called.

His old woman brought the light, but came so close that the pitch caught on fire, and the old man was badly burned.

#### 64. The hearth fire on New Year's Eve (*Ôtoshi no takibi* 大歳の焚き火)

Long, long ago there was a poor pack-horse leader who lived in the country. The next day was to be New Year's Day, but since there was no work, he started for home without a load on his horse. He suddenly noticed a dirty beggar who had fallen over, groaning there, lying in the shade of the pine trees which lined the highway.

"Dear me! Can there be men worse off than I?" he thought. "I must help this man."

Thinking it fortunate that the rack was empty, he loaded the beggar onto his horse and took him home. He and his wife talked it over and they decided to spread a straw-mat on the dirt floor. Then they laid the beggar down carefully and covered him with straw matting. Having nothing for him to eat, they built a good fire on the hearth by him and then let him pass New Year's Eve in one way or another.

On New Year's Day the sun had risen high, but the beggar did not get up and come out. The man and his wife went in and stood by him and tried to call him. There was no answer. It seemed to them that he had turned cold, and they were terribly worried. They pulled off the piece of straw matting with which they had covered him and found that what they had thought was a beggar was a great lump of gold.

The pack-horse leader used the gold and immediately became known as a rich man.

—Mikawa, Minamishidara-gun

**65. The Jizô with sedge hats** (*Kasa Jizô* 笠地藏)

Long, long ago there lived a well meaning old man and his wife in a village. The old man made a living by making sedge hats every day and taking them to town to sell.

On the day before New Year's he went out to sell them, too, but nobody would buy a single hat because there was the market for the year's end. Giving up, he loaded the hats on his back and started home.

A snow storm came up, and the Jizô images in the middle of the field looked cold and wet.

"This is too bad," thought the old man. He put his six sedge-hats on the heads of the six Jizô images.

When he got home, he told his wife what he had done. Since there was nothing else to do, they went to sleep.

As the dawn of the New Year was approaching, the sound of sleds could be heard in the distance and voices singing,

"Who put on the six Jizô  
The six hats of sedge?  
Where's that Grandpa's house?  
Where's that Grandma's house?"

The singing voices of those drawing the sleds drew nearer and nearer.

The old man and the old woman jumped up and ran to the door calling, "Here we are! Here we are!"

They found lots of bags of treasures tossed in a heap on the door step and they could see the backs of the six Jizô images departing.

**66. Dumpling paradise** (*Dango Jôdo* 團子淨土)

Long, long ago there was an old man and an old woman in a certain place. While they were making dumplings for the Festival of Spirits one spring, one dumpling dropped to the floor and went rolling and rolling away.

"Dumpling, dumpling, how far are you rolling?" cried the old man as he ran after it.

"I'll roll to Jizô San's cave," it answered and finally rolled right into the cave.

The old man got into the cave, too, and found that the bottom of the cave was wide and a Jizô Sama was standing there. He managed to catch the dumpling just as it came to a stop in front of the Jizô image. The part of the dumpling that had dirt stuck to it, he ate himself, and the man



gave the part without dirt on it to Jizô Sama.

In the meantime it began to grow dark, so the old man thought that he had better go home.

"Climb up onto my lap," said Jizô San.

"I'm not good enough to climb up," answered the old man.

"It's all right, climb up," insisted Jizô.

The old man climbed up as he was told.

"Now, climb onto my shoulders," said the image then.

"I have barely climbed up as far as your lap, and I am sure I should not climb up higher," refused the old man.

"But climb up anyway," insisted Jizô.

The old man climbed up to his shoulders.

"Now climb onto my head," the image then said.

He did his best to refuse, but Jizô Sama insisted that he climb up, so the old man gave in and climbed onto Jizô's head.

Then Jizô San lent his fan to the old man.

"Presently the demons will gather here and begin to gamble," said the image. "At the right time, beat this fan and imitate a rooster's crowing."

Sure enough, a crowd of demons came along and began gambling. After a while the old man did as Jizô had told him, imitating the rooster's crow.

"There, it's dawn already," the demons cried and rushed out with a shout, leaving the old coins and gold there and running off somewhere.

The old man received all of the coins and gold from Jizô San and took them home in high joy. The old woman was waiting for him. Together they spread out all the coins and gold pieces and looked at them in delight.

Just then, the old woman from next door came to call. When she asked why the folks at that house looked so happy, the honest old man told her exactly what had happened.

"Then I'm going to send my old man to Jizô's cave, too, I am," she declared, hurrying home.

The two neighbors then hastily started making dumplings. They took one out in the yard and dropped it, but because it would not move, the old man kicked it along. He kept at it until he got it into the cave, and then he followed it in quite boldly. Going over before the Jizô image, he found the dumpling lying, all covered with dirt. The bad old man took out the inside which was still clean and ate it, giving the dirty, outside part to Jizô San.

Since nobody invited him to climb up, he climbed up to Jizô's lap, anyway, and then to his shoulders and finally to the crown of his head. Nobody offered to lend him the fan, so he took it without permission and sat on the look out.

On this day, too, demons came gathering there and began gambling.

The old man hurriedly made a noise by hitting the fan and imitating a rooster's crow.

"Is it dawn already?" exclaimed the demons. "It's awful soon!"

They jumped up in confusion, but one of the young demons could not get away because he caught his long nose in the hook over the hearth.

"Help! Wait for me, demons. My nose is caught on the hook," he cried.

Unconsciously the old man let out a chuckle.

"Listen! There's the voice of a man," the demon said.

They all looked around here and there until they found him. Down they dragged the old man from the top of Jizô's head and all pitched into him. Instead of gathering up the money which the demons left to take home, he barely got away with his life.

That is why people say that one should not imitate others so much.

—Uzen, Mogami-gun

### 67. The tumor doubled (*Kobu futatsu* 瘤二つ)

Long, long ago there was a priest who had a big tumor over his eye.\* While he was traveling around various regions practicing his austerities, he came to a certain village where nobody would let him spend the night. All he could do was to go into an old wayside shrine to spend the night.

Toward midnight, sounds of many feet were heard and a crowd came into the shrine. Looking closely, the priest could see that they were long-nosed demons who had met there for a drinking bout. He could not hope to remain hidden all night, so he watched his chance. In spite of his fears, he hung the cushion he was sitting on over his seat and jumping out, he began to dance with the demons.

When it was about dawn, the demons began to get ready to go home and said, "Come next time, too, because you are a jolly priest. So that you will not just agree to come and then only break your promise, we will take this and keep it for a pledge."

Saying this, they took the tumor from over his eye and carried it away with them. Glad to be rid of the bothersome tumor, the priest returned to his own region in great delight.

It happened that in his neighborhood there was another priest bothered with a tumor in exactly the same place. He heard the talk about what happened and was so envious that he could not endure it. He inquired in detail about the man's story and then set out to the shrine just to get his tumor taken off.

Just as he had expected, in the middle of the night the long-nosed demons gathered for their drinking bout. Hurriedly he tied the straw seat on his

\* Another well-known version in children's story books pictures the tumor on the cheek.

hips and did a dance for the demons.

“Great! You kept your word without a hitch, old fellow, and you came back, didn’t you?” they shouted. “To pay you for your trouble, we will give you back the pledge we took.”

He felt something slapped onto his face, and at once he found that he had a tumor over each eye.

He was sorry forever after because he overdid imitating somebody.

**68. The old man of Ôshû who scattered ashes** (*Ôshû no haimaki jiji* 奥州の灰まき爺)

Long ago, also out in the country in Ôshû, a good old man and a bad old man lived as neighbors.

They both went to catch little fish in the current of the river one night, and they each fastened up something called a *dô* and left it. The old man from the upper house got up early the next morning to see, but in his *dô* there was only a little dog. In the *dô* belonging to the man in the lower house, there were lots of little fish. He took all the fish from that *dô* and threw the puppy into it. Then he went home looking as though nothing had happened.

The old man from the lower house went later to see and found the cute little puppy crying in his *dô*. He lifted it out and carried it home in his arms and took care of it. And each day, when he fed it from a bowl, it grew as big as a bowl, when he fed it from a pot, it grew as big as a pot. In a short time it was big enough to carry all kinds of tools on its back and go with the old man into the mountains.

One day the dog showed the old man how to catch deer in the mountains. The old man called, “*Shishi* that way, come here! *Shishi* this way, come here!”

At this the deer came gathering from all directions, and the dog caught the deer one at a time and killed them. Then the old man put them on the dog’s back to take home. The old man and the old woman cooked deer soup.

When they were eating it, the old woman from the upper house came along. After hearing all about it, she said, “Please, lend us your dog, then. We want to eat deer soup, too.”

She led the dog away. On the next day the old man from the upper house took the dog to the mountains.

“The dog didn’t say to load these, but I want to take this and I might as well take that,” the old man said as he put a hatchet and a sickle and all kinds of tools on its back. Then with a shout, “Hurry, there, hurry!” he drove it into the mountains.

Instead of saying *shishi*, the old man made a mistake and called

“*Hachi*,\* that way, come here! *Hachi* this way, come here!”

All the bees in the mountains came flying and stung the old man. He declared that it was all the dog's fault and became very angry. He struck the dog and killed him, and after burying it under the rice-tree, he went back home.

No matter how long the old man at the lower house waited, his neighbor did not bring the dog home. When he went after it, he found the old man at the upper house groaning in bed.

“Thanks to that dog, the bees stung me all over this way,” he complained. “It was such a hateful beast that I killed it and buried it under the rice-tree. If you want your dog, you can go and look for it under the rice-tree.”

When he heard this, the old man from the lower house felt very sad. He went to the mountains and cut down the rice-tree. He made a hand-mill from the wood and he and his old woman sang a song as they turned it.

“Money, come down before *jiji*,  
Rice, come down before *baba*.”

As they sang the grindstone song, money came down in front of the old man and rice came down in front of the old woman. In a short time they became very rich. They could do many things such as wearing beautiful clothes and eating rice for food.

The old woman from the upper house then came along again and asked, “Where did you get all those good things?”

“Where would you think?” they answered. “We cut down the rice-tree in the mountains where your old man killed the dog and buried it, and from the tree we made a hand-mill. When we grind it, money and rice comes out. That's where we get them.”

“Then lend me the mill,” the greedy old woman said and borrowed it to take home.

Now the old man and the old woman at the upper house ground the mill with all their might, but they forgot the very important words to the song. Instead they sang,

“*Baba*, come down before Grandpa,  
*Shishi*, come down before Grandma,”

Just as the words said, lots of bad smelling things came flowing into the house. The old man and the old woman were furious. They blamed it all on the hand-mill. With an ax they split it up and poked it into the

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\* In Tohoku dialect the words for “deer” and “bee” both sound much like *shigari*. The bad old man in the tale confuses the important words in italics in this and following passages.

fire, and burned it all up.

The old man and the old woman at the lower house waited quite a while and then went to get the hand-mill.

“That hand-mill was an outrageous thing,” the neighbor complained. “It filled our house with filthy things. We could not stand to have it around, so we split it up and burned it in the earthen stove.”

“If there is no help for it, then, I’ll take the ashes home, at least,” said the old man.

He brought a basket and carried the ashes home in it. When he took the basket of ashes out to his garden patch to scatter them, he discovered that geese had alighted on the pond next to it. The old man began throwing the ashes while he said the following words :

“Ashes, go into the eyes of the *gan*,  
Ashes, go into the eyes of the *gan*.”

The ashes went into the eyes of the geese as he sang, and they dropped dead. The old man gathered them up and went home. He and his wife made goose soup, which they were enjoying, when once more the old woman from the upper house came.

“How do you get such good things to eat?” she asked.

“You folks chopped up the hand-mill from our house and burned it up, so I brought back the ashes and tried scattering them. A lot of geese fell down,” answered the old man. “I gathered them up and brought them home and we made them into this goose soup, which we are eating.”

“If that’s it, let me have a little of those ashes for us,” demanded the old woman.

Again she made her old man imitate the neighbors. He climbed up onto the ridge of his roof on a night when a strong wind was blowing. Looking up at the sky, he began scattering the ashes, and again he forgot the important words. He bellowed away at these words,

“Ashes, go into the eyes of *jiji*,  
Ashes, go into the eyes of *jiji*.”

As he sang, the ashes flew into his eyes, just as the words said, and blinded him. He went tumbling off the roof.

The old woman below was on the watch for the geese to fall and took him for a goose. She hit him with a big mallet, so the story goes.

—Rikuchû, Esashi-gun

**69. Why the sea is salty** (*Umi no mizu wa naze karai* 海の水はなぜ鹹い)

Very, very long ago, there were two brothers living in a certain place. The elder brother was rich, but the younger brother was poor.

Although the next day would be New Year’s Day, the younger brother

could not get ready for it. He went to his older brother to borrow a measure of rice, but the brother only cursed him and refused to give him anything.

There was nothing for the younger brother to do but to go home. On the way he met an old man with a long white beard, cutting grass by the side of the road.

“Where are you going?” asked the old man.

“Tonight the Old Year ends, but I have no rice to offer to the God of the Old Year, so I am just walking around with nothing to do,” answered the younger brother.

“That certainly is too bad. I will give this to you,” said the old man as he took out a little wheat *manjû* and handed it to him. “Take this *manjû* and go to the little shrine in the woods over there. Behind the shrine there is a hole where many Little People go in and out. I am sure that they will want your *manjû*. Tell them that you will not trade it for anything but a stone hand-mill and then all will be well.”

When the man came to the shrine in the woods which he had been told about, sure enough, there was a hole where lots of Little People were running in and out in great confusion. Wondering what they were doing, he saw that they were falling over each other, struggling to carry a single piece of thatching rush.

“Here, I will carry it for you,” said the man and picked it up in his fingers and carried it for them.

While he was doing this, he suddenly heard a voice by the mouth of the cave cry, “Murder! Murder!”

Looking around carefully, he found that one of the Little People had got caught between the clogs of one of his wooden *geta*. He picked him out gently.

“What a big, strong man he is,” they all exclaimed, and looking up, they discovered the wheat *manjû* in his hand.

“Please, let us have that,” they begged.

They brought out a lot of gold and piled it up in front of him, but because he had already been warned by the old white haired man, he said that he would only trade it for a stone hand-mill. He finally got the hand-mill.

“Even among us Little People there is not another treasure like this,” they said, “but we will give it to you for the *manjû*. Turn the mill to the right, and anything you want will come out. Turn it to the left, and it will stop,” they explained.

He took it home carefully.

His wife was all worn out from waiting for him. “It’s the close of the Old Year and where have you been? Did you bring that rice?” she scolded in a high voice.

“Well, just wait and see,” he replied. “Hurry up and spread out a

piece of straw matting.”

Setting the little hand-mill down on the mat which his wife spread out, he began turning the little mill and said, “Come forth, rice! Come forth, rice!”

Over a peck of rice came pouring out. Next, he ordered salmon to come out, and two or three salt salmon came flopping out. Then one after another he drew out all kinds of things he needed. That night he and his wife observed the happiest sort of an Old Year’s passing and then lay down to sleep.

The next morning was New Year’s, and the man said, “Here I am, suddenly rich, and I don’t want to go on this way, just living in somebody’s lean-to. First, we’ll build us a new house.”

They ground out a beautiful house and a storehouse twenty by thirty feet came out next. Then they got a long house for workers and a stable with seven horses to put in it.

At last they ordered, “Come forth, rice-cakes. Come forth, wine.”

They prepared for a big celebration for all the neighbors and relatives. The village folk were astonished and came to enjoy a feast such as they had never seen before. Even the elder brother, who had refused to lend the measure of rice, was invited.

“How can he have become so rich a man in just one night,” the brother wondered.

He thought it so strange, so very strange, that he could not get over it. Surprised as he was, he noticed this and that very carefully. Then finally it came time for the guests to go home.

“I would like to give the guests cakes to take home,” thought the younger brother, secretly going into a corner to start turning the handmill. “Come forth, cakes. Come forth, cakes,” he said.

“Ah, now I understand,” said the brother, who had been spying. “It’s that hand-mill.”

That night, after all the guests had gone home, the older brother chose the time when the younger brother and his wife were sound asleep to steal back into the room where the little hand-mill was hidden. He carried it away, and with it he took *mochi* and other cakes that were beside it. He carried them all down to the beach where, as luck would have it, there was a little boat. He loaded the precious mill and all into it, untied the rope, and rowed out to the open sea, planning to cross to some island and be a rich man by himself.

Although he had loaded *mochi* and other cakes and such sweet things into the boat, he unfortunately had nothing salty. He thought that he wanted to get salt out before anything else and recklessly began turning the mill.

“Come forth, salt. Come forth, salt,” he said and salt came pouring out.

Soon the boat was full of salt, but when he thought that there was about enough and wanted to stop it, the elder brother did not know about turning the mill to the left to stop it. The salt kept on running out until at last, from the weight of the salt, the boat and the elder brother and the stolen hand-mill and everything went sinking into the sea.

Because nobody knows about turning the mill to the left, that hand-mill is still grinding out salt at the bottom of the sea. That is why the water of the sea is salty.

—Rikuchû, Kamihei-gun

**70. Hachikoku (Eight Koku) Mountain** (*Hachikoku-yama* 八石山)

Long ago in the province of Echigo there were two sons in a farmer's home. The older son's mother was dead and the younger son's mother was the mother then. The step-mother hated the older brother and only wanted to make life pleasant for her own child in some way.

For this reason, she divided a patch of garden in the mountains into two and made the brothers plant beans to see which could do the better. In the night, she stole out to the older brother's garden and dug up all of the beans he had planted that day. No matter how long he waited, the beans in the older brother's patch did not sprout.

"That child didn't want to plant beans, anyway, and he took them somewhere and threw them away, I am sure," the step-mother said, hoping that the father would give the boy a good scolding.

Perhaps the dead mother was looking from somewhere out of sight and came to his rescue. At any rate, there was one bean over in the corner of the garden which the step-mother seemed to have overlooked when she took the beans out. That one bean sprouted and began growing bigger and bigger. Finally, it grew to be a great tree even higher than the mountains, the tops of its branches reaching clear to the heavens. When autumn came, from this single tree they gathered eight *koku* (nearly forty bushels) of beans, and the step-mother's plan failed.

The mountain at this village is called Hachikoku, "Eight-koku." The gate posts of Senpuku-ji at Hôjô were made from the trunk of this big tree when it was cut down.

—Echigo, Kariwa-gun

**71. "Dog's-head thread"** (*Kentôshi* 犬頭絲)

Long, long ago, two girls lived next door to each other in Mikawa province. They both made a living by raising silk worms.

Although one girl did well with her silk worms, at the other girl's house, no matter what she tried, she could not raise them as she wanted to. She became poorer and poorer. All the youths and maidens that helped her lost interest and left her one after another. Then gradually all of her silk



worms except one, died one by one. This single silk worm seemed to eat the mulberry leaves well and it grew bigger day by day. It seemed useless for her to raise just one silk worm, but she took good care of it. Finally it became an unusually big worm.

One day she took this one big worm outside to feed it mulberry leaves. The little white dog which she kept at her house stood wagging its tail. It stood watching the silk worm in front of the house, and when the girl was not noticing, it took the worm and ate it up. To think that the dog should eat the one last worm after all her pains made the girl lose heart over her bad luck. It was just something a dog had done, so what could she do about it? The dog lay down and didn't seem to care in the least. The poor girl looked at it and, feeling very sorry for herself, she began to cry there alone.

Presently the dog gave a sneeze, and the girl noticed something like a pair of white threads running out of its nose about one inch. The threads looked exactly like silk. It seemed so strange that the girl took the ends of the threads and tried drawing them out. Both of them seemed to be so long that they had no end. She fastened them to her reel and began winding it. She filled two hundred and then three hundred reels, but the thread still did not break. After about thirty-five or forty pounds of thread had come out, the dog suddenly collapsed and died. The girl thought that it might have been a messenger from God, so she buried the dog under a mulberry bush in the back garden.

State ceremonies were being held in Kyôto about that time. An official went out into all the land to look for thread for the emperor's garments. At the neighbor's house there was a big yield of silk, but it was dark and so full of knots that it could not be used. He saw the silk floss bleaching in the yard of the second girl. It was pure white and had such a beautiful sheen that it was perfect material. The official immediately took that to use.

The next year, silk worms appeared by themselves on the mulberry tree in the back yard where the dog had been buried, and they produced the same kind of silk thread. From that time, the silk floss at Mikawa always was more splendid than that of other regions. It surely was because of the eggs from the worm in the dog's head.

## 72. How a fox returned a kindness (*Kitsune no on-gaesbi* 狐の恩返し)

Very long ago, when an old man got up in the morning and went out into his yard to sweep, he found one bean which had fallen in the corner of the garden. It was a pity to leave it there, he thought, and he planted it in the garden behind his house. Soon it sprouted and grew into a big tree. It did not yield as much as the Hachikoku tree, but this one bean tree yielded nearly a bushel of beans.

A fox came along one day, however, and ate all the beans up. The old

man grew red with rage.

"You hateful beast," he roared, "you have stolen and eaten the beans which I have taken such pains to raise! I'll beat the life out of you!"

The fox begged to be forgiven and said, "Do let me go! If you will, I'll help you earn lots of money."

"All right, then I'll let you off," said the old man.

The fox turned himself into a pony at once. The old man led him to a rich man's house and sold him for a high price and made lots of money. The fox, which had turned itself into a pony, ran away in four or five days and came back.

"This time I will change myself into a tea kettle," he said and turned into a kettle of just the right size.

The old man took this kettle to the temple and sold it to the priest who liked tea. It made a nice sound when the priest put it over the fire.

The acolyte took the tea kettle to the river to scour it.

"Ouch! Ouch!" it cried. "Don't rub so hard."

"This is awful," the boy said. "The tea kettle said something."

"Nonsense," replied the priest. "How can that be?"

The priest built a big fire and hung the tea kettle over it.

Finally the fox could not stand it any longer and cried, "That's too hot, priest! *Gagee!*"

He showed his tail and ran off.

—Tsugaru, Goshogawara

### 73. The Listening Hood (*Kikimimi zukin* 聽耳頭巾)

This is also about a good old man who was poor and who lived out in the country in Ōshū. He was always wishing that he could at least give some fresh fish to Inari Sama, the tutelary diety, but he was poor and couldn't do things he wanted to do.

One day when he went to the shrine to worship, he said, "Ujigami Sama, Ujigami Sama, I want to say that because I am so poor, I cannot offer you fresh fish. So please eat me instead, I beg of you."

"Old man, old man, there is no reason for you to worry so," replied Ujigami Sama. "I know very well what trouble you have, and I am going to grant you a bit of fortune. Here, take this precious hood I give you and try putting it on your head. When you wear this, you can understand anything that birds or beasts say."

With these words he bestowed upon the old man a faded red hood.

"Really, I thank you very much," said the old man. Quite pleased, he hurriedly tucked the old red hood into his bosom and left.

As he went wavering down the road, he noticed a big tree by the side of the road. Stopping there to rest, he soon fell asleep. Now from the

direction of the beach, a crow came flying and lighted on the branch of the tree because it was tired. Presently another crow came flying from inland and stopped in the top of the same tree. The old man saw them and decided that if he were going to try the Listening Hood which Inari Sama had given him, now was the time. He pulled it out quietly and put it on. Suddenly he heard the voices speaking overhead.

The crow that flew in from the beach said, "Well, it's been a long time since I saw you. I have been at the seashore up till now, but there aren't any fish these days. The times are hard, so I flew this way. Which way did you come from?"

"I came from Arami way. It looks like hard times anywhere you are," answered the second crow. "Is there anything strange going on in the world?"

The crow from the seashore answered, "It isn't very strange, but it has been five years since the rich man in a village by the beach built his storehouse. When they were laying the thatch over the entrance to the storehouse, a snake somehow or other crawled up and happened to be nailed below a board. It cannot get away and it's still there, half alive and half dead. What I can't help admiring is the way the female snake brings food and keeps it alive, but they both really are having a hard time.

"Their resentment has built up until it has afflicted the body of the rich man's daughter with a lingering illness," continued the crow. "If the board isn't taken off soon, the snake will die and the daughter will die, too. Time after time, I fly there to the roof to call the people, but human beings are a sorry lot and can't understand what I am saying."

"Men are just like that," the second crow agreed. "They seem absolutely numb to such things. Well! I'll see you again one of these times," he added and the two crows separated, one flying to the east and the other to the west.

The old man had heard something good! He wanted to hurry to the rich man to save his daughter and the snake, too, but he could not set out because he was not ready.

He went loitering along behind the town and found a round wooden box which was broken and thrown away. He picked it up and pasted paper on it and set it on his head. Then he went before the gate of the rich man by the beach and called, "Fortune Teller! Fortune Teller!"

The rich man at that time was worried about what to do for his daughter who had been sick for so long. He called from the inside, "Hey, out there, Fortune Teller, come in quickly and lay out your sticks."

The old man went in and asked, "What kind of a fortune do you want me to read?"

"The fact is, my daughter has been sick for a long time," explained

the rich man. "It is at a point where we don't know whether it will be to-day or tomorrow that she dies. Try a fortune to see if there is something which we can do to make her recover."

"Then lead me where the sick girl is," the old man demanded.

He went beside the pillow of the sick girl and sat down. Then he began chanting over and over, "Arrow root leaves which spread twenty *ri* have spread twenty *ri*." After this he told them in detail the story, just as he had heard it from the crows.

The rich man declared that it was all exactly as the fortune teller had said. Such a thing might have happened, so he called a carpenter to tear off the boards in the roof to see. There the snake was, nailed down and half of it turned white with decay.

"Oh, this is it," they said, and carefully laying it in a basket, they lifted it down from the roof.

They put it in front of the drain and fed it and cared for it for some time. After it was strong, they turned it loose. While they did this the daughter's illness began to disappear day by day, as though it had been peeled off like layers of thin paper. As the days went by, she completely recovered.

The delighted rich man gave three hundred *ryō* to the old man in thanks. The old man became very rich then. Going back home, he immediately built a new shrine for Ujigami Sama and celebrated with a more splendid festival than had ever been held before. Needless to say, he also offered fresh fish many times.

The old man of the Listening Hood put on good clothes and set out again on a trip. When he was resting under some big tree one day, crows came flying again from the east and the west and rested in the branches of that tree and began gossiping.

One of them said, "I don't gain anything by staying in one town all the time."

The other answered, "That's right. The following sort of thing is going on in the town where I have been until now. The rich man at the town has been sick a long time. It looks like his life will be over any day now. The reason is that when he built an annex five or six years ago, he cut down an old camphor tree, which had been in the yard a long time. The stump is under the eaves where the rain drips off onto it. Since the root cannot die as long as it has life, it continues to send out shoots, doing its best to grow because of its vitality. But as fast as it sends out shoots, they are pruned off. Thus it cannot die even if it wants to, but then neither can it live if it wants to. Its resentment has gradually afflicted the master and he lies sick.

"And besides, it is a sight to see the friends, the trees from various mountains, that come almost every night to try to cheer up the suffering stump," added the crow. "I would say, if they mean to let it live, they

should let it live. If they mean to kill it eventually, they should dig it up, roots and all. It's a terrible thing."

The old man hurried to town after he heard the story.

"Fortune Teller, Fortune Teller, we have some thing to ask of you," the people of the rich man's house said and called him in. "Our master is sick. Find out for us what we should do to make him well."

The old man said, "There should be an annex here which was built five or six years ago. Let me spend the night there."

"Why, Fortune Teller, how could you know that we have that annex?" the people of the house asked in surprise.

"That I learned through my fortune telling. At any rate, leave me there for the night. In the morning I will tell you all about the cause of the master's illness," answered the old man. "Nobody must come in until I tell him to."

That night he stayed there alone to see how things were. In the middle of the night he heard a rustling and footsteps drawing near.

A voice said, "Dear camphor tree, how do you feel?"

A faint answer seemed to come up from deep in the ground. It said, "Are you the *nagi* tree from Rokkôshi-san who is saying those kind words? I'm sorry you always have to come so far and with such difficulty. I am just as you see, wishing I could die even one moment sooner, but it cannot happen that way, and I can only go on suffering."

"Now don't give up that way," the friend said, trying to comfort him, and then went away.

After a while something came along with a swishing sound. A voice asked, "Camphor tree, old friend, how goes it?"

Again the camphor tree's voice came up, "Is it the creeping pine from Hayachine-zan who is asking? There is absolutely no way to save me. I am sorry for the way you fellows have to come to comfort me every night."

"Oh, it's nothing," answered the voice, "You mustn't worry about it. I'm on my way to Goyô-zan for a good time, and this is on the way. It isn't like the east trying to meet the north. You will be well by spring, just wait and see. Don't be discouraged."

Then the creeping pine went on with the same swishing sound.

With the Listening Hood on, the old man heard all that was said. When morning came, he asked to be led to the pillow of the sick man. There he did his usual chant of the arrow root spreading twenty *ri*. Then he told in detail the conversation of the trees from the night before.

"This isn't just the suffering of the camphor tree under the eaves," he concluded. "All the trees even on the high mountains in every direction are miserable over this. Hurry and dig up this root."

They dug up the root and worshipped it as the Tree God of their yard.

The master's illness then began to disappear day by day, like the peeling of layers of thin papers. All the rich man's house rejoiced and again the old man received three hundred *ryô* in thanks.

The old man accepted the money and went home, but from that time he had no more desire for gain. He stopped telling fortunes and spent his days living like an ordinary rich man.

—Rikuchû, Kamihei-gun

**74. The Sparrow Shrine** (*Suzume no miya* 雀の宮)

Long, long ago in a country place in Yashû, there was a strange man who liked to boast that when he ate a *manjû*, he could swallow it whole in one gulp. There was a bad man who knew of this man's freak doings, so he put a needle in a *manjû* and left it. Not knowing this, the man ate it in the usual way. His stomach hurt him so much that he went to bed because of the pain.

While he was lying thus, he drew back the sliding doors and looked out. A sparrow was coming continually to the leek patch, eating the tops. Wondering why this was, the man watched it closely everyday. At last, he noticed a little piece of a needle wrapped around with a leek came out of the sparrow's tail. He thought that God had taught him through the sparrow that the needle would come out if he ate leeks, so he thought he would try it himself. After he had eaten lots of leeks, the needle actually came out and all the pain left.

With great joy, the man built a little shrine which he called Sparrow Shrine. Even now the railroad station near there is called by that name.

**75. The deified gild heads** (*Kurodai Dai Myôjin* 黒鯛大明神)

Long, long ago in Tosa province, a fish vendor was going from the beach to a village back in the mountains to sell fish.

He found a copper pheasant caught in a net left by somebody among the trees along a lonely road. Seeing the bird, he wanted it, but he knew that it would not be right to take it without paying. Since there happened to be nobody around, he took three giltheads from his own basket and put them in the net in place of the bird, and without permission he took out the pheasant and carried it home.

Soon after this, villagers who came along thought it very strange that giltheads were in the mountain, but thought it even more strange that they should be in a copper pheasant's snare. In the belief that it was a sign from heaven, they hurriedly built a little shrine after deliberating together. There they joined in worshipping the three giltheads and called the shrine "Kurodai Shansho Gongen," the temporary manifestation of heaven in the three giltheads.

As the fame of the shrine began to spread, people came from all direc-

tions to worship, and it became very prosperous. When the fish vendor came along after some time, before he could ever tell how he had taken the copper pheasant, the shrine had already become very popular.

**76. The lizard hilt ornament** (*Tokage no menuki* 蜥蜴の目貫)

This is a story of long ago when a highly skilled carver was still spending his days as a poor man, unknown in the world.

One day when he went out into his yard, he saw a lizard playing around among the stones. The form of the lizard was so lovely, that as he stood there motionlessly looking at it, the carver suddenly felt like carving one like that. He made a copy of its form, and in a short time he had made a silver hilt ornament.

Quite proud that he had done so well, he took it to a curio dealer who not only bought it right away, but afterwards ordered one more and then another and another. The carver was praised as a skilled craftsman, and because his fame spread, he could always sell them, no matter how many he made. As he made more of the hilt ornaments, his life became easier.

There was just one curious thing about this. After he began making the sword hilt ornaments, whenever he went out to see, whether in summer or winter, the same lizard would come out from between the stones and play before his eyes. At first he did not think much about it, but later it began to get on his nerves. He began to feel very disturbed about it. Moreover, only he could see it, no others could. Finally, he could endure it no longer, and in a moment of despair, he flung a rock at the lizard and killed it.

From that time the carver's fame suddenly began to wane. Nobody said he wanted to buy his work, though he made the pieces from time to time. The orders for the lizard hilt ornaments came completely to an end. Gradually the man was reduced to the poor carver that he had formerly been.

**77. The Fish-stone of Nagasaki** (*Nagasaki no uoishi* 長崎の魚石)

Long ago when Chinese were still called Tōjin, there was a Tōjin who was a friend of the house of Iseya in Nagasaki. He came to call there before he went back to his country.

Now standing and now sitting, the Tōjin looked for a long time at a little green stone which was in the wall around the storehouse. At last he said to his host earnestly, "Please, let me have that green stone."

"It is nothing that I need in particular, so there is no reason why I shouldn't give it to you," the head of the house said, "but I am afraid if I remove that one rock, the stone wall will crumble. By the time you come again, there will have been an occasion for construction work. I certainly will have it set aside then and present it to you."

"If it will take money to repair the wall, I will pay one hundred *ryō* for the stone. I don't know whether I will come again or not, so please let me

buy it and take it with me," urged the Tōjin.

At the words, one hundred *ryō*, the head of the Iseya house, whose name was Kyūzaemon, realized for the first time that the stone was something precious. A spirit of greed began to stir in him. It seemed a pity to part with the stone offhand, and he made some excuse or another and would not agree to sell it, even though the Tōjin offered him three hundred *ryō*.

After the Tōjin's boat had set sail, the man dug the stone out to look at it. He called a jewel polisher to have it appraised, but all that he could judge was that it certainly did not seem like an ordinary stone. He had the man polish it a little at a time, but it did not shine, neither did it show anything unusual. It was so puzzling that he had the jeweler try driving a chisel into it. The stone split in two, exactly at the middle, and water came out, and with the water, two little red fish like gold fish leaped out and died immediately.

"What a pity I did that! I missed making three hundred *ryō*," the man thought.

He was still regretting this when the Tōjin returned again the next year. This time the Tōjin came along with one thousand *ryō* and asked once more to buy the green stone. The disappointment seemed more than the man could bear, but when he was told in detail what had happened, the Tōjin shed tears of distress.

"I had only heard of that stone, but never had come across it anywhere else," the Tōjin said. "That was a great treasure called a Fish-stone. Had it been patiently polished all over, a little at a time, until reaching about a tenth of an inch from the water, the two goldfish could have been seen playing inside, shining from the light within. It would have been a beautiful sight unequalled in the whole world. It possessed a virtue such that by looking at it in the morning and in the evening, one's character would have been ennobled and life prolonged, so the legend says. Kings and noblemen would have paid any price to possess it.

"I was going to take it to my country to find a buyer," admitted the Tōjin, "and with my wife and children and whole household, I thought I would live without worry for the rest of my life, but now that hope is all in vain. Perhaps it was destiny that this rare treasure should have been hidden from the world and not preserved for the future. It was my fault not to have told this story to you in the first place, instead of trying to buy the stone without explaining. This time I intended to buy the stone even if the price of one thousand *ryō* had been tripled," he concluded, drawing out a package to show, in which three thousand *ryō* were wrapped. Then the Tōjin went back to China dejectedly.

Merchants who come from far countries have a fault always of trying to reduce the price without showing in their faces what they are thinking.



Japanese merchants, without knowing about things, intend only to make money and have lost by doing such foolish things from olden times.

**78. The great affair of the melon** (*Uri no dai jiken* 瓜の大事件)

Once, long ago, Hachiman Tarô Yoshiie, a famous warrior, and Abe-no-Seimei, a noted augur, and the distinguished physician Tada Akira, and Kanju-Sôjô, a well known priest, all happened to meet at the home of Midô Kampaku Michinaga.

That was on the first day of May. A basket of early melons had been sent as a gift from Nara, but since it was a day of fasting at the palace, there was doubt about allowing such things from the outside to be brought in. Abe-no-Seimei was asked right away to make an augury. He announced that there was poison in just one of the melons. Kanju-Sôjô was then told to perform an incantation. After he had prayed for some time, suddenly one among all the melons began jumping up and down, by which they knew it was the poisonous one.

Since that was the case, the physician Tada Akira received a command to use needles to draw out the poison. He took the melon up in his hands, and after turning it around, he stuck needles into two places. These stopped the melon from jumping. Then Hachiman Tarô Yoshiie drew his sword from his hip and cut the melon open to see. There was a small poisonous snake inside, just as the augury had hinted.

The two needles which the physician Tada Akira had stuck into the melon had each pierced an eye of the snake. Although Yoshiie had seemed only casually to cut the melon open, his sword had severed the head of the snake precisely.

**79. An augury left by the father** (*Shigo no uranai* 死後の占ひ)

Long ago a traveler on his way back to Kyôto with a number of followers came into a lonely village along the Hokkoku-kaidô. It was toward evening, but there was no place where they could ask to spend the night except a big house where a woman lived all alone.

Getting up early the next morning, the traveler was setting out when the woman who owned the house followed him and said, "You owe me one thousand *ryô*. Please pay it back before setting out."

This was such an unexpected accusation that the attendants were taken aback. Some became angry, others began chattering, but the master at least heard quietly and restrained them. He turned back and listened to all the details of the story, at any rate.

The woman said, "I do not know the reason, but when my father was about to die, he called me before him and told me that in ten years from then on yesterday of this month, a traveler would probably come from the north and spend the night here. If I would tell this story to that person, he would

probably give me one thousand *ryô* in return. After repeating it over and over, he died. I have been waiting all this time in good spirits, and you came on that exact day and stayed over night. That is why I thought there could be no mistake."

"In that case, I understand you very well," said the traveler. "Your father was a diviner, I think. He knew ten years ago that I would come, so he left you that message. Well, well, since that is the case, I can return that money to you immediately."

The truth was that the traveler himself was a noted diviner. He re-entered the delapidated old house where he had spent the night and walked all through it. In a room far to the interior, he approached a pillar and tried striking it. Only this pillar was hollow and had a different sound. The promised one thousand *ryô* were hidden in it. Taking the money out, the traveler promptly gave it to the woman. Telling her to use it carefully, he then went on his way to Kyôto.

The woman's father had known ten years before that his daughter would be in need some time. For this reason, he had read a fortune and saw that at just this time the splendid diviner of Kyôto would come and spend the night. If he had lacked either skill in fortune telling or fatherly love, one or other, such a plan very likely could not have been made.

#### 80. The beggar's money (*Kojiki no kane* 乞食の金)

Long, long ago, when Tôkyô was still called Edo, a poor man named Zengorô lived in Fukui-cho in Asakusa. All his life he had believed devoutly in Daikoku Sama, but he could not make any money. When the Old Year was nearing its close one year, Zengorô became very troubled. There seemed nothing left to do but to starve to death.

If he were going to starve to death anyway, he decided to throw off his real self and break into the house of a rich man in the neighborhood and steal some money with which to spend at least one New Year's in ease. He talked this over with his wife, but she declared that it was better to starve to death than to steal. She would not agree at all to his doing it.

In spite of this, he could not dismiss the idea. When he saw that his wife was asleep, he left the house. Standing by the fence of the big house nearby, he looked in cautiously. He wanted to try to get in by some means, and reaching his hand onto the board fence, he started to climb over. It had been snowing, however, and his feet slipped. He fell and fainted on the outside.

Then as in a dream he saw the form of Daikokuten appear, surrounded by a bright light and with a high mound of a gold and silver at his feet.

The poor man exclaimed, "To one who has worshipped you every day for all this time, why have you never given even a little of the great heap of

gold which you have?"

Daikoku Sama replied, "There is no fortune to bestow upon you. Even this money has an owner. The only thing that you can do is to ask to borrow it."

"Where is the owner, then?" asked the man.

"The beggar who is sleeping at the approach to the bridge straight ahead of here is the owner," came the answer.

The poor man was truly surprised and he regained consciousness. Zengorô, who was honest at heart, promptly set out according to the word of Daikoku. He went to the approach of the bridge to see. Sure enough, a filthy beggar was fast asleep there in the cold with only a straw mat over him. Zengorô shook him until he awakened and told him all that had happened.

"I will give you a deed if you will only let me have three hundred *ryô*," he said.

"But how can I do such a thing?" the bewildered beggar answered.

"It was truly a revelation from Daikoku Sama," insisted the poor man.

Trying to persuade the beggar by some way or another, Zengorô took the beggar home with him and drew up the contract of loan for three hundred *ryô* and gave it to him. Furthermore, they agreed to live on terms as relatives from that time.

"With this done, we may be able to find the money," said Zengorô. "Let us start looking at my house first."

Making his wife help him, he lifted up the boards in the floor. After they looked in every corner, they found a place which seemed a little higher than the rest in a corner under the porch. They dug out exactly three hundred *ryô* from under the dirt there.

Using this sum as a capital, they worked for a living and little by little their fortune improved. Of course Zengorô brought the beggar to his house and shared with him fittingly. He set him up in a home and both families prospered. Since Zengorô and his wife had no children, they adopted a son from the beggar's family and handed property over to him.

Thus it was truly as Daikokuten had revealed, all the fortune came into the possession of the beggar's family.

### 81. Picking up too much (*Hiroi sugi* 拾ひ過ぎ)

This next old tale is also about Edo. Long ago a rich *samurai* called Monnasukezaemon lived in Aoyama. An honest servant called something or other worked for him.

On the twenty-eighth, just before the passing of the Old Year, once the master sent his man to where he had deposited money in Asakusa to collect fifty *ryô*. The man put it carefully in a wallet and hung it around his neck.

On his way home, when he had gone as far as the entrance to Gyokuryû-ji on the present street car line in Aoyama, he fell down in the road because it was so bad.

He hurried on back to his master's house and hung his wallet above the door while he went to wash the mud off his hands. Forgetting the money completely, he washed and then went in to his master. Just as he opened his mouth to report, he discovered that he did not have his wallet.

In great excitement, he jumped up and ran out without saying a word and hurried to the gate of Gyokuryû-ji. It looked as though nobody had passed there in the meantime, and coins were scattered all around. Gathering them up, he found that there were only thirty-eight *ryô*. It troubled him that twelve *ryô* were missing, but he thought that he could at least explain what had happened and do something about it later.

When the man reached home, he noticed his own wallet hanging from the hook by the door. Then he realized that what he had picked up was not his. He sent out word all over and waited, but the owner didn't claim it, so the money became his finally. The man invested this and little by little he succeeded in life because he always had been honest, it is said.

It is also quite likely that when he fell in front of the temple in the first place, he slipped on the money in his hurry.

## 82. The mountain bandit's younger brother (*Sanzoku no otôto* 山賊の弟)

Long ago in a farm house in Echigo province there were two little boys. From the time the older brother was little, his nature was not right. At last his parents disowned him and he ran away somewhere.

Presently the father died and the younger brother tried to care for his mother, but the household could not get along. They had to sell the little bit of rice fields that they had. Leaving his mother in the care of relatives, the sixteen or seventeen year old boy left for Edo. He went into the service of a physician and lived at his house.

The boy was steady and didn't spend a single *mon* wastefully. After ten years, by adding all that he had received in various ways, he managed to save fourteen or fifteen *ryô*. Then he went before his master and told all his story.

"Please let me return to my mother while she is still in good health," the young man said. "I want to go back to the place where I was born and buy back the land with the money I have saved and have my home."

The master sympathized with him and gave him money for the trip as a farewell gift.

Then the young man set out from Edo for his native place in far away Echigo. On the road through the mountains of Jôshû the young man fell among mountain bandits. Of course they took the money in his wallet, but

they even stripped him of his clothes, leaving him stark naked. He felt sorry for himself to have lost in a single day every bit of the money which it had taken him ten year's of toil and sweat to earn. At any rate, there was no point in his going home like this.

The young man said to the bandits, "I have no place to go now. Maybe you would let me join your band and work for you. Perhaps I could stay at your place."

Even the bandits felt sorry for him. They gave him a single shirt to wear, and after tying up the things they had just taken from him, they put the bundle on his back and took him to their hide-out.

After the young man had been hiding there for three or four days as a guest of the bandits, he thought everything over. It seemed to him that he could never make a business of thieving. He was still young and it would be better for him to go back to Edo and work once more. When he explained this to the bandits, they agreed with him.

"Just this one shirt is all I need for clothes," he said, "but let me have back my short sword just to scare off dogs on the way. That is something I bought for the purpose from my allowance at Yanagibara."

"That is reasonable enough," answered the bandits, "but to return anything once seized is against the code of bandits. If you are willing to take a sword, we have many of them." Bringing out a bundle of swords tied with a rope and showing them to him, they said, "We will give you one, so pick out any one you like and take it with you."

"I'll take one, then, if I may," he said, and after selecting a rather rusty one, he set out from the bandit's place.

At Edo he had no place to go except to his former master's house. He went back there and told all his troubles from beginning to end and once more hired himself to him.

The master happened to have always liked swords and liked to judge their value. When he heard that the young man had received a sword from the mountain bandits, he was interested in seeing it at once. The young man brought out the sword and showed it to him. The master said it looked like a rare sword. He took it to a specialist in that line and the man said that it was a genuine masterpiece of a well known maker. There was a man who immediately bought it for thirty *ryō*.

"This certainly is an unexpected piece of good luck. Now that I have this money, of course I want to return home even one day sooner," the young man said to his master and asked permission once more. Then he set out for the skies of his homeland again.

Since he had been treated so badly on the mountain road through Jô-shû, he wondered if he should give it up and take another road around, but he ended by taking the same road. In addition, he went out of his way to

call at the bandit's hide-out.

"Has the chief been getting along without any trouble lately?" he inquired. "I am the man who enjoyed your hospitality recently. I sold that sword you gave me for thirty *ryô* in Edo. Since you took only fifteen *ryô* from me, it isn't right for me to keep all this money. I came by to give you back half of it."

The bandits were dumbfounded and stared at each other blankly.

In the meantime, the chief looked closely at the young man's face. "You say that you are an Echigo man, but from exactly what village in Echigo did you come?" he demanded.

The young man told him in detail his village, his parent's name, and such things.

The bandit sighed deeply. "It might have been just a hunch, but I have been wondering if that wasn't it," he said. "Nobody can get away with doing wrong. I am your elder brother who was disinherited more than ten years ago. You were little and perhaps do not remember my face, but I finally came to this sort of life. Is it possible that brothers sharing the same blood can be such different men?"

The two men recalled their dead father and wept together.

Then the elder brother called his companions together and said, "We have got along together for a long time, but I must stop this and go home. I'll take just a little money for the trip and the rest I leave for you to do as you wish."

The two brothers set out for the village where they had been born. There they bought back the rice fields and garden. Because the elder brother had been disinherited once, he wanted the family to be set up in his younger brother's name. The younger brother would not agree to that. While they were settling these matters to each other's benefit, the older brother suddenly cut his hair and became a priest, going off somewhere.

Beginning with Denkichi of Echigo, there were probably many such upright young people in the villages of Echigo, actually, but this story has been handed down even at Edo. That is why it is a little strange.

### 83. The woman in travail and the strong man (*Rikishi to ubume* (力士と産女))

Long ago there was a man at Yokote of Ugo called Senoo Gorobê. When he was passing Janosaki bridge at about dawn one night, a young woman was standing at the approach to the bridge.

"Please hold this baby for a while," she asked, and after leaving a baby with Gorobê, she went away somewhere.

While he was holding the baby, it began to grow heavier and heavier. It straightened out its back and made terrible eyes at him. Gorobê was

a brave man and clutched it grimly. In the meantime the woman came back and thanked him warmly. She pulled out a wallet and offered it to him, but he refused it saying that he did not want anything like that.

"Then I will give you strength," said the woman and handed him a towel as she left.

When Gorobê washed his face with the towel on the next day, he tore it in half as he wrung it. When he wrung it again, it tore into four pieces. He knew then for the first time what great strength had been bestowed upon him the night before in the mountains.

There are many stories left about this man. One time Gorobê fought with workmen who were dragging a big tree over Janosaki bridge. He lifted up the tree and then threw it into the river. It took fifty men three days to pull the tree out.

Another story, also, which seems for the most part like the same one, has been handed down and told in this way. There was a *samurai* of Yokote called Umezu Chûbê. He was going up the hill to the castle to relieve the watch at midnight when he met a woman at the place called Nanamagari.

"I have a big piece of work tonight and I want you to be sure to help me. I came here and waited for you on purpose," she said. "Please hold this baby for a while."

She handed Chûbê a baby whose first hair was not yet shaved and then disappeared so fast that it seemed as though she had flown away.

Chûbê could not report for duty holding the baby in his arms. While he was waiting, it gradually began to grow heavier and heavier. At first it started to weigh about fifty pounds, then one hundred, two hundred, and at last two hundred and fifty pounds—something too heavy to compare to stone or metal. The strain became so great that Chûbê unconsciously cried out, and recited a Buddhist prayer. Instantly even the form of the baby disappeared, and he found himself standing there stunned.

The former woman then reappeared, perspiring and with her sleeves tied back. Her face was flushed as though she had been working hard.

"With the help of that *Nembutsu* of yours, the mother and child were saved just now," she declared. "I am the tutelary god of this mountain. A baby has just been born at the home of one of my charges, but with my power alone, it could not have been done. I looked for a *samurai* who would say a prayer to help me. The soul of the child became too heavy before it was born, but just at that time, the power of the prayer saved it, and it could be born safely. Nothing could have made me happier. In thanks, I will bestow great strength upon you which will continue to the last of your descendents." With these words, she disappeared.

When Chûbê went home and wrung his towel out to wash himself the

next morning, it tore in half. When he folded it again, it tore into four pieces. From that he realized what strength had been granted him on the night before.

He called at the home to verify the story and learned that there had actually been a birth that night. The great weight of the baby he held and the great pains of travail had occurred at the same hour.

#### 84. Strong women (*Onna no tairiki* 女の大力)

Long ago there was a man named Kebara-no-Myôga in Kishû. When he was passing above Kannon pool one day, a graceful noblewoman appeared.

She said, "I beg you to take out the thing that is shining in the bottom of the water. I am a princess from the Dragon Palace, but I cannot return to the palace because that is shining there."

Myôga good naturedly obeyed and jumped into the water. When he brought out the thing that shone and looked at it, he found that it was a little image of Kannon, about two inches high. Although some say that this is probably why the pool came to be called Kannon pool, others say that what he brought out was the tip of a Chinese plow.

The princess was very happy and said, "At last I can return to the Dragon Palace. What would you like as a gift of thanks from me? Please tell me without hesitation."

"Then please give me the strength of a thousand men," answered Myôga.

He then and there received the power of one thousand men and started down the mountain. The trouble was that his steps were as powerful as those of a thousand men, and the mountain path gave way under him, making it very difficult to walk.

Myôga then returned and asked to change his request to strength enough to match whatever he met. If something came weighing a hundred *kamme*, he would have strength for one hundred *kamme*. This was much better than having the strength of a thousand men all of the time. This strength was to continue in his line and be handed down for many generations. But there was one condition—he was never to hand anything to a woman. If he should, the strength would go to the woman. The princess cautioned him about this very positively.

It happened one day that Myôga received bean paste at Kôyasan. When he got back home, he absent-mindedly handed it to his wife. From that moment he could not hand his strength down to his sons, and it became quite useless. On the contrary, his daughters who were born from that time all became very powerful women. At a house where Myôga's daughter went as a bride, if a sudden evening shower came on while someone was



bathing outside, they had the girl carry him in, tub and all.

Even now there are many stories about the strength of Kebara-no-Myôga. When they were putting a new roof on Kôsan-ji at Kôyasan, they had difficulty in raising the ridge pole. Many hundreds of men were milling around the beam.

Myôga happened to be passing by and he stopped, looking on vacantly as he shouldered a load from the ends of a pole.

"Those guys will never make it!" he said to himself.

"If that's what you say, lift it yourself," they all said.

"All right, here goes," he replied and lifting the ridge pole onto his shoulder by himself, he took off and climbed to the top of the roof and set it down.

Everybody was astonished at such strength, but they thought they wanted to try him again.

"Hey, Myôga, you put that wrong side out," somebody called from below.

"Oh, did I?" he said, and putting his shoulder to it, he gave it a turn over.

They shouted from below again, "The truth is, we told you a lie just now. Please, put it back the way it was."

This time Myôga became angry and would not do as they wanted.

That is why the ridge pole at Kôsan-ji at Kôyasan in Kishû even now is wrong side out.

—Kii, Naka-gun

There are those who say that Myôga's power to match the strength he needed is not because he brought out the shining thing from the bottom of the river. They think it was because he went on an errand with a letter from the Goddess of Uzuwa-buchi in Kebara to Manaita-buchi. In any case, his strength was something bestowed upon him by a goddess.

#### 85. Ôiko's rice-balls (*Ôiko no nigiri meshi* 大い子の握り飯)

Long ago in the little village of Ishibashi in Ômi there was a very strong woman called Ôiko.

One year when there was a drouth, the people were so mean that they turned the water away, keeping it from flowing into Ôiko's rice paddy. She said nothing, but in the night she secretly brought a rock over seven feet square and put it in the middle of the ditch to stop the water from running.

When the villagers woke up the next morning, they were astonished to see it. They hurriedly tried to take it out, but with only a few people, they could not budge it. If they were to call many men to help, the rice paddies around would be trampled and churned up. At a loss to know anything else to do, they went to Ôiko's house to apologize.

"Please, take away that stone," they begged her. "We will let you have all the water you want in your field after this, and we will never do anything mean to you again."

"In that case—," she said, and in the night she went secretly and carried the stone to where it would no longer be in the way and left it there.

The stone has remained there for a long time and is called the stone from Ôiko's inlet.

There is also another story of somebody who made the mistake of trying to tease Ôiko. A wrestler named Saeki-no-Ujiosa once was on his way from Echizen to Kyôto. He was passing through the village of Ishibashi and caught sight of a beautiful young girl who was going home from the river, carrying a bucket of water on her head.

He never dreamed that she was Ôiko, the strong woman. Coming up from behind her, he tickled her under one of her arms with which she was holding the bucket. The girl laughed a little at this and taking one hand down from the bucket, she caught Saeki's hand and held it fast under her arm. Although he tried to get it away, he couldn't, and in the end he was pulled along to Ôiko's house.

Only when they had reached the house, did Ôiko let go of his hand and she asked, "Just what kind of a worker are you?"

"To tell the truth," he admitted, "I am a wrestler from Echizen. I have been summoned to a wrestling match by the Imperial Court and I am on way up to the capital city."

"The world is big," said Oikô, "and you don't know what strong men will go up from other provinces. Wouldn't it be better to stop at my house for a while and go after you have practiced some?"

Fortunately there was plenty of time before the day of the matches, so he decided to stay and practice for three weeks. Every day Ôiko cooked hard rice and with her own hands she packed it into tight rice-balls which she fed to the wrestler from Echizen. For the first week he couldn't bite into the rice-balls, no matter how hard he tried. After another seven days he was only barely able to bite them open. But after the third week, he could chew them up easily and eat them for the first time.

"If you can eat up rice-balls which I make as easily as that, you are pretty safe now," announced Oikô. "Hurry and get ready and set out."

In great delight, Saeki-no-Ujiosa set out then for the wrestling season at Kyôto.

#### 86. Kidaiyu of Hida (*Hida no Kidaiyû* 日田の鬼太夫)

Long, long ago there was a wrestler at Hida in Bungo named Ôkura-no-Nagasue, but commonly called Kidaiyû.

His fame as a wrestler gradually rose and at last he was ordered to ap-

pear at the wrestling matches in Kyôto to meet the foremost wrestler called Kokanja of Izumo. He wanted to be successful, so he stopped at the Myôjin at Oimatsu in Chikuzen on his way to Kyôto. He prayed there earnestly for victory in his fight.

That night Myôjin Sama stood by his pillow in his dream and told him a secret. "While the mother of Kokanja of Izumo was bearing him she ate iron sand\* every day because she wanted to give birth to the strongest wrestler in Japan. That is why the whole frame of Kokanja's body is as strong as iron. However, just once the mother happened to eat a muskmelon. For this reason, there is one soft place on his body. It is this place on his brow," said Myôjin and pointed to it.

With this assistance, Kidaiyû broke through the soft place on Kokanja's brow and won the decision at the official Imperial Court match.

Kidaiyû's descendents have worshipped Oimatsu Myôjin for a long time because of this.

### 87. Inazuma Daizô 稲妻大藏

Long ago, the wrestler of Isahaya in Hizen was a child born in answer to his mother's prayer to the Mountain God of Hattendake. Since he was a gift of Tengu Sama, no matter what opponent he met, he never lost. Finally he became the best wrestler in Japan.

Because his sympathy was aroused when one opponent begged so earnestly for victory before the official wrestling matches one year, he passed up winning just one time. Immediately, the strength of the Tengu left the body of Inazuma and he suddenly became a weak wrestler, the story is.

—Hizen, Kitatakaki-gun

### 88. Fujinuki Kinai 藤抜き喜内

Long ago there was a strong man named Kinai in Kaga in the village of Seryô in Ôsugitani. His fame was echoed in far countries.

A certain famous man came to match strength with him. Kinai happened to have gone into the field by the side of the road about that time to prepare to transplant rice.

The *samurai* came along and stopped to ask, "Where is Kinai's house?"

Kinai realized immediately that the man was somebody who was coming to match strength, so with one hand he lifted the shaft of his Chinese plow which he was using, the horse still fastened to the end, and pointed with them. He said, "It's that estate."

Astonished at such strength, the *samurai* said, "You must be Kinai, then."

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\* Magnetite placer.

"No," answered Kinai, "I am one of the servants of the house of Kinai."

The *samurai* said, "Just a helper like this points the way with a Chinese plow with a horse fastened to it. I cannot imagine how strong the master would be."

Quite discouraged, the man lost all desire to match strength with Kinai and fled for home.

—Kaga, Nomi-gun

**89. The wrestler from Awa and the wrestler of Kumano** (*Awa no dairiki Kumano no dairiki* 阿波の大力熊野の大力)

Long, long ago there was a famous wrestler in Awa province. He heard about Osodagawa, the wrestler of Kumano in Kishû, and he wanted to defeat him in order to become the best wrestler of Japan.

He crossed the sea and went over mountain roads for a great distance, finally arriving at the house of Osodagawa at Tagawago in Kumano. There he asked for him.

The old mother, who was watching the house all alone, said, "My son went to gather kindling wood in the mountains. He will be back soon, so come in and warm yourself."

She picked up a five-foot fire box with one hand and set it down at the entrance. The wrestler from Awa stealthily tried to move the fire box, but it seemed as if with even two hands he could not lift it. He was wondering what the son would be like with such a mother, when it suddenly grew dark. He looked at the sky to see if it had become cloudy, but it was only the wrestler of Kumano coming back down the mountain with a load of grass on his back as big as a hill.

He realized that he could never match him, but he had come so far and had made himself known, so he could not just go away. The two men then went down to the beach by Yanagigata at Egawa to wrestle.

The wrestler from Awa fastened on a regular cotton loin cloth, but the wrestler of Kumano picked up a bamboo pole and crushed it and put it on as a loin cloth. Then he promptly clutched the Awa wrestler and lifted him high over his head.

"Heaven, or earth!" he asked.

The helpless Awa wrestler said, "Earth!"

Immediately he found himself buried deep in the sand.

As long as Osodagawa was alive, the Awa man could not hope to be the first wrestler of Japan. He gave up and left secretly in the night.

However, there are no descendants of such strength in Kumano now. The name Osodagawa is also a bit odd.

—Kii, Nishimuro-gun

**90. Niô and Gaô, the two Deva Gods** (*Niô to Gaô* 仁王とが王)

Long, long ago Gaô came from China to match strength with Niô of Japan. For the feast, Niô said that he wanted dumplings made. His wife tore an iron pole into bits and put bean meal on it for tea cakes and served them. This was to test Gaô Sama, but he went through with it doggedly, eating every one, and saying that they were good.

Accordingly, Niô declared that they should be brothers and guard the gate of Kannon Sama together after that. And that is why, even now, one of the Deva gods stands holding an iron rod. The other one, who has his mouth open, is said to be Gaô from China.

**91. Tankurô and Takurô** (*Tankurô to Takurô* 巨九郎と田九郎)

Long, long ago there were two brothers called Tankurô and Takurô. The elder brother Tankurô was wealthy and dull witted. His younger brother Takurô was crafty, yet he was always poor.

One day at the house of Takurô, the tea kettle was heated and boiled over so much that it was set off onto the wooden floor for a while. Just then Tankurô, his elder brother, came to visit.

"Why this kettle is an unusual kettle!" he exclaimed. "It boils when it is set on a board!"

"That is a fireless kettle which has recently come into my possession," answered Takurô.

"If that is the case, let me have it for ten *ryô*," Tankurô asked and he carried it home in a great hurry.

After he had washed it well, he filled it with water and set it on the wooden floor. No matter how long he waited, the water did not heat. He became angry and went to his younger brother's house to protest about it.

"That should not have happened," said Takurô, "unless Elder Brother happened to wash the tea kettle. What, did you go and wash it? You shouldn't have done that. If only you had not washed the kettle, the water would have heated. What a pity you did that."

Another time Takurô threw two gold pieces into the stable and left them. The elder brother came along and saw them.

"Well," said he, "this horse is dropping gold pieces!"

"That is my prize horse that drops gold," said Takurô.

"Then I will give you fifty pieces of money if you will only sell him to me," offered the elder brother.

He paid the big price and rushed home with the horse. Then he built a nice new stable and left the horse tied in it so it could not go out, but no matter how long he waited, the horse did not drop anything like gold pieces. The elder brother became angry at being fooled again. He hurried to his

younger brother to take him to task.

Takurô explained, "Hasn't Elder Brother repaired the stable at his house and put the horse on a board floor? Oh, that's it, isn't it? It is too bad you did that. If the horse that drops gold is left tied up on a wooden floor, he immediately becomes an ordinary horse."

**92. Clever Yasohachi** (*Fumbetsu Yasohachi* 分別八十八)

Long, long ago there were six men with the name Yasohachi living in a village in Ōshû. Without nicknames, nobody could tell which one was which. One was gruff and quarrelsome, so he was called Gedô or Gruff Yasohachi. The one who liked to gamble was called Bakuchi or Gaming Yasohachi. The man who planted rice fields was called Hyakushô or Farmer Yasohachi. Another sold rice and was called Komeya or Rice Dealer Yasohachi. Another, a thief, was called Nusuto or Robber Yasohachi. The last Yasohachi was clever so he was called Fumbetsu or Clever Yasohachi.

One day Gruff Yasohachi had a fight with Gaming Yasohachi and, giving him a heavy blow, he killed the man. Gruff Yasohachi had not intended to kill anyone and this frightened him. Worried about it, he went to Clever Yasohachi to talk over what he should do.

Clever Yasohachi advised, "Try taking the corpse to the water inlet of Farmer Yasohachi's rice field. Set it carefully in a squatting position on the little path between the paddies where the inlet is cut and leave it there."

Now Farmer Yasohachi came around that night checking on the water in his rice fields and found a stranger sitting by the water inlet to his paddies.

"You sneak! You think you can come around stealing water again, don't you?" he shouted and gave him a thump with a stick from behind.

The body toppled over, and when Farmer Yasohachi looked closely, he recognized Gaming Yasohachi.

"Now what have I done? What am I going to do?" the frightened farmer thought. Taking a gift with him, he went to Clever Yasohachi for advice, also, just as Gruff Yasohachi had done.

Clever Yasohachi said, "I advise you to tie the body up in an empty straw rice bag and carry it to Rice Dealer Yasohachi's store. Put it up on the very top of the stack of rice bags in front and leave it there and see."

Then the next night Robber Yasohachi came by Rice Dealer Yasohachi's rice store. Thinking the sack was a sack of rice, he stole it. When he got the bag home and opened it, there was Gaming Yasohachi's dead body and he was aghast. He wondered what to do, and he finally went to Clever Yasohachi, too, with a gift to ask him to lend his wits.

Clever Yasohachi said, "Well, after it gets late tonight, go to the Gaming Yasohachi's house with it and knock on the door from the outside and say,

‘I’m home now.’ His wife will be sure to get angry and say something cross and refuse to open the door. Then take dead Gaming Yasohachi to the well by the gate and throw him in.”

Robber Yasohachi did as he was told. He tapped on the door of Gaming Yasohachi’s house after midnight and disguised his voice. “I’m home now, old girl. Open the door,” he demanded.

From the inside the old wife let out an angry shriek, “What do you mean by getting back so late? A good for nothing like you would be better off dead!”

Then Robber Yasohachi took the corpse and dropped it into the well with a splash and stole quietly away.

The wife raised a great clamor when she heard that sound. She called the men from the village to help pull Gaming Yasohachi out. When she saw him, she wept and cried bitterly.

Only Clever Yasohachi made something out of the affair, receiving gifts from all of them.

—Rikuchû, Kamihei-gun

93. **Two bolts of white cloth** (*Nitan no shiro* 二反の白)

Long, long ago a bride and her mother-in-law got into an argument when they took the May doll out of its box to get ready for the May Festival.

“This doll is called Tawara Tôda,” one said.

“No, it’s Hachiman Tarô,” the other said.

Neither would give in to the other. Then they agreed to take it to the priest on the next day and to let him decide which was right.

That night, the mother-in-law quietly took a bolt of white cloth to the temple and asked the priest to let her win. A little after she returned, the bride took a bolt of white cloth, also, and asked the same thing of the priest.

On the next day the two went together and said, “One of us is wrong. Dear Osho San would surely know which one is, wouldn’t he?”

The priest laughed and answered, “This is neither Tawara Tôda nor Hachiman Tarô. From here a bolt of white and from there a bolt of white for nothing, in other words, it is named *Nitan-no-shirô*.”\*

94. **A silence race** (*Mugon kurabe* 無言くらべ)

Long, long ago a man and his wife, who lived in a certain place, liked *mochi* more than anybody else. They made *mochi* once and ate so much that only a little was left.

“Tonight let’s see who can keep still the longest. The one who wins can have what is left of the *mochi*,” they agreed.

\* A play on words: *Ni-tan-no-shiro* 二反の白, two bolts of white, and *Ni-ta-no-shi-rô* 二田の四郎 a popular hero of legends.

Unfortunately, in the night a robber came in and went walking all around in the house looking for things. Both of the couple were quite aware of it, but whoever said anything would lose the *mochi*, so they kept a hold of themselves. The thief took advantage of this and looked all over scattering things around. Finally he opened the cupboard and started to take out the *mochi* box.

The wife could not stand it any longer when she saw this and cried, "Oh, that thief is carrying off the *mochi*!"

The master, who had held in until then, roared, "That *mochi* is mine now."

How about it, everyone? Do you think the robber agreed?

**95. A leak-in-an-old-house** (*Furuya no mori* 古屋の漏り)

Long ago an old man and an old woman could not sleep on a rainy night and they talked together.

One said, "A leak in an old house is something to fear even more than a tiger-wolf."

Now a tiger-wolf happened to be standing outside the door and overheard this. "Then there must be something called a leak, which is more dangerous than I," he thought. "I must be on the lookout."

Just then a horse thief was about to break into the house. Thinking the tiger-wolf was a horse, he climbed onto his back.

"This is awful. Now I am caught by that terrible leak-in-an-old-house," thought the wolf.

Quick as a flash, he jumped up and ran away. He shook off the horse thief, and the man fell into a dry well by the side of the road.

A monkey came along there and asked the tiger-wolf, "What are you up to?"

"There is a monster called a leak-in-an-old-house hiding in this hole," answered the tiger-wolf.

"There isn't any such monster, is there?" said the monkey. "I'll find out for you."

The monkey, who is apt to be officious anyway, let his tail down into the dry well and felt around. The horse thief at the bottom of the well grabbed hold of the tail with a firm grip. When the startled monkey tried to pull his tail up, he pulled so hard that it snapped off at its base.

There is a legend that the monkey's tail began being short from that time, too.

—Higo, Aso-gun

**96. Seizô's rabbit** (*Seizô no usagi* 清藏の兎)

Long, long ago Seizô went to the mountains to play with his friends. There in the grass a rabbit lay fast asleep.



“Oh, here’s a dead rabbit in a place like this,” exclaimed one of his companions.

Seizô immediately held his nose and said, “No wonder. I thought there was a terrible smell.”

Just then the rabbit, hearing voices of people, woke up and ran off frightened.

“Oh, it was just taking a nap,” exclaimed another of the friends in surprise.

Seizô quickly interposed, “That’s why—I thought his ears seemed to be moving.”

Since then, when anybody says things which are too much hit and miss, there is a saying that it is just like Seizô’s rabbit. There are many folk tales about all kinds of funny people, but only three or four from them can be related this time.

**97. The pigeons might overhear** (*Hato no tachi-giki* 鳩の立一聴き)

Long ago an old man in a mountain village was working at a garden patch on the far side of the river.

An old man called from this side, “Hey, what are you planting today?”

The old man didn’t answer, but only beckoned for him to come over.

The second man crossed the stream and went up to him, asking, “What’s the matter?”

The old man put his mouth to his ear and said, “I’m going to plant red beans.”

“What’s so secret about red beans?” he was asked.

“Well, it wouldn’t do if the pigeons overheard,” he answered.

—Kôzuke, Azuma-gun

**98. The insect that taps aloud with a stick** (*Tsue-tsuki mushi* 杖つき蟲)

Long ago a blind minstrel, carrying his lute on his back, was passing through a mountain village.

An old man called from the garden path on one side of the river to an old man on the other side, “Hey, look over there. A big insect tapping along with a stick has come out. Six years ago when a bug like that came out, we had a big harvest of beans. We should have a big yield again this year, too.”\*

**99. The quilt on the nape of his neck** (*Kubisuji ni futon* 首筋に蒲團)

Long ago a poor man who slept in straw instead of under a quilt said to his children, “You mustn’t tell about sleeping in straw because I am ashamed of it. You must say quilt before people.”

\* The large body of the lute on his back must have looked like the folded anterior wings of an insect.

He trained his children carefully.

When he and his child went calling once, the child said, "Father, there is a blade of quilt stuck to the back of your neck."

**100. Pretending to know** (*Shittaka-buri* 知つたかぶり)

Long ago, when a certain man was invited to eat out and had noodles for the first time, he asked the serving child in a low voice, "What name?"

Thinking the man was asking his name, the server said, "It is Yajiro."

The man remembered that. The next time when he went to town with some of the villagers from his place, he saw a lot of noodles hanging out to dry.

"Look! Look! See how much *yajiro* is out drying. I wish I could order some of that *yajiro* cooked and give you all a treat," he said.

**101. Chilled pride** (*Yase-gaman* やせ我慢)

Long, long ago a proud *samurai* spent the night at a farm house in the country.

The farmer said, "It is very cold tonight. Please, cover yourself with this straw matting."

"I have gone to battle time after time, and when I slept in the open, I never needed anything over me," boasted the *samurai*, and he lay down to sleep on the bare floor.

In the night it became very cold and he was uncomfortable.

He wakened the farmer and asked, "Say, Farmer, do you make the rats in this house wash their feet?"

"No, we don't do anything like that," was the answer.

"Don't you? Then they will soil my clothes when they run over them. Bring me a straw mat and I will put it on to protect them," he said.

**102. The hoarder** (*Yoku-fuka* 慾ふか)

Long, long ago in a certain place there was a very grasping old woman. Whatever she saw anybody have, she wanted.

She would say, "If you don't want this, would you let me have it?" Then she would carry it off.

One time a neighbor's cat caught a rat and ate it all except the tail. The people were about to throw the tail away and jokingly said, "Surely even that old woman won't ask for this."

Gossip about somebody and she appears, so the old woman came to call just then.

When she saw the rat's tail, she said, "If you don't need this, would you let me have it?"

Everyone was puzzled at that, and one asked, "What are you going to do with it?"

"I want to make a sheath for my drill," she answered.

**103. Stinginess** (*Mono oshimi 物をしみ*)

Long, long ago two stingy old men lived as neighbors. One of them sent a messenger to his neighbor.

He said, "I want to borrow a hammer. Tell him that I beg him to lend me a hammer for just a little while."

The neighbor asked the messenger, "Now is that nail an iron nail or a wooden nail?"

The messenger answered, "He is going to pound an iron nail."

The neighbor cocked his head on one side and said, "It is such a trifling request, but I happen to have loaned my hammer elsewhere, and I do not have it now." Saying that, he sent the messenger home.

When the master heard what the reply was, he said in disgust, "What stingy people there are in this world! He wanted to know whether it was a wooden nail or an iron nail, did he? He lied and refused because he was afraid I would damage his hammer. He just made up an excuse. Can you beat that? Well, I'll have to get my own hammer out and use it, I guess," he concluded.

**104. Temptation to steal** (*Nusumi gokoro 盗み心*)

Long, long ago a man went to call on somebody on a day when snow had fallen. The outside was so bright that when he went into the house it seemed pitch dark.

"Oh, how dark, how dark" he exclaimed as he went in.

At the entrance he stepped on something cold. When he picked it up, he discovered that it was a little hatchet. He thought that a little hatchet like this was just what he had been wanting, and he was tempted. He tucked it carefully into his bosom, supposing that nobody could see.

After a while he realized that the inside of the house was dimly light and that the people there had been able to see what he had done. He began to worry and squirmed around, wondering what to do. He kept on talking and waiting for a chance, and then somebody else came visiting.

The new visitor, also, shouted, "Oh, how dark, how dark!"

At that, the man who had stolen the hatchet said, "Here, I have a good cure for that. I'll show it to you. If you put a little hatchet like this in your clothes for a little while, it will be light for you soon. I just came in and tried it out, so I am sure it works."

He took the hatchet from his clothes and handed it to the caller.

**105. The son-in-law's chat\*** (*Muko no seken banashi 婿の世間話*)

Long ago when a son-in-law first went to his father-in-law's home, he

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\* The stupid son-in-law is a favorite subject for jokes. The humor of this tale lies in its lack of a point.

was told by some of his friends that he should prepare some good small talk to tell at the right time. If he just ate and said nothing, folks would laugh at him, they told him.

When the day came and the first greetings were over, the trays of food were brought out and drinking started.

The son-in-law awkwardly stood his chop-sticks up on his lap and began his little chat, "Now how about it, father-in-law, have you ever seen a snipe as big around as a man can stretch his arms?"

"Why, I have never seen anything like that," he answered.

"Is that so?" remarked the son-in-law. "I never have seen one either. That is all."

**106. The roof of the underground country** (*Shita no kuni no yane* 下の國の屋根)

Among many stories about big liars there are many unusual ones.

Long ago when they dug a well in a certain village, no matter how much they dug and dug, they still could not reach water. Day after day they kept digging until at last they came to some smoked straw.

They were about to take that out and start digging further when a voice thundered out, "What are you fellows from the upper world up to? That's the straw from my roof. What do you mean by peeling that off?"

**107. The gambler's trip to the sky** (*Bakuchi no Ten-nobori* 博奕の天登り)

Long, long ago a gambler, who was going home after losing heavily, sat himself down under a big tree and began rolling dice by himself. He seemed to be having a good time, shouting, "Won! Lost!"

A long nosed demon was looking on and wanted the dice very much, so the man traded them for the demon's feather fan.

The demon said, "If you fan a nose with this fan, it will become longer, a little longer with light fanning, and much longer with strong fanning. Turn the fan around and fan, and the nose will become shorter.

The man took the fan and stood by the gate of a rich man's house. The only daughter was just leaving to visit a shrine. The man looked at her nose and began fanning with all his might. Her nose grew seven feet long and she couldn't leave. All she could do was to lay her nose on its side in the big parlor and cry every day.

The rich man put up a big sign that said he would let anyone who could bring his daughter's nose back to its former size become his son-in-law. The gambler tucked the fan into his bosom and presented himself to become the son-in-law. Little by little he made the daughter's nose shorter and everybody in the house was delighted. Quite elated, the man lay down to cool himself and went off to sleep, continuing to fan in his sleep. His own nose faced the back of the fan, and it began to grow longer and longer. It finally

grew so long that it reached heaven without his knowing it.

Now it happened at that time that they were repairing the Milky Way in heaven and they needed one more pillar for the construction. While they were looking around for one, a pole rose up suddenly from below. Thinking that this was very fortunate, they brought a rope and tied it securely and tilted the tip a little.

The pain woke up the rich man's son-in-law, and he discovered what had happened. In great excitement he turned his fan around and fanned his nose furiously, but it was too late. Instead of the nose's shrinking down to the man, his body was drawn up. He floated clear to heaven toward the end of his nose because it was fastened down as the bridge support.

Therefore, there should be a dice shooter from the earth even now in the bottom of the Milky Way, but one cannot see him with an ordinary telescope.

**108. A trip through the sky (*Sora no tabi* 空の旅)**

Long, long ago there was a man who had good luck in anything he did. He shot geese with a gun bent like the character *be* (へ). With a single shot he brought down tens of geese, one after another, flying in a line.

He tied them all up and hung them from his waist and started walking along the road. The geese came back to life and flew off somewhere in the sky. They set the man down on the top of a five storied pagoda at some temple in Yamato.

The man wondered how he could ever get down from there and called loudly for help. Many people gathered from the temple and village. They took the biggest *furoshiki* there was at the temple and held it out firmly by the four corners beside the pagoda. Then cotton was heaped up like a mountain on that. The man was then told to jump carefully onto it.

With a one, two, three, he jumped. Under the force of his landing, the *furoshiki* instantly closed up and the four priests who had been holding the corners bumped their heads together so hard that fire flashed from their eyes. The fire caught in the cotton, and then the *furoshiki* and the pagoda and the man who had been dropped by the geese onto it, all burned up.

Only the tale is left from long, long ago.