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Printed by
Kyobunkwan, Tokyo, Japan
for the

American Mission to Lepers

156 Fifth Avenue
New York



**To the heart aglow for Thee
The Valley of the Shadow
Is like sunrise on the sea!**

Utsunomiya, of Oshima

Hearts Aglow
Stories of Lepers
by the Inland Sea



HONAMI NAGATA
and
LOIS JOHNSON ERICKSON
Translator of
Kagawa's Songs from the Slums



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at Dshima

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. A WORD OF EXPLANATION	1
II. "THE NEW MAN STANDS FORTH SHINING"	5
III. TWO VERSES BY KEIZO KANDA . . .	29
IV. TWINS	33
V. LITTLE POEMS FROM OSHIMA	45
VI. "THAT THE WORKS OF GOD BE MANIFEST"	67
VII. POEMS BY HONAMI NAGATA.	81
VIII. ST. SHIGEMA OF THE GAMBLING DEN.	87
IX. ONE LITTLE PILGRIM OF SHIKOKU . .	103
X. LOVE'S GIFT	125 ¹

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
THE INLAND SEA NEAR OSHIMA <i>Frontispiece</i>	
OLD KANDA AND THE LITTLE ONE . . .	19
SNOW	28
"ALL SMILING IN HIS SLEEP"	44
"CHILDISH FACES BEND IN ECSTASY" .	50—51
"FAINT VOICES MURMURING"	62—63
HONAMI NAGATA	72—73
"FAR-OFF WILD GEESE HONKING" . . .	79
SHIGEMA GOES TO OSHIMA	102
ONE LITTLE PILGRIM OF SHIKOKU. . . .	120—21

I

A WORD OF EXPLANATION

I.

A WORD OF EXPLANATION

Within sight of my home beside the Inland Sea is the little island of Oshima. Eight of the provinces of Japan have joined in establishing a hospital for lepers there. Only the destitute are taken. Each patient has his tale of suffering. Many have been driven away from their homes.

Many have made the Pilgrimage of Shikoku, the last refuge of the hopeless. And many have found, when at last they have been taken to the beautiful island, not only comfort and security and a measure of healing, but the knowledge of a Father Who loves them. This has transformed their lives.

These stories are part of a book called *Mi Sora no Hana* (*Flowers of Heaven*), written by Honami Nagata, one of the first to learn the Way of Life. They tell of the personal experiences of himself and three or four friends. This book has run to seven editions in Japanese, and Nagata has written others which have had a wide circulation. He is a leader in the Poetry Club at Oshima, and a constant contributor to the monthly magazine published by the Christians there.

In retelling these stories, I have allowed myself all freedom. In some I have given explanations and de-

scriptions to make a vivid setting for the picture. In others, Nagata's style and mine are intermingled. But the story of Nagata's life is told as nearly in his own words as possible.

To these life histories I have added many verses taken from the little Christian magazine. I have not tried to preserve the form in which they were written, but rather to take the beautiful thought in the mind of the author and put it into the reader's heart.

The Mission to Lepers has had its faithful share in bringing to these sick ones at Oshima the joy to which they bear such witness. Others are joining in the work which they began, and gradually the hope is growing stronger that one day the world will be rid of leprosy.

L. J. E.



II

**“THE NEW MAN STANDS
FORTH SHINING”**

II

“THE NEW MAN STANDS FORTH SHINING”

Hiroshima is famous for wigs and oysters. In little mud walled, straw thatched villages the able-bodied till the paddy fields, while old people and children busy their fingers with frowsy bales of coarse black hair. When autumn comes the young men stock their oyster boats and set out for the large cities. A few crude earthenware pots, several bags of charcoal, some wooden buckets of cold, unsalted rice, the oysters, and needful crockery and chopsticks change the boat into a restaurant. A saucy, black-eyed girl or two and plenty of cheap beer and *sake* make the preparations for business complete. In a few months the season is over, and the square-sailed boats, draw anchor and thread their way among the islets of the Inland Sea, turned toward home again.

Just at the close of the War with China, in 1896, a boy was born in one of the wig making villages. His father was an oyster man, too fond of drink. On the water front in Kobe scouts were watching for his kind to send as laborers to Hawaii, or Brazil. One day when little Keizo was five, word came that Kanda had joined a party embarking for Rio Janeiro. They

never heard from him again.

The young mother bent over heaped up piles of hair, deftly turning it into wigs and switches. In the busy season she toiled for long hours in the fields. Too frail for such hard work, she began to cough. One autumn day a typhoon came up out of the southwest. Huge waves dashed salt spray over the ripening crops. Rain fell in torrents. The river, racing down from the mountains, rose threateningly. On the third day its banks broke, and harvest and humble homes were swept away together. Keizo's mother died of exposure, leaving her little bewildered child among the ruins.

The nearest of kin, his father's uncle, came to take care of him. He was an old man, gnarled with poverty. Keizo went to school for the required four years. As he grew older he learned to help in the fields. He plowed the soft mud and planted the hotbeds, or stood naked on the water wheel, treading it by the hour to flood the paddys. He transplanted seedlings, knee deep in mire, and carried evil-smelling buckets of fertilizer to pour in dippersful upon the rows of growing things. He cut the rice at harvest time, drying it on mats and threshing it with a flail. Next day he would break ground to plant wheat.

Year in, year out until he was eighteen; farming, wig-making, going away with the oyster boats.

Barely enough food; a few poor clothes; a place to sleep. One day the breaking point came in a hysterical outburst of tears and shrieking, and when it was over, the exhausted boy got his things together and wandered off to the town of Imaharu. There a merchant took him in and set him to work about his little shop.

Soon, however, the flimsy business fell to pieces, and Keizo was on the streets again. He joined the waifs who spent their nights under temple steps, or by the water side, or in rooming houses, where sometimes three were heaped together on one mat. There were creeping and crawling things, stifling odors, trachoma and tuberculosis. There were pick-pockets, sneak thieves, robbers, drunkards. Even the hard work he had run away from came to seem sweet by comparison, so he struggled back. Shopkeeping had appealed to him, and he persuaded his uncle to let him set up a stall for the fruits and vegetables that grew about the place. So until he was twenty-one he remained at home, plowing, planting, harvesting, and selling now and then a few pennies' worth of onions or oranges.

2

Then he was married, and soon afterward it was time for the yearly conscripts to go into the army.

9

Reserves in brown and red uniforms escorted the boys and their families across the fields to the railway stations in long processions, banners waving, drums beating. Many of the farmer lads would look back upon the cheers given them when the trains pulled out as the most thrilling moment of their lives. Keizo must go for a physical examination in preparation for his share of glory.

White-coated doctors sat in bare offices with dumpy, spectacled nurses at their elbows. Young men waited in long queues. Most of them were country boys in faded blue *kimono* and limp sashes. Some were students in tight, dark uniforms. A few were city dandies with long, sleek hair. All were weighed, thumped, stethoscoped and measured. They were passed on to rooms with apparatus for testing eyes, ears and throats. Sunshine streamed through the outer walls of glass and over the polished floors. Shelves of blue and white bottles gave out pungent odors. All day a stream of silent youth passed by. Now and again a doctor frowned over tuberculosis. In an inner room sat a large group detained for further questioning.

Keizo, bronzed, heavily muscled, in scanty loin cloth, stood before the lung specialist and waited for the stethoscope. The doctor, turning from his report blanks, glanced carelessly at the figure before him. As he mechanically adjusted the ear pieces, a different

expression leaped into his eyes. With all his force he dug the point of the instrument into a small spot above the left breast and watched for reaction from the boy. There was no response. The examination went on. At its close the doctor asked briefly, "How long have you had that spot?" And Keizo, looking down, saw it for the first time. He was excused from military service.

Keizo came in from the flooded fields one day in June. His bare legs were plastered with slime. The dirty towel around his forehead was sopping with sweat. As he picked his way along the narrow path he could see blue sky and fleecy clouds mirrored in the shallow water. Small clumps of seedlings spread a precise pattern of bright green polka dots all over the little fields to the dykes that bordered them. Young and old, men and women, were everywhere bending to the task. They wore round, flat hats, and their *kimono* were tucked into their sashes. Scarlet petticoats flashed. Birds were singing.

The small room seemed very dark after the glare, and cool after the intense heat. Into the house rushed a wriggling puppy, and behind it toddled a naked baby. Little Snow, Keizo's wife, hastened her preparations for his dinner, while he washed his hands at the well and played with the chubby child. They sat down to coarse rice, soy beans, weak tea and

a dish of fish livers; hot, tasty, filling. Keizo ate heartily. Next day he was covered from head to foot with a vicious, black eruption.

Remembering that suspicion in the doctor's eyes, a cold hand clutched at Keizo's heart. But within a few days his body was well again, and only upon his face were the disfiguring pimples to be seen. Keizo looked stealthily for Snow's small mirror, and carrying it in his sleeve to a sheltered place behind a straw-stack, studied his features carefully. He returned to the house silent, and terribly afraid.

The rush of the rice transplanting was over, and Keizo's uncle snatched time to draw a long breath. Standing on the hard, bare ground in front of the house among the chicken coops, with the puppy tumbling over his feet, he took a long look at his nephew. Finally he spoke.

"It would be well to consult a doctor about those sores on your face."

Keizo flushed angrily. But Snow added her plea.

"Just to relieve our uneasiness, it would be well to go."

That afternoon in his flapping broad-brimmed hat, cotton *kimono*, and tight blue and white striped drawers buttoned around the ankles, Keizo trudged to Hiroshima. The wide entrance to the hospital was

choked with wooden shoes. Leaving his own stout clogs among them he purchased an admission ticket at the little window, was classified, and followed a nurse through long corridors until they came to the waiting room of the skin specialist. It was full of patients. They sat on hard, uncomfortable benches around the walls. In the office grimy bandages were being removed, and people were going out swathed in fresh, white gauze. Strong ointments done up in seashells were being handed out. Boils and carbuncles were being lanced and dressed.

At last a nurse held up a pasteboard ticket and called Keizo Kanda. He took his place in the vacant chair beside the doctor. An electric change of expression, swiftly covered, but seen! What use to falter the story of the fish livers, to claim to be almost well? The *kimono* was pulled apart, and the strange spot—larger now—studied carefully. The finger tips were tested and found to be insensitive. The doctor sighed and looked toward the palm trees in the garden. At last words came, none the easier for having been said to others,

“My boy, I sorrow with you. It is the ‘Curse of Heaven!’”

3

There is a sharp, dangerous curve on the railroad

13

as it runs from Hiroshima to the wig makers' village. Keizo's heart was set upon reaching this treacherous spot within the fewest moments possible. A bank of sullen, black clouds rolled up swiftly in the hot sky. The wind drove dense dust before it. It mingled with his hard-fought tears and streaked his face. Lightning flashed. The voice of the storm called,

"You will never see them again!"

But as the dark clouds ran before the wind and the thunder and lightning passed, the voice too changed, and now it was,

"You must see them once more, just once!"

And by and by when it was almost calm again, the question came,

"How are you going to face them?"

Two days later Keizo stole out long before dawn. He was dressed in the white of the Buddhist pilgrim, with mushroom hat and tinkling bell. On his wrist was a rosary, and he carried a staff. Back in the hills was a lonely stone image of the Goddess of Mercy. He bowed and prayed before it, telling his beads. Down the mountain before daylight, so that the neighbors might not know, for that was the concern of Snow and his uncle. They were selling their little treasures to buy "good medicine", hopeful that all would be well in time, if only their world could be kept in ignorance.

A week later Snow's relatives appeared. Un-

willing to enter, they stood in the bare, brown yard and stated their business. Snow should not remain with a leper. Keizo was too crushed and humiliated to protest. The uncle argued feebly for time. Snow, in a draggled garment tied back for work, turned her flushed face upon them,

“I did not come here for fair weather only,” she cried. “I am Keizo’s wife. I will not leave him!”

But Japanese family conferences are endless and the hours passed with more, and yet more, bickering. At last Snow, carrying the sleeping baby on her back, marched sullenly off with the men. But at two o’clock the next morning, as Keizo tossed under his hot mosquito net, he heard a tap at the shutter nearest him, and a voice calling softly. There in the dim light was Snow, still in her work dress with sleeves tied back; still with the baby on her back. In a few moments her little flower-face was against his shoulder.

The next day there were no hours of consultation. Snow’s father arrived with three burly followers; threw a blanket around unsuspecting Keizo; bound his arms and left him; while they carried off Snow and the baby, deaf to screams. Keizo watched in angry helplessness. Murder was in his heart, a wild desire to steal upon them in the night and burn their house and them to ashes.

Several days passed. Keizo lay one night trying

to forget the heat, the swarming mosquitoes; and his own pain. Suddenly his heart leaped. The puppy was barking joyously. Snow's voice again! But the uncle was nearer, and held the boy back as he went to greet her. Her face was pale in the moonlight, and swollen with crying. Over her shoulder the baby's bright, black eyes laughed in delight. Snow's hands were crossed behind her back to steady the little one; she swayed from side to side to keep her quiet. The old man's trembling voice broke the silence.

"My child," he said, "it is useless for you to come. The separation is finished. We cannot care for you here. Don't you see that it is best for you to go away?"

There was no answer. Snow moved toward the door and tried to push past him. But he stopped her, patting her shoulder as he said,

"It is best to go, Little Snow."

She stepped back and gave him a long, heartbroken look. Then she spoke for the first time.

"I shall die if you do not let me stay. I mean this. I cannot go on living."

The uncle hesitated. Old tales came to his mind, tales of wifely devotion which have become a part of the religion of Japan. He looked from one to the other of the shaken young things before him, and gently led Snow into the house. Then he started off

in the moonlight to call together their few relations to face the issue.

It was two o'clock when they came to an agreement. At three one of the women took the dimpled baby, and Keizo and Snow started out together across the fields toward the home of the man for whom Keizo had worked years ago, in Imaharu. At the end of their journey they found humble, but sincere hospitality. But there was only despair for Keizo when he confessed his plight. All was sympathy and kindness, but there was the inexorable necessity to move on.

The two took passage for Kobe on an Inland Sea steamer. They found a small room in a dingy part of the city, and there in the heat and odors of an Oriental summer, Snow learned to make wigs. Perspiration rolled down upon the masses of tangled hair. Shoulders and eyes ached from the strain. Keizo, with wet, naked body toiled beside her. The intense heat made it impossible to imagine a time when people would be willing to add even a wig to elemental clothing. Business was stagnant. Heartsick, they moved again and again, until they found themselves part of a sweltering mass of wretchedness in the Shinkawa Slums. Keizo found a job with a company putting up modern buildings on the hill. Day by day he exhausted his failing strength hauling carts loaded with stone up the steep slopes. One night he came back

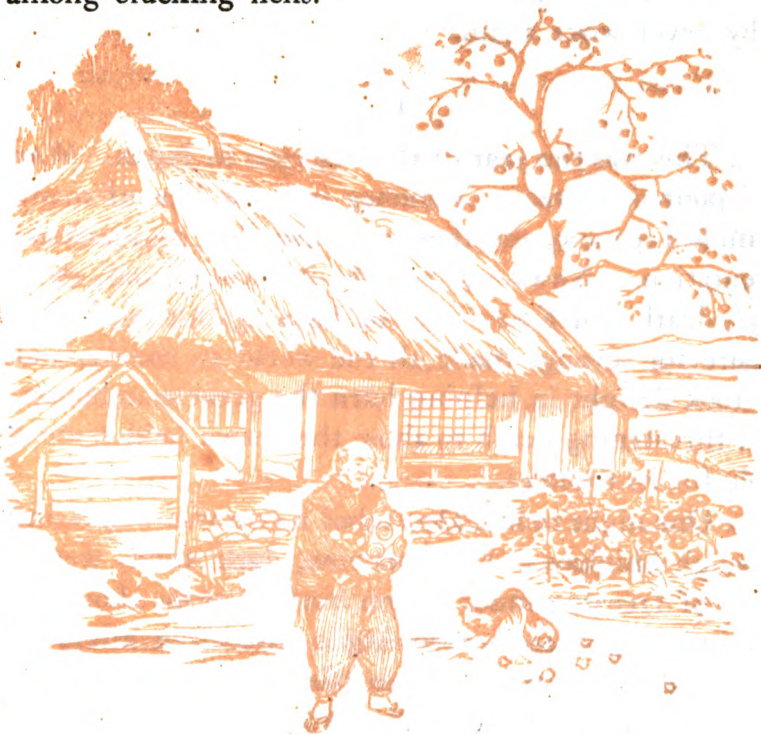
to find that Snow had given birth to a sickly baby, with no one to take care of her but the ragged old woman who lived in the next room.

Snow was very ill. Sights and sounds and smells reached her, even in delirium, and terrified her. When at last she was able to stand on her feet, Keizo put her on a third class train for the journey back to Hiroshima. The wooden seats in the car were crowded. Aisles were littered with banana peel, lunch boxes, cigarette stubs, newspapers, milk bottles, teapots. Children munched sticky sweets. Men snored beside their tired, patient women. The air was thick with tobacco smoke, and reeking with the odor of sweating bodies. There were long waits at stations; swaying and jerking around curves; smoke-filled tunnels.

Snow folded her feet under her on the hard seat, and leaned her aching head on the window sill. The month old baby on her back wailed ceaselessly. Hours of suffering, and then at last her own station and Uncle Kanda's kind old face. Next day a hot fever, and on the next her father came with his men. Snow was carried out on someone's back toward cleanliness and mother. But the little, weazened baby was left behind with the uncle, seventy-five years old.

The two sat together in the sunshine of an autumn afternoon. Beside them magnificent chrysanthemums

were flaming into bloom, the red flowers bright against the yellow walls of the thatched hut. Persimmons were ripening in heavy abundance, and among the crisp, green oranges were some that hinted of warmer colors soon to come. The pale gold of the paddy fields stretched in limitless, fantastic patterns toward the mountains. Banks of snow-white cloud lay against the sky. Birds twittered. The dog dozed among clucking hens.



On the ground lay a baby's nursing bottle, partly filled with condensed milk. The long red rubber tube and nipple were gritty and sour from lack of washing. But there was no lack of love in the wrinkled, unshaven face bent over the little one. Tenderly he opened the neck of his rough garment and laid the wailing child against his sunburned breast. Gently he soothed the well wrapped bundle. The crying ceased. His head sank. The two slept. But the baby never woke again.

4

This was the year of the rice riots in Japan. War had poured a stream of money into the laps of many humble Japanese, and they were spending it in reckless ostentation. News of Snow's departure and their boy's death sent Keizo into the fight against profiteers. Desire for revenge made all the world an enemy, and he took delight in helping burn the great warehouses, and threatening death to those the crowd held responsible for its troubles.

One night in late December Keizo was wandering through Shinkawa. The narrow, dark streets were a mire of freezing mud. Sleet beat upon his shoulders and stung his face. Crossing a three-foot alley, he stumbled over a wooden shoe hanging by one strap to the bare foot of a ragged figure lying drunk or dead.

A thin strain of music came from an open door where a crowd of children were huddling together for warmth, and for the little they could see of what was going on inside. Keizo pushed in among them.

The room was packed with poverty stricken children. They sat three deep on the mats, tense with excitement. Around the walls were large colored pictures—a wounded traveler being lifted to the back of a donkey; an old man embracing a tattered boy; a Shepherd with a lamb in His arms. A bit of green pine daubed with cotton stood in a corner, and above it glittered a tinsel star. A woman played with two fingers on a baby organ, while a class of gawky girls in limp red cotton skirts sang shrilly, "Joy to the World." A thin young man in a dark *kimono* beat time, his eyes shining. (Toyohiko Kagawa, to be known the world over as one of its great religious teachers.) Keizo watched for a while, then reached into the street for a handful of frozen mud, and flung it at the young man's face.

Exposure, drink and hunger did their work. The disease grew worse. Keizo's face turned purple and bloated. His head grew bald. One day one of the men in the slums said to him,

"Keizo, face the facts. You are dogged by the 'Curse of Heaven.' In some former existence you committed a great crime, and you will have no peace

until it is atoned for. Your only chance is to give up all you have and make the Shikoku Pilgrimage. This may bring you health at once. At any rate, if you make it, you will be born next time more favorably."

The only chance! And it would mean that he must cut himself off still further from wife and child and faithful uncle; that he must trudge long, hot miles in summer, and sleep under the stars in winter; that he must climb on crippled feet the hundreds of stone steps at Kompira; that he must go to temples at midnight and stand under icy streams of water; that he must beg for food.

5

Two years later, one day in July, Keizo and three of his companions left their battered cart and bony cur by the roadside, and hid themselves at the edge of a cemetery. The tall, closely packed gravestones, almost touching each other, and black with the weathering of five hundred years, made a hiding place visible only from the steep bluff just above. A smooth expanse of granite at the base of a headless Buddha made a good spot for throwing dice. A gourd of *sake* leaned against a cracked vase of wilted flowers. One of the four at play was a woman. A woman whom the disease had robbed of all beauty and attractiveness, and yet when *sake* and gambling had done their work, the

men fell to quarreling about her. Some one on the bluff heard the noise, saw knives drawn, and hurried to the telephone. A motor-cycle policeman rushed around the curve just in time to prevent tragedy. Shortly after, pilgrims, dog and wabbling cart were taken to a house of detention. Next day the four were ordered to the Government Hospital at Oshima.

They huddled together half apprehensively as the doctor's launch towed their *sampan* through the morning mist. Sea and island and sky, subdued by the soft light, made a picture in apple green, slate gray and silver. Presently details stood out clearly. Beyond a crescent beach two hills were connected by a low lying plain, and here there were wide buildings; the hospital, administration department, laboratories, electric light plant, and assembly hall. Farther back were tennis courts, and the tall chimney of the crematory. Through the trees were glimpses of the patients' cottages hugging the hillside, with tiny paddy fields or patches of vegetables beside them. And winding its length between the big, low buildings and the cottages, a barrier of barbed wire, beyond which no leper is allowed to go alone.

Keizo loitered about in the hot July evening, grateful to the strong breeze for its cooling. Down on the beach the massive roots of the pine trees lay black upon the sand. Groups of patients sat among

them in the moonlight. At hand was the music of the tide, and beyond, silver waves and far flung islands. Near the shore an irregular mass of granite capped by one great gnarled tree loomed dark against the sky. A thin figure on crutches paused beside Keizo and made a labored attempt at a formal bow. Together they strolled to a place where a *samisen* had been left on the ground beside a company sitting upon a strip of matting. These people listened eagerly while Keizo played and sang for them the racy songs of the Hiroshima oyster boats. Heads wagged. Cracked voices marked the rhythm. The hearers ranged themselves in pairs and clapped each others' hands. *Sake* appeared. Wilder and wilder grew the noise of laughter, singing, shouting, clapping. Late at night Keizo stumbled up the hill, drunk with excitement and applause.

As he tried to go to sleep in his breathless little room, recent events circled before his eyes. He saw the dusty roads and the hiding place behind the graveyard, and heard the foolish giggle of the leper woman who had been with them. He cringed at the glare of hate on the men's faces as they drew their knives. Then came the blast of the policeman's horn; the tangled traffic of the city streets; the confusion at the house of detention; the freshness of the morning boat ride; the bewildering business of examination, disin-

fection and finding quarters; the calmness of the black and silver night; the wild racketing of *samisen* and song. The noise was fading and oblivion coming when with a startled jerk he was on the road again. Then a sudden clod-clod of clogs made him spring up, thinking Snow was calling. For a moment he saw her clearly in the moonlight, her arms supporting the little one upon her back.

Maples flared upon the heights above the jade-green water. Winds from Siberia howled through the trees and drove the sick people to sit forlornly beside their braziers. Cold rains poured. Wild flowers made the island a purple paradise. Summer came again. Through the seasons Keizo sang and laughed and told his jokes. But sometimes at night the bitter wail of his flute could be heard along the shore. And in the hours of darkness his heart listened for that step of Snow's, or saw the old man sitting in the sunshine with the baby on his breast.

The more intelligent patients still afoot at Oshima are asked to help with the bedridden cases. Keizo, in a long white cotton coat, stood about the ward one day assisting with dressings, cleaning up after operations, doing orderly's work. Some score or more lay in their beds, usually suffering most and dying from some disease not leprosy. Poor creatures with paralyzed throats whistled through breathing tubes.

Heavy over the room hung the sickening smell of iodoform. Kimura, whose leg had just been amputated, covered his head with his clumsy quilt and wept. Within reach of the wide windows butterflies fluttered above scarlet pomegranate blossoms. Lacy patterns of shadow trembled on the sand. A white sailboat crept through a gentle breeze to the still harbor of Yashima.

A little band of men and women paused to leave their footwear at the door before entering the ward. Nagata left his made leg also, and crawled across the room to the bedside of Shimamoto. With them was Miyauchi from Takamatsu, for many years pastor of this little flock. Books bound in black and gilt were taken from bandannas. Quavering hymns were sung. Keizo edged nearer to listen. By and by arms were folded; eyes closed; heads upraised, and Miyauchi's voice spoke confidently. Keizo, hearing, knew that he talked to God.

“Our Father, we thank Thee that we know that Thou art very near. Our brother suffered much in journeying to find Thee, and through his pain he came to fear and hate Thy name. We thank Thee that the body's agony is not needful, but that Thou dost hear the cry of every contrite heart. That Thou dost give cleansing from all evil, peace and joy. That Thy Holy Spirit doth find a temple in every child of Thine.

That death brings not to such rebirth, nor retribution, but that Thy loved ones go to be forever with their Lord.”

That evening, as Keizo strolled toward the beach, he stopped to listen at the Christians' tent. The curtains were tied back, and he could see the rough pulpit, folding organ, song-sheet, and the little company of believers sitting on camp stools around a table covered with a faded cloth. Hoarsely, unmusically, but joyfully, they were singing.

I saw Keizo when I was at the Hospital the other day. He is quite blind now. But for years the marks of dishonesty, sensuality, hate and despair have gone from his face. Behind all the distortion shines a happiness which startles. Nagata, fellow sufferer, ends his story thus quaintly:

“The knowledge of this good doctrine caused the wish to hear to boil up within him. From baptism Keizo is a man living a resurrected life. In joy or pain, grief or gladness, he gives thanks. We can prophesy the future with confidence, for Christ liveth in him.

“The old self
And the sin,
All cleansed and purified before the Cross,
The new man stands forth shining!
O Keizo, blind,

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But praying always with deep love and tears,
Salt of the earth, light of the world,
May all the journey left you be
Of Heaven truly more than blessed.
Amen."

III

TWO VERSES BY KEIZO KANDA

III

TWO VERSES BY KEIZO KANDA

I would not change one little jot
Of His dear will for me;
But in my weakness I would go,
Entrusting all my load of woe
To Him Who walks with me.



Pain does not need to bring sorrow,
Grief does not need to bring rue;
All man's concern on life's journey
Is that his own heart be true.



IV
TWINS

IV

TWINS

None of the chronicles of *Mi Sora no Hana* is more moving than that of the twins, Susumu and Minoru Fujita. To give the real flavor of the original, it is told here as artlessly as it was written. And to bring out Nagata's quaintness of expression as well, many passages in this story and in the story of "St. Shigema" are taken from a direct translation. Such passages will be recognized by the quotation marks enclosing them. L. J. E.

"Susumu and Minoru Fujita were twins. Their father was at the head of a trust company in Okayama, and the family was prosperous and happy. But while the boys were hardly out of babyhood their mother was taken with a mysterious disease which proved to be leprosy.

"The whole house was plunged suddenly into the heavy sadness of a black shadow. But the affection of the parents was not broken by this sickness. There was loneliness, but the smoke from the house ascended straight and peaceful into the great sky. The sick woman was remembered at her pillow side by her three loving children and her kind husband. She received

the tears from their true, burning hearts, and satisfied, she entered into her long sleep when the girl was nine and the two boys five.

“The father, being very fond of his children, and thinking them very pitiful because they had no mother, did not take another wife, but attended to his business, only now and then comforting himself with *sake*. And while something was lacking in the home life, they were getting along very well, when suddenly the father caught a slight cold which became worse in a few days, and following after his dead wife, he started out to the other world.

“The fall of the pillar of the house was a terrible thing. The wolves of avarice opened their red mouths to quarrel over the ruins. The uncle of the orphans seized the reins of the trust company. Another man, calling himself an uncle, came and took over the furniture, saying he would keep it for the children.”

But the little ones were left to shift for themselves. They huddled together at night and cried until they went to sleep. When they woke, like mice they searched the place for food, and ate it raw. When there was nothing more to eat, and they were so hungry that they could not endure it, the twins started out to find their uncle. Their faces were streaked with dirt and tears, but they marched along bravely, each holding the other's hand.

At last they came to the father's place of business, and the janitor, who had always known them, called out a cheery greeting and took them to find their uncle. But instead of welcoming them, the man's face darkened.

"It is a thing to be ashamed of, but before the desire for food all else fades away. No matter how strong aversion may be, if put up against starvation, it becomes a burnt out fire. Though his legs were trembling, Susumu's hungry stomach made him say,

"Neither I nor Minoru Chan have had anything to eat.'

"Sister has had nothing, either.'

"Why haven't you eaten? Uncle is poor, and you need not come here to beg. Go to your aunt.'

"Then, as though sweeping them out, and still scolding, he took from his pocket a fifty *sen* piece and threw it at them. It rang against the concrete with a hollow sound and rolled away.

"Thank you, Uncle!'

And laughing for joy, the brothers ran to pick it up. But the miser had taken himself into the house."

The sister spent the fifty *sen* for rice. They washed it, and worked with all their might to build a fire in the brick stove. It was hard to make the flimsy matches burn. Again and again the heads would break off and fall, but at last a spark fell on the waiting straw

and the twins fanned eagerly. The rice swelled and bubbled and scorched, but when they ate it, half the grains were hard and raw. On the third day afterward their aunt appeared. But her family was truly poor.

What she could do for them was not much. She took the sister into her own home, and sent the twins to a Buddhist orphanage. The children clung together and cried bitterly. They felt as if they would never see each other again. But life at the orphanage was little better than what they had left. "Whenever the spirit of society is cold, the charity causes must shed blood. Especially is it true that when there are places which abuse confidence, the people lose faith in all appeals, and worthy institutions must suffer with the rest."

The Head of the orphanage went cold and hungry with the children. Their clothing was insufficient, and they lived on barley gruel. All day they pasted match boxes or envelopes. But in their hearts hope was still burning. One night a great wind blew across the plain, and the waves dashed high against the shore. The poorly built house shook, and cold draughts came up through the mats to chill the orphans huddled on the floor. The others were sleeping, but the twins were restless with discomfort.

"It's cold, isn't it?" said the younger one, crying.

"Minoru, Father and Mother are lying out in the

snow.”

“Susumu took his brother in his arms to comfort him, and the two fell asleep. That night their lost parents came to visit them.

*“The orphan child, all smiling in his dreams,
Is being fondled by his mother.”*

A year went by. The twins were now seven. One sorrow after another had come into their short lives. But worse was in store for them. Minoru looked changed. His eyebrows and hair were falling out, his face swollen, and his eyes too hard and bright. Remembering his mother’s story, the Head of the orphanage was troubled. There was nowhere he could send the little fellows, but he feared Minoru had leprosy. When another year had passed and Susumu showed the same symptoms, the fear became a certainty.

Their playmates were cruel, and this was their only protection from the disease. They taunted the twins ceaselessly. Screaming names, they would chase them into trees, or make them hide under the floor where the garbage was swept. Here they would cower in the cold until the others would forget them. Then they would creep back and work patiently at their tasks. They were everything to each other. Sometimes they even talked of dying so that they might find their father and mother again.

The Head of the orphanage heard at last of the

new hospital at Oshima and sent the boys away, glad to be rid of his responsibility. When they arrived at the beautiful island, all thin and ill, they found among those lined up to meet the boat a man who was to be a second father to them—Nagata, of the heart of song.

On the beach, all golden in the sunlight, he stood among the pine trees leaning upon his crutches, one leg missing from the knee, his face paralyzed, and his fingers twisted and useless. But the frightened twins could sense his kindness as he led them up to his home on the hill, and did his best to take away the strangeness. Day by day he called them to him, and would take them upon his one knee, or putting them upon his back with their arms around his neck, he would crawl with them about the room.

But let him tell it for himself: "And he taught them the love of the True Father, and the Mother Love of Christ, and showed them the way of righteousness. He told them how God Himself rejoices when the lost are found. How happy the brothers were in this love of Christ, taking the place of their longed-for parents! Through the Scriptures the hearts of the two understood well the heart of God, and day by day they changed to playful children."

One day Nagata saw in an Okayama newspaper a notice of the suicide of a young woman suffering from leprosy. Something about the story seemed to fit in

with the twins' memory of their sister, from whom they had not heard for so long. They listened anxiously to the account of her journeyings as a pilgrim, and when Nagata had finished reading, they looked into each other's pale faces and fell into broken hearted crying. They begged Nagata to try to find out more for them, and he hardly knew how to comfort them. But he said,

"Pray well to Our Father. That is the most important thing. I shall write at once."

But no answer came. Then they asked the police to investigate. No clue was ever found. Even the hard-hearted uncle had disappeared. Nagata was in despair, but the brave little fellows said,

"Probably all are dead. And if so, there is nothing we can do but bear it."

Years went by. I used to see Susumu and Minoru whenever I went to Oshima. Always they sat beside Nagata or Miyake in the front row at our Christian meetings. How they loved to sing! And how they could turn the pages of their Bibles! At Christmas they took their part in all the celebrations, and gloried in repeating long passages of Scripture. They were always ready to lead in prayer.

But each time I saw them, my heart ached. For the disease was progressing rapidly. They were still little boys, but their hairless heads and scarred faces

might have been those of old men. In spite of disfigurement, their original resemblance was still strong.

When they were eighteen, Minoru was stricken with tuberculosis. So many go that way! His brother waited upon him tirelessly, and all their fellow Christians came to help. At the end Susumu knelt beside the sick boy as he lay among his heavy quilts, thin and wan, and with features so repulsive. But over all a lovely light—ah, only we who have seen these faces transfigured can conceive of such sadness mingled with such grace! “And it was the will of God that praising God and giving thanks he was taken up to Heaven.” Then Susumu laid his head upon the knees of the old man who was watching with him, and wept.

Some of the patients came bringing a straw image to bury with the dead, lest the other twin be taken. But Susumu would not consent to such superstition. “Reading the Bible and singing hymns, he placed the flowers on his brother’s form as it lay in the coffin. At the funeral he told with tears of the hard life the two had led, then with changed expression of the blessings of their salvation. The Heavenly Father’s holy grace is beyond all power of praising.”

Two years went by, and tuberculosis claimed Susumu, also. But his soul was calm. Face to face with death he sang,

**“If I should dwell now on the pain
Of soul and body that have come to me,
Nor heeding sunshine, look upon the rain,
How foolish, foolish my poor heart would be!”**

Nagata says: “We heard him with heads hung down for the weakness of our own faith. There is another poem which he wrote at that time. It shows how lonely he was from the point of view of human feeling. But this very loneliness he used altogether as a stepping stone to God. And tempered to the last degree, he was able to offer up the perfect thanks.

**“To bear these ills in life’s sweet spring,
How hard ’twould be,
And sad,
Did I not have God’s love for me
To make me glad!”**

“Born fallen into the hands of cursed Satan, he traversed the unending desert of ill luck and adversity, but washed in the blood of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, he became a perfect victim. With no clearing of the rain of his tears, his soul, washed by these tears, through the grace of God was lifted up to become the companion of the saints. Behold, through the atonement of Christ this brother’s path led up to Heaven! Writing his farewell song, he went boldly from us.

**“O wondrous God,
By whom my life was blest,
I yield to Thee again
This body torn with pain,
And find my rest!”**

**“You who think of Susumu Fujita and look up into
the glory of the great Father in Heaven, again,
again, and yet again, you can but praise God.”**



V

LITTLE POEMS FROM OSHIMA

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LITTLE POEMS FROM OSHIMA

THE NEW YEAR

A lonely peak,
 Soft purple clouds,
 High in the sky;
 Not the red sun
 Greets New Year's Morn
 With stouter heart than I!

Fujita

Sails rippling in morning wind,
 White,
 Flashing with light
 From dawn
 Of New Year's Morn,
 Divine—
 And mine!

Hayashi

The year
An uncut jewel is,
Of matchless worth;
Bringing along with it
New heaven and earth;
I long to dwell with God,
Oh, through this year,
Blessed with His blessing
 May I live
 A life of prayer!

Miyauchi Tsurus

The lovely light of stars
 Shines quiently,
Where sleep the flowers
 peacefully,
Before the New Year's dawn.
 I leave the past
 Determinedly,
 To face the future
 Manfully,
And bear my hard cross on!

Fujita

CHRISTMAS

Two thousand years ago the Star appeared
To wondering men;
Tonight it shines above our isle
As bright as then;
Lo, let us, let us go
To Bethlehem!

All quietly the maple leaves glow red
That once were green;
Without the Camp
All silently,
Tonight the Christ is seen,
New-born and helpless, now as then,
Lo, let us, let us go
To Bethlehem!

Yamamoto

The Wise Men once
You guided safe to Him;
So guide me now,
O Star of Bethlehem!

Osaki

Bright lights are gleaming in our House of Prayer,
 (The little church
 Given by friends
 In other lands)
And childish faces bend in ecstasy
Above their sleeping dolls with golden hair.

Miyake

White snowflakes
Falling, falling,
Children's voices
Calling, calling,
Dance with joy, my heart!
 Saved,
We celebrate Christ's coming,
Eager footsteps crowding, running,
All their pain forgot!

Kawabuchi



A Wee One in a manger,
Praise Him where He lies,
Angels singing carols,
Listening winter skies!

Hayashi

Glory to God Who sent His Son
To save the sad, dark earth;
And as we praise Him on this day
That gave Him birth,
The hymns that herald how each heart rejoices
Mingle with angel voices!

Handa

The wireless brings us songs of Christmas praise
From far and near;
And listening, we are one with you today,
Friends everywhere!

Yamamoto

EASTER

Like snowflakes, or like petals of sweet flowers,
In shining showers from Heaven,
My Father's promises to my full heart
This Easter morn are given!

Miyoshi

Lilies a-bloom;
And in my heart no room
Except for thoughts of Him Who
conquered Death.

Upon this Easter morn
Afresh, oh, all afresh,
His grace in me is born,
And my dumb heart cries out to
sing His praise,
On this, His Day of days!

Takamoto

PRAYER

At morn to kneel before Him,
In the night to pray
For happiness of all men
Every day—
This the task I love.

Hayashi

Oh, make my heart so still, so still,
When I am deep in prayer,
That I might hear the white mist-wreaths
Losing themselves in air!

Utsunomiya

Remembering the pain
That I myself have borne,
I pray for those who wander still,
Lost and alone.

Miyake

One drop of wine,
A morsel of the bread,
Then prayer,
And they become
My flesh and blood.

Hayashi

I rise before the dawn has come
And go
To pray apart;
And there the perfume of the flowering plum
Comforts my lonely heart.

Iwataro Miyauchi,
pastor at Oshima
(not a leper)

How sweet to lie upon my pillow
Whispering prayer,
Then sleeping feel that I am wrapped about
With loving care!

Nagata

Flowers dead; friends gone;
An autumn night apart;
But not alone, while prayer
Wells joyful in my heart!

Hayashi

Oh, shining morning when I kneel to pray,
My loathsome, blinded body all forgot;
The door shut,
I, together with my thoughts,
Alone amid the loveliness of dawn!

Miyoshi

THE CROSS

Bearing reproach and shame,
Suffering, pain, and loss,
My soul undaunted still shall march,
Holding aloft the Cross!

Hayashi

O Cross, how is it I can sing thy praise?
Thou art like precious warmth on winter days!

Nagata

We that are sick
Must suffer pain;
Yes, that may be—
But this our comfort,
That it leaves us free
To quietly look up
At Calvary.

Hiromi

Pierce through my heart,
O message of the Cross,
That I may know
The way that leads among the thorns must be
The road I go!

Handa

LOVE

Star,
Shine on the world in its woe;
Gleam through the dark where I go,
Sweet Star of Love!

Takamoto

I find His promises
And con them slowly,
Word by word;
So am I comforted,
Knowing that I am well-beloved
Of my dear Lord.

Hayashi

Whether the day bring mirth
And joy, or whether
Sorrowing come,
The Island folk
Rejoice or weep
Together!

Yasumoto

Alone, and twilight time;
But on the sand
In boldly written hand
I trace the one word LOVE,
And gloom is gone!

Hayashi

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

Why should my daily pathway seem
A desert stark and dry,
When all around the hills of God
Are glorious in the sky?

Takamoto

The seasons pass;
Winter and summer, autumn and the spring;
But all the days in Christ's unchanging grace,
I shall go glorying!

Iwataro Miyauchi

Only Thy power canst make my sinsick spirit whole,
O Divine Saviour, precious to my soul!

Hayashi

I have forgotten grief and suffering,
For I have trusted God in everything.

Miyake

Ever adding Thy grace unto grace,
In blessing and love to me,
O most wonderful God I adore
How can I glorify Thee?

Takamoto

One very earnest prayer is mine today—
The same that was so sweet on yesterday—
“Thank Thee, O Father!” This is what I say.

Egi

Morning brings worktime,
When my bright hoe cuts the sod;
Sweet then the breezes,
And my happy heart
Thinks on its mercies
And gives thanks to God.

Takamoto

You ask my dearest treasure, and I come confessing
It is the burden God has turned to blessing!

Egi

DEATH AND HEAVEN

To the heart aglow for Thee
The Valley of the Shadow
Is like sunrise on the sea!

Utsunomiya

Though His summons may be in a twinkling
Rejoice when He bids you to come,
Nor fear the pain of the journey,
For it leads you to Him and to Home!

Nagata

Often and often comes the thought of death,
But always, past the sod,
I find its meaning in Thine own deep love,
Eternal God!

Anonymous

I live in light and love,
By God's grace given;
Yet is my hungry heart
Homesick for Heaven!

Takamoto

O joy of entrance into heavenly rapture,
O rush on wings to where Thy seraphs bow,
O bliss to be, myself, among Thine angels,
Come to me now!

Takamoto

LEADING

God planned
The little grain of sand
I hold upon my hand,
And so it need not be
Hard for my faith to see
He plans for me!

Miyoshi

I seek how best to trust Him, and my sure heart saith,
“Unquestioning submission— that is perfect faith!”

Nigishi

I do not fear to tread the road
I cannot see,
Because the hand of One-Who-Loves
Is leading me.

Nagata

NATURE

A white ship trailing inky smoke
Afar I see;
Along Tamamo's lovely shore
Peace brooding deep,
Breezes asleep,
A crystal sea.

Takamoto

I find them in the sunshine,
And I sing;
Seashells and sailboats,
And the sea in spring!

Keizo Kanda

Amid the winter's greyness
When I dream
Of happiness,
The blue of April's perfumed skies
Wraps me about
With loveliness!

Utsunomiya

Let us be patient for the little while
That cold winds blow,
Waiting the springtime
When along the hills
Azaleas glow!

Iwataro Miyauchi

The snow falls fast along the road I go,
And as I watch to see
The little white flakes melt upon my hand,
My spirit laughs with glee!

Susumu Fujita

The rising sun
strikes on the fragrant yellow jonquils
by the hedge
and gilds the melting frost
that borders them.

Kasai

A meadow path,
(Hidden, humble thing)
That looking up
To the great sky
Hears sweet larks sing!

Anonymous

Faint voices murmuring
Echo in my heart;
Lonely melodies,
Of the sky a part;
Far off wild geese honking,
"You are old. . . .old. . . .old. . . ."
Baby birds before the storm,
Lost and cold. . . .
As I sit listening,
Sightless, apart,
All voices whispering,
Echo in my heart.

Miyoshi



MISCELLANEOUS

Ah, those who love not God
Will find their doom far in the future years;
But He Whose justice sends them out from Him
Will part from them with tears!

Nagata

Sweet picture,
Linger on
In memory still—
My sick-room
And the playful sparrows
Twittering on
The window sill!

Miyake

Evening,
And from the church
Worship bells ringing;
Hovering
Angels of peace
Earthward
Are winging.

Hayashi

Motherless;
But still I hold her in my heart,
Nor shall forget.
Down by the sea where we parted
She lingers yet.

Anonymous



VI

“THAT THE WORKS OF GOD BE MANIFEST”

VI

“THAT THE WORKS OF GOD BE MANIFEST”

(A Close Translation of Nagata's Own Story)

Years ago the banks of the Yoshino River were noted for the production of indigo. On moonlight nights the flowers bloomed white against the ridges of the fields. Fireflies glowed, and from far and wide arose the songs of the slow-going night workers. I was born on such a night, and in a farmer's house of the better class I was brought up. But while I was still a little child the price of indigo became unstable. Ships brought it in from Hokkaido and India, where it was produced more cheaply, and our people, losing the security of living, emigrated to other countries. The places they left behind became vegetable patches, where only the songs of the larks gave life to the loneliness.

My father took this situation much to heart. He felt that agriculture was falling to decay, and was always telling me that Japan, like England, must devote herself to scientific industry.

“You love your studies,” he would say to me, “but if what you know is not practical, it will be of no use. Nourish your real powers.” Though a farmer, he

had the soul of an artist, and not satisfied with mere superficial attainments, looked for the inner advancement of his sons. The family was old, and from it had come priests and officials, and other people out of the ordinary.

While at primary school I was housed with a priest. I loved my books. Always I was at the head of the class, and I took pride in doing work in advance of the others. Sometimes I was asked to take the place of the teacher and hear the lessons of my mates. But while I was in my eighth year of schooling and hope and youthful blood were bubbling, I was seized by the dread hand of leprosy. The dragon, with wings spread to mount the sky, was changed in one day to a feeble earthworm.

Only the love of my father and mother upheld me in my desperation. All that I saw was the color of ashes. All that I heard was a bitter wail. Death beckoned unceasingly. One moonlight, starbright night, while I could hear the regular breathing of the household, I stole out under the eaves and spread my hands upon the ground.

“Oh, Father, Mother, please forgive me! Living is for me far too unbearable pain. To die! That is the only path left to me!” With tears streaming I formed these words in my mouth, struggling to keep back the sobs that would come. Then I walked up

and down the river bank.

The wind blows cold.
Under the eyes of night
The great white river flows;
Upon the shore
A far torch wavers faintly,
And the calls
Of drowsy fishermen
Rise as the night boats
Ride the tide.

The pitying stars
A-glimmer as they wane
Point out his pathway
To the child of pain.
The murmuring wavelets
Call him,
And he plunges.

How is this?
Black shadow
Follows shadow
Into the coldness,
And tall echoes rise
That shatter dreams
Of sleeping waterfowl.



Then dripping father
And his trembling son
Stand on the sandy shore
Clinging together,
All their fears
Finding wild utterance
In grievous tears.

“Father, please let me die. It will be best for all of us. I am no use if I live. The whole family is sorrowing over me. Why have you tried to save me?”

“I could not throw you off. You must live, Honami. You are suffering, but live for me.” Thus we clung together and wept while the night passed, and the dawn broke.

Time went on, and my dearly loved father, who grieved for his sick son, fell asleep. My elder brother undertook to run a dyeing establishment, and my mother took me to another house a mile or two away. I liked to have her thus alone with me.

“Honami now needs no fine clothes. But it was a happier time for us when he did need them.” Thus she would speak in the long evening when she would pause over her sewing. In the light of the lamp tears coursed down her cheeks. Opposite her, with my books spread out on the table, but thinking always of my unbearable agony, I sat silent as the hours passed.



“Mother, why does my aunt, whenever she comes, speak of my illness as though it were my fault?”

“She thinks your disease will be in the way of her son marrying into the Himeda family, and she has an eye to the dower. You must not listen to her.”

“Mother, I want to make the Pilgrimage. My spirit is yearning so. . .”

“Oh, no. Traveling and sleeping outdoors would not be good for you. It would be better to wait until the Oshima Hospital is completed. If you were there I could go to see you sometimes.” When relatives complained we would go over all this again and again.

At last the new hospital was finished, and I was the first to make application. The police replied that as my people were able to take care of me, they could not take me in. But I opened up my heart and begged with such earnestness that at last they consented. One day in May the resident officer came and said, “You are to go tomorrow afternoon. Get ready.”

My poor mother had not expected such haste, and she was all in a nervous tremor. She sent at once to tell my brother and my sister, who had been adopted into another house. I had no preparation to make. I merely gave my books to my brother, and waited for the *jinrikisha* to come.

They stood at the gate and watched me go. From the little jolting vehicle I looked my last at familiar

things. Thus I passed along the plain and through village after village as the night came down. Late in the afternoon I came to the place where my sister lived. But, as my mother was much concerned that her adopted family should not know, I allowed myself only a glance. Through the great gate I could see in the broad yard a mountain of cocoon manure, and implements of silk farming lying about. A number of people were singing cheerfully about their work. The odor of mulberry was everywhere. But I did not see my sister. I thought how gladly she would have come to say good-by, had I been going to Tokyo to study.

It seemed a very sad thing, since there were so few of us, that there could be no word of farewell. My bosom ached with the sorrow of it. But suddenly, looking back at the main house, I saw a window open in the second story. Someone with a pale face leaned halfway out, gazing toward me. But she belonged to another family, and I could not even call out to her, "Sister!"

She covered her face with her sleeve. Gradually we grew further apart. That white face, seen against the window, red in the evening sun, can be seen forever.

That night I staid at Odera Machi. At the tavern I dreamed of my mother; of my sister at the window; and of the lonely look in my brother's eyes as he said

good-by. These pictures fluttered by all through the night. At daybreak I climbed into the *jinrikisha* again, and faced toward Osaka Pass.

Down from the Pass
The white road winds and winds
Over the mountain.
Where now the little inn
At which I slept?
The rising sun
Spangles the silver Yoshino,
And mists
Rise lightly from the valley.

Out of this lovely picture
That I see
Is Mother gazing on this peak
Longing for me?

Grief blinds me,
And I see again
Mother and brother,
And all leaning down
Out of that upper window,
Looking hungrily,
The white face of my sister—
How beats now her heart?
O Heaven and Earth,

Which nourished us
Together through the years,
In this eternal parting
See our tears,
And comfort me,
Oh, comfort me,
If this. . . must. . . be. . .

I entered the hospital in May, 1909, but my tears did not cease to flow. Even among the flowers and under the moon, I grieved over my misfortune. I did not, like the other patients, think that Oshima was a disagreeable place. From the point of view of clothing, food and shelter, there was nothing to complain of. Only in my heart this feeling of loneliness always came and went.

One night in autumn I stood alone by the grave of a friend, watching the moon as the evening passed. Time wore on, and it waxed more clear and mellow, while the sea grew dark. It was calm, calm. Not even a breeze whispered through the pines. My heart and head were full of the mystery of human existence. Especially in thinking of the friends gone before, an inexpressible sadness came over me.

High up in heaven
An autumn moon;
Upon the hill
This stone;
Beneath,
The friend I loved so well,
And I alone. . . alone. . .

Shrill, shrill, the crickets chirp and call,
And from my heart the slow tears fall.

These words came to me, and turning toward the grave, I sang them over and over. As I touched the cold stone, once more the tears came. They were not alone for the one I had lost. They were for myself. For no one seemed near to me, and my love for books was setting me apart from others.

I had great love for my friends, but I did not wish many of them. If I had a book, that was enough. I was especially fond of philosophy and essays. Because of these characteristics, my pain was different from that of others. The only alleviation came in the writing of verses.

In the spring of 1914 the Bible first came into my hands. Through this came a great change in my heart and character. I had been taught to believe that my

disease was the result of sin in a previous incarnation.
But Jesus said,

*“Neither this man sinned, nor his parents, but that
the works of God should be manifest in him.”*

How these words tore away all my old conceptions!
How astonished I was that a value was placed on my
life! Light was given to it, and misfortune and ad-
versity had meaning added to them. This great
thought led me up to faith.



VII

POEMS BY HONAMI NAGATA

VII.

POEMS BY HONAMI NAGATA

IN ALL THINGS, VICTORY!

He hears me pray to Him upon the deep,
When masts are gone, and tattered sails are blown
By storms that drive my frail boat out to sea;
He hears, and sends the wind that wafts me home.

*Naught that can come shall bring despair to me,
Gaining in all things more than victory!*

He hears me pray to Him when I am lost
Amid wild mountains, and no path can see;
He saves me from the beasts and from the night,
And gives the comfort of His strength to me.

He hears me pray to Him when my tired feet
Struggle across the desert's burning sand;
With His own blood restores my fainting soul,
And to green pastures leads me by the hand.

The limits of the earth are wide and vast,
And vaster still its smiling dome of blue,
Yet through this space I always hear His voice,
"O little one," He says, "I died for you!"

**My Lord in me has found a dwelling place,
And I in Him. Oh, glorious boon to gain
To be His temple! Gladly will I face,
In His great strength, all bitterness and pain!**

THE PEACE OF PRAYER

**I cast my care on Him,
And sing again;
For God's love makes me smile
Through heavy pain.
And oh, when His dear face
The dark clouds dim,
And leave me all alone
Weeping for Him,
Mourning for friends who left
My heart in dust,
Lo, grief is changed to joy
Because I trust!
Prayer is His children's life,
Their rest from care;
How poor the heart which spurns
The peace of prayer!**

THE LONG WAY HOME

Blue of the boundless sky
Answers the boundless sea;
Never a change in the steadfast earth,
And never rest for me
Till my life is lost in the changeless life,
O Lord of the Cross, in Thee!

Pleasures of heedless days
Swiftly fade in night:
Ever the darkness deeper grows
And ever hard the fight
When Thou dwellest not in the depths of
my soul,
O Soul of the Lord of Light!

Joy unto joy received,
Blessing to blessing bound;
Bearing the weight of my Master's cross
Is weakness, glory-crowned,
For I wait to look on Him face to face
When the long way Home is found!



VIII

ST. SHIGEMA OF THE GAMBLING DEN

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Ichitaro, in his battered school cap and torn *kimono*, sat on a rock painting a picture. A strip of brilliant sky; jagged grey crags; fantastic pines; dancing lights on massed bamboo; a fragile hanging bridge above white granite and turquoise water. The summer breeze was fragrant with blossoms. There were butterflies and bird songs; sunshine and the music of the river.

Absorbed in his work, the boy started suddenly and cast a keen glance toward the valley where there was a deep bend in the road a mile or more away. A kick at the sleeping dog by his feet brought a series of shrill yelps, which stopped abruptly at a low word. The dog lay down to rest again, and Ichitaro turned toward the nearest of the hovels below him. A swollen, ugly face peered around the corner for an instant, received a nod from the boy, and vanished. Then, one by one, a half dozen disreputable creatures stole out into the bushes behind the house, and straggled down the ravine toward the back doors of the village. Ichitaro went on with his painting.

The two specks on the distant road disappeared in the trees, came into view again, were lost, and finally emerged at the lower end of the street. Passing slowly

along the houses, they stopped in front of the one just vacated; put down the long, thin rolls they were carrying, and called a lusty, "Good day!" There was no response, though the cry was three times repeated. One of the visitors pulled aside the curtains before the entrance and walked in.

At first he could see nothing, but groping for a moment across the square of dirt floor in front of the mats, he began to distinguish a low wooden table, upon which stood empty bottles and unwashed dishes. Beyond was the stock-in-trade of a disreputable eating place; gray tentacles of cold devil-fish; boiled eggs; round slabs of rice and vegetables wrapped in seaweed; cheap cakes, brightly pink or green. Over all was the sour smell of *sake*. Behind the room was a torn paper door, closed tightly. The caller made as though to push this aside and explore further, but changing his mind, he went back to his friend in the street again.

The two opened their rolls and hung them on the outer wall of the little house. One was a song sheet, written in the simple syllabary of schoolchildren; the other a vivid chromo picturing a turbaned father and a forlorn boy. With strong, untutored voices, out of tune and in different keys, they began to sing the Japanese version of "Jesus Loves Me."

“My Master loves me;
My Master is strong,
So though I am weak,
I shall not fear.”

The children in the homes below came running; little sunburned urchins, naked and gloriously unashamed. After them came farmers with knotted head-bands; girls in red petticoats; mothers with babies at their breasts; grandfathers with toddlers tied into the backs of their *kimono*, and grandmothers grinning through blackened teeth. Back in the little eating house the ragged doors moved slowly, and a dark figure slid out. Step by step it drew nearer. Kato was telling the story of the Prodigal Son, and of how his father ran to meet him, “though the mother was so worn out with anxiety that she had no strength to move!” The fatted calf was killed, and the *bath heated*. Imperceptibly the black shadow emerged from the house and stood in the sunlight. Turning suddenly to point at the picture, the story teller looked into the staring eyes of a leper.

2

As Nagata tells the story, “Shigema Shimamoto was from the age of five a leper, but as his case was very light, he was able to take his primary school education. He early learned from his bad companions

to gamble in a small way. How the heart of his widowed mother must have sorrowed over him! Day and night the little womanly heart was full of grief added to grief, pain to pain. Finally, from this agony she poured out her life, holding to herself bitterness too deep for tears, and became a guest of the other world.

“The boy should have repented, but on the contrary he rejoiced that she was gone. Thinking that now there was no one to reprove him nor to sorrow over him, he went from bad to worse. He turned his home into a gambling den, and enticed seven tenths of the little village, old and young, men and women, into his place and led them astray. His disease, thus neglected, progressed like a galloping horse.

“But while Shigema was laboring to bring his village into the kingdom of Satan, God was reaching out His powerful hand to save. God’s good vessel, Brother Kato, went about preaching. He sang, and told the story of the Prodigal Son. Then with prayer, and a contribution to his poverty-stricken host, he went away. After this, he came almost every other day.

“How kind this was of a stranger! ‘Love, real love, is it not this?’ thought Shigema, much moved. But it was more than six months before Shigema entered into the true religion. The birthpangs of a soul are not short.”

The heights above the village of Koajiguchi were peppered with spots of snow. Wind whistled through the pine trees and bent the trembling bamboo. Crows cawed in the bare poplars. People in closely wrapped *kimono* passed along the street shivering. In front of Shigema's little house a glossy camellia bent under the weight of its blood red flowers, and the fragrance of plum blossoms perfumed the cold air. From behind the empty eating-room came the startling sound of a man crying.

Shigema lay on the mats, his head buried in his shaking arms. Leprosy had attacked his eyes, and through the darkness only a faint glimmer of light and the flicker of moving objects could reach him. The disaster had come swiftly. After a few days of pain, he awoke one morning to find himself helpless. Trembling with fright, he crept along the wall to the door, and called to his neighbors. They were kind. They tried to comfort him. They called a doctor, and he too was sympathetic, but he did not come again. A good old woman came in to make Shigema's fire and cook his food, and gradually he learned to stumble about with arms outstretched to feel his way.

But there was a gash on his forehead where he ran into a tree. He stepped on his kitten and she wailed

in his arms. Once he ventured into the street, clinging to a guide and tapping his way with a long, unwieldy stick. A motor car crowded him to the wall in the narrow road, as it chugged past, horn shrieking. Bicycles hurtled by, grazing his clothing. His guide was exasperating. And Shigema felt the eyes of all the world upon him in his helplessness.

There were sounds that tormented him. Dogs chasing his kitten; the fire alarm, and swift feet running; the jingling bell of a newsboy, as he raced along with an extra. (Shigema could not read!) At night there was the wail of the blind masseuer's flute. But Shigema knew that his disease cut him off from the only refuge of blind men in Japan. Ahead was want, and a body failing fast.

He sprawled upon the mats, sobbing. In his arms were the fragments of a flower pot, and a gay geranium, crushed in the spilled earth, lay broken beside him. He straightened himself, and flung his arms forward. One hand touched the glowing embers in his brazier.

Hours passed. The wind grew louder. The sun went down behind the mountains. The old woman came with food and fuel. He would not notice her, and she went away leaving him in the darkness. He was praying. Now his voice was raised in high-pitched pleading; now sunk in weary whispers. Night closed in. He went on without rest, or food, or fire. At

times he brokenly repeated Scripture. And again his hoarse, cracked voice would quaver the words of a hymn.

Nagata says: "A week went by, and at last Shigema arose from the bitterness of despair dancing for joy. God is love. Therefore He does not needlessly inflict pain and torture upon His children. The trials He sends have a deep meaning, which is beyond the wisdom and understanding of men. 'Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!' If it is God's will, there is nothing that is impossible. And looking up into the glorious light around him, he seemed to see the face of God."

Strengthened by this vision, he again took up his prayer. Day after day, and far into the night; praising, confessing, pleading. Another week went by. Worn out, he fell asleep on his knees. When the anxious old neighbor stole in to kindle his brazier, he was lying huddled against the wall. She hurried to bring a quilt from the closet and spread it over his shoulders. He awoke and rolled over, facing the door she had left open. Clear in the cloudless sky he saw the sun rising above the mountains! "*Halleluiah! Halleluiah! Amen.*"

"For those who enter the Christian faith there comes the question of daily food to make them afraid and anxious. Oh, the bitterness of the need of the

man of flesh! Shigema, in order to be at ease about his daily living, found money to set up a little business. But the sudden advent of hard times swallowed up many little ventures. Shigema's undertaking was caught in the whirlpool, and everything was lost.

"This two or three times purified vessel, small though it was, now became the finest gold. Blessed is he, who because of trials, draws the nearer unto God. The next business he took up was the service of God. From the mouth which had used to urge men to gamble, he cried now for repentance. Oh, what a change! People hard with surprised eyes. The place that had been a gambling den now became the gathering point for daily prayer circles. Shigema's testimony was the blood of a living Christ. The badly diseased Shigema lay on his bed in the glory of God, and while the whole village was being saved, he was ordered by the police to go to Oshima. In Koajiguchi there was now not merely not one gambler. Instead, there were twenty-four Christians, and new enquirers were being added. Almost the whole place had changed into a Christian village."

4

Shigema sat on a thin cushion in a little wagon with a rickety tin roof supported by bamboo sticks. Spilling over his knees, and tied wherever they would

stay on, were presents from his followers. Eggs laid end to end and done up in straw; paper sacks of bread and cakes; fruit in flat-sided baskets; bottles of ginger ale. A long line of friends stood ready to follow his cart down the mountain side. They were dressed in their best black *haori* and divided skirts. The women's heads were topped with puffs and whirls, bristling with combs, and glossy with hair oil. Little boys wore flopping coats and trousers, and the little girls, flowered *kimono* and gay ribbons. Everywhere was ceremonious salutation and decorous deportment. Each carried his own New Testament and hymnbook done up in a square of colored cloth. Ichitaro was there with the little dog he had trained to warn Shigema of the approach of strangers to the gambling den. It was five years since the day he had barked at Kato and Fujiwara.

A cousin of Shigema's, dressed in the tight breeches and wide sleeved cotton coat of a *jinrikisha*-man, picked up the shafts of the poor little vehicle, and the procession started down the winding road. Dewdrops still glittered on the wayside grasses. The mountains in the distance were a misty purple, and the fields a sea of green, with little islets of yellow huts under friendly trees. The breeze played delicately with bare heads and gala clothing. A lark sang in the sky.

They passed out of the wooded uplands down to the terraced paddys, and into a level spot by the road-

side. The cart was drawn up facing the gathering. Shigema raised his hand for prayer. The people sang. Someone read a formal address of farewell. Next, the man who had been a great trouble to the police was now thanked by them. Others gave their good-by messages with full hearts. They sang *God Be With You Till We Meet Again*, and Shigema spoke a final benediction,

“My beloved Koajiguchi, God’s blessing upon you!”

It was dusk when the wagon wobbled into Susaki. Factory girls covered with cotton lint were hurrying along in giggling groups. Two-wheeled carts, rigged out in pink and green and yellow streamers, rolled along pulled by sunburned youths in shorts and woolly cholera belts, bawling “I-i-i-ce cre-e-e-am!” Fat men wearing towels roped around their middles lolled in front of dimly lighted shops. Dogs fought fleas. Babies played in the streets. Bicycles loaded with all the merchandise of commerce dodged in and out among them. The river, a sheen of amethyst, melted into the gray sea below the darkening mountains.

Shigema and his puller drew up before a small wooden building surmounted by a Cross. A group of waiting Christians hurried out to meet them. The cart was taken to the rear of the church, and kind hands brought a refreshing meal. The man who had come with him took the tray, and breaking open the paper

envelope containing chopsticks, fed Shigema with the hot rice, fish and vegetables. For Shigema had no fingers now, and feet and legs were so far gone that when time for the service came, his cousin lifted him from the dusty cart, carried him on his back into the church, and set him down on the edge of the pulpit.

There was a large congregation. The believers had called together so many of their friends that the benches were crowded, and people sat on floor cushions. Fans fluttered. Insects swarmed around the light bulbs. Naked legs beneath light summer clothing shifted ceaselessly to avoid mosquitoes.

It was the first time that Shigema had ever entered a Christian church. He sat on his knees in his blue robe, with scarred head and ulcered face. He spoke in a husky voice, difficult to understand. But for two hours attention was breathless. Shigema told of the days in his gambling den where men and women had debased themselves, and of the drunkards who had snored off their sprees on his tattered mats, while their children hung around the door crying for food. He recalled the day when Kato and Fujiwara preached in front of his home, and how they had told him that the Father loves His children. His hearers lived with him through the despair of blindness, the glory of his vision, and the miracle of restored sight. The swollen face was shining. Speaker and hearers were carried

into the presence of God.

5

Shigema lay on his bed in one of the wards of the hospital. North and south the long glass walls were pushed back, and a fresh breeze played over the marred faces on the wooden pillows. Some of the sick folk amused themselves with packs of cards. Some talked. Some dozed. Some read. Shimizu told his beads: "*Namu Amida Butsu! Namu Amida Butsu!*"

High on the western hill Shigema could catch glimpses of the eighty-eight stone monuments that have been set up, a miniature of the Eighty-Eight Shrines of Shikōku. Faithful Buddhists make the rounds of these to pray before them, trusting the gods to see that although they cannot make the longer pilgrimage, they still do penance for the Curse of Heaven. Farther down the hill are the cottages where most of the sick folk live, and the vegetable patches where they raise turnips and cucumbers. Then the tennis courts and baseball field, and to the left the Assembly Hall. There in the days before the church was built, the red-and-gold Buddha, the god-shelf of Shinto, and the little organ of the Christians stood side by side. Then come the administration buildings and the laboratory, one of the best in the world.

100

Four or five patients were crossing the sand on their way to the wards. They were going for their morning talk with Shigema. His sight was almost gone once more, but for almost a year now he had spoken to them every day. Deaf, crippled and blind, his one prayer was, "O Lord, spare my voice, that I may praise Thee unto the end!"

Little Flower came with medicine, a white clad nurse, beautiful amid the ugliness. Long minutes passed. Nagata prayed. Shigema's broken hands fumbled with his Bible. They waited for his message, but he did not speak. "At last he turned, and with the old gesture of blessing he said in one word, 'Thank all of you. I shall be allowed to go to Heaven day after tomorrow in the afternoon!'"

Two days later Shigema's corner of the ward was crowded with his Christian friends, arrayed in their best. They sat on the floor around his bed, singing and praying and reading the Scriptures. There was Nagata, the poet; old Miyake; the Fujita twins; Mrs. Miyauchi with face all paralyzed, and six-year-old Haruko with her doll. Many others sat there, still and patient. Shigema lay outside his quilts in his crested robes. Friends had bathed and shaved and dressed him. He was waiting. Around the little company the island glowed in gold and green and orchid. Wild flowers were massed against the hills. Sea and

sky melted into blue infinity. Sunlight flashed on the fishing boats creeping by.

Shigema's face on the hard pillow was radiant, listening. He folded his twisted hands on his breast, smiled farewell to his friends, and whispered, "Everything is ready." Then while his lips moved in prayer, he was called!

"Halleluiah! Halleluiah! A great sinner has been changed by Christ to a saint! Glory to God!"



IX

ONE LITTLE PILGRIM OF SHIKOKU

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Miyo could not remember her mother. From the time she was three years old she played all day at the edge of her father's field, or fretted for him to carry her on his back while he tilled the paddy. She took her naps on an old blue wadded coat, and toddled along on her little sandals to run after butterflies. In the evening her father came with his two big baskets of vegetables balanced on a long pole across his shoulder. Setting them down, he slung the child to his back and bound her to him with a black cotton sash. When he had adjusted his heavy load again, they shuffled homeward in the gathering dusk.

It was dark already in the empty thatched hut. The father set the baby down upon the mats, and her eyes stung with smoke as he fanned the charcoal to make their tea. Then he went to the iron pot on the brick stove and ladled into a wooden bucket a mound of clammy rice, and stopped at a great keg to fish from the yellow brine a rough piece of pickled turnip. As they sat on the faded floor cushions, he poured scalding tea over the rice, and fed the little one between his own gulping mouthfuls. Afterward he lighted a cigarette and took her out to see the sleepy chickens in their

wicker cages. In a little while he pulled the thick bedding from the closet, and they snuggled into it, while Miyo lay staring at the unwinking electric light until she dozed off to sleep.

She was badly spoiled. She must have been quite a big child before she ceased to waken many times at night and whine to be carried about on her father's back and jiggled to sleep once more. He would sway from side to side on his tired feet, crooning wordlessly, while Miyo looked with drowsy curiosity into the corners of the dirt floor where mice sometimes played, and clung closely to the security of his broad shoulders. He was never impatient. No matter how hard he worked all day— while she played in the sun— he never failed to heed that coaxing cry. Sometimes in the night his arms fumbled for the baby, and he would whisper, "My little keepsake!" He was only a boy, and had loved her mother tenderly.

He took the child with him always when he went to work. He had no interest in anything but her. Much of his hard earned money was spent for her clothes, and much of his time in keeping them clean. When she would beg to carry the neighbor's fat youngster on her back, his mother would say,

"Oh no, he might soil your *kimono*. Then what would Daddy say?"

The little girl was hardly out of her father's sight

until she was eight years old. Then she tired of playing on the dyke beside the field and begged to stay and toss bean bags and build doll's houses with her friends. When meal time came she ran proudly home to make the tea, and even learned to kindle a fire of chaff to boil the rice, though often when they ate it, it was smoky tasting.

2

It must have been the sight of those little hands struggling with the big pot, and scratching and burning themselves as she tried to serve him, which convinced the father that they could not go on so. His friends had often urged him to marry, but he would never consent. When Miyo was nine, however, there was suddenly a great stir of mat-beating and throwing away of old garbage. "Auntie", the pleasant neighbor, struggled over, loaded down with bright new bedding. Then there was busy preparation of food, and bottles were brought from the *sakeya*. Miyo felt her importance among the other children as this unusual confusion went on. She had been told that it was on account of a new mother.

But when she saw this mother, her heart stopped. The bride came in a *jinrikisha*. She was tricked out in a high-piled head dress, with shining ornaments in her stiff black hair. Her face had been plastered

white and then painted, and she wore a black *kimono*, as the occasion required. But child though Miyo was, she saw that she would never look so again. That her face was coarse and common; her eyes little, like pig's eyes, and her teeth like horse's teeth. Miyo hated her. And when she saw among those who had come, a girl of her own age who strongly resembled the woman, she knew it was her step-sister, O Katsu, and ran screaming to throw herself on the floor and refuse all comforting.

For the first time, her father failed her, and from that day he was helpless. The new wife had a piercing voice and a fierce temper. From the noises which poured from her open mouth, he fled in terror or cowered in beaten silence. But Miyo fought her like a little tiger. Never would she obey the slightest command. A cold chasm opened up between father and child. He dared not show affection for her, and puzzled and hurt, she could not understand why he did not cast out of the house this person whom she detested.

Seeing their wretchedness, Auntie asked Miyo one day why she did not go as a baby nurse, and Miyo begged that she find a place for her. So for six months the child lived with a baby on her back from morning till late at night, the mother relieving her only when the little one was so hungry that nothing would stop

his crying. Half a year of this, then Auntie found her a better place in another village. The father took her to the new home, and they clung together wordlessly when they had to say good-by.

The new family was kind. There were other servants, and Miyo had only to fetch and carry a bit and do light household tasks. She had been there more than a year when she had an experience which she never forgot, and which Nagata would never have failed to include in her story.

Japan was in great trouble. On July 30 of that year the Emperor Meiji passed away, and General Nogi and his wife knelt together and took their lives that they might follow their master to the other world.

All the country-side went at night to say a last farewell. The little foot paths were filled with silent people moving in single file toward the railroad tracks. Their bobbing paper lanterns were like fireflies with golden images dancing in the flooded fields. The night was alive and pulsing with the croaking of the frogs. A breeze brought coolness after the summer day. Clouds raced across the moon.

The mourners knelt on both sides of the track, shoulder to shoulder, in lines which seemed endless. Their bodies were bowed until their foreheads touched the dusty earth. Old and young were one in their sorrow. At last came the rumble of the funeral train.

Slowly it grew clearer; came nearer; thundered past; shrieked farewell, and rolled away between the rows of worshipers.

3

Soon after this, Miyo's strange and bitter misfortunes began. The little finger of her right hand grew bent, and she could not straighten it. She fell and hurt her foot, and the wound would not heal. Finally she was taken to the doctor, and they learned that it was leprosy! The master wrote at once that he must send Miyo home. She went, glad she was to see her father, half sorry to leave her pleasant place, and a bit self-important at the seriousness with which her ailment was being taken. She had not faintest idea of what was in store for her.

Her father was not well, but he greeted Miyo tenderly. That night he placed her beside him in the great outdoor cauldron which was the bath, and as they sat up to their chins in the pleasant steaming water, they felt for a moment that they were rid of the hateful presence which had ruined their home. "Their love, warmer than the bath, melted the bitterness in their hearts and drew them together again. No words were needed, but at last Miyo whispered,

'Father, my dead mother. . . .'

He trembled as he drew her nearer to him, and

tears were in his voice as he replied,

‘Miyo, do not say it. . . . Father, too. . . .’

These two, having lost something precious, were drawn yet more closely together. The mother’s spirit, seeing, must have rejoiced that night.”

After Miyo’s return her father and step-mother quarreled yet more fiercely. The woman was determined to drive the child out of the house, and to compel her to make the pilgrimage in far away Shikoku, that the priests decree for leprosy. Miyo was ten years old, and very small so the father fought to keep his roof above her head. Sometimes the wife would goad him to the verge of insanity, and he would seize her by the hair and drag her about the place until she screamed for mercy. Three years of such misery went by, and then another child was born. After this, the mother was still more insistent in her demands that Miyo be cast out.

One day when she had left the place after a shameless scene, the father sharpened his razor carefully. Then he tied the baby on his back, and taking Miyo by the hand, they started up a lonely mountain road. He kept saying,

“Hurry, Miyo Chan. Someone may see.”

Miyo knew what he was going to do. Her heart was beating so fast that she could hardly breathe, and she was trembling. But she stumbled along, holding

tightly to him. At last they reached a great rock at the edge of a bamboo thicket. Looking down they could see their little thatched home and the hard yellow ground around it. Beyond was the field where Miyo had spent her baby years watching her father at his work. It was faintly green now with winter wheat, and joined with other small patchwork plots until they were bounded sharply by the sea. How peaceful it was in the sunshine, and how sad the man's quivering face! Miyo could not make it harder for him. So when he untied the sleeping baby and laid her on the granite ledge, passionately drawing the older child to him, though she could see him fumbling in his sash for what she knew was there, she tried to smile and whispered, "Father, it is all right. We shall go to be with Mother!"

He dropped to the ground and clasped her knees, burying his face in her clothing. They sobbed as though their hearts would break. Suddenly a man crashed through the bamboo, snatched the razor, and threw it over the cliff. He grasped the father by the neckband of his robe, and the two struggled together. But the nerve strain had been too great, and the father, crumpling, pitched over on his face. Miyo helped the neighbor to revive him, and by and by they crept down the hill to the unhappiness they knew was waiting there.

Things were no better after that. Once Miyo begged her father to give her poison. But he shook his head sadly, and said, "I could not." One day after an angry battle the child lost her self control altogether, and forgetting what might be the consequence, cried out,

"I shall stay here no longer. I am going to Shikoku!"

"Her step-mother, adroitly accepting these passionate words, and rejoicing greatly, hurried to make the preparations for the journey. The father, worn out with the struggle, gave in, and began to teach Miyo the prayer she must use on the pilgrimage. She said goodbye to no one but Auntie. The other neighbors thought she merely going on an errand. The parting with her father was like death."

4

She walked to the edge of the village steadily enough, but once in the country road, tears blinded her. She could not believe that she was homeless! It would be so easy for her to go back from this strangeness to familiar things. Surely she had but to reach out her hand to pet the new puppy! Was it not almost time to kindle the fire for dinner? How could they eat calmly while she was alone on this long road? She dropped down upon the wayside grass and cried until

there were no tears left. But when she arose, she did not go back.

By night she had wandered to the next village, and there some one showed her to a little inn. She told her story, and a kind-hearted woman tried to comfort her. Miyo stayed there for a week, and by that time pride was gone. She wrote to her father and told him that she could go no farther. The reply was, "Come to Okitsu. Father will be waiting."

The birds were singing as Miyo started out to meet him. But she was happier than they. This nightmare was almost over. Soon she would be in her father's arms. At first she had no thought of where she was to look for him. Their own village was so tiny. But from the edge of Okitsu, the place was crowded. She searched the strange faces eagerly. Streets ran off at right angles to the one she was following, and there were little winding alley-ways. She went to the railroad station, and watched the crowds come and go. She stopped on street corners and stood until she was jostled aside by bicycles or farmers' carts. She wandered slowly along, peering into the slops on either hand. Tired and hungry, and desperately discouraged, she saw night come on. And still she had not found him. The second day it was the same, and the third. At night Miyo slept in an inn kept for pilgrims, and because she was little and alone, the wo-

man of the place stayed close by her.

Miyo did not find her father. And though she could not have forced herself to put it into words, there was a tiny doubt in her heart— enough to make it impossible for her to turn toward home again. Oh, better any terrors that might face her on the road than to find that her father had deceived her, or that he should fail to welcome her! She would go on and pray at the temple and come back cured.

Crying helplessly, she pressed on toward Ejiri. The road wound around cliffs, high up above the sea. On one hand were towering mountains, and on the other, far below, were white-caps dashing against the shore. The roaring of the winds, the noise of the tide, and the rolling clouds in the sky filled her with fear. She longed for companionship, but when she saw some unknown person approaching in the distance, she was yet more terrified, and hid among the trees until the stranger had gone by.

Night was falling when she reached Ejiri, tired and footsore. She could not find a friendly little inn at which to stop. Everywhere she was refused because she was a young girl alone. She walked the streets weeping in the dark until a policeman noticed her. He was kind, gave her cakes, and found a place for her to stay.

Next morning Miyo took from her bundle the

pilgrim's costume which her step-mother had prepared. It would be a protection, she was told. "Around her shoulders was the red band betokening an orphan. On her breast was a wooden charm. On her wrists were half-gloves. Her legs were wrapped with strips of cloth. She bore a staff. On her right hand was a rosary; in the left, a bell. On her head was the mushroom hat of a pilgrim. Daily she went along, begging her way. Those whom she met realized her plight, and with tears in their eyes contributed to her necessities. But she was not thinking of money. She was longing for love."

Sometimes she found it. At one inn there was a woman so kind that it seemed she must be the mother about whom Miyo was always dreaming. Miyo tried to help about the place to show her gratitude, and ended by spending two happy weeks there. There were tears in this woman's eyes when Miyo had to say good-by, and she told Miyo that but for her disease, she would like to keep her always.

Miyo's hair was beautiful. Black and straight and shining, it reached to the ground when she unbound it. People had noticed it all her life. But the heat and dirt of the road and the carelessness of the folk who stopped at the inns made it impossible for her to keep it. "Although it seemed next in importance to life itself, she saw that she would have to

give it up. After it was cut, she carried it with her to a river. It was a swift mountain stream flowing between steep banks, and singing and sparkling on its way. She clambered down through flowering bushes to the water's edge, and flung her precious treasure in. For a moment the rich black tresses floated against the white stones in the channel, then were caught in the current and carried out of sight. She sat on the ground, all doleful and dusty, and laid her little shaven head upon her arms and wept.

Miyo had come two hundred miles over the mountains and through the tea plantations and mulberry groves of Central Japan when she reached Kyoto. She knew that Osaka was near, and she thought that Shikoku was a part of Osaka. So she took a train to Osaka, believing that she would be at the end of her journey "in one breath". A prayer in the temple at Shikoku, and she would be well again. And then for home, and father! At the Osaka station there were scores of *jinrikisha*-men lined up for passengers, and when they saw this small pilgrim, so like a little old nun, they vied with one another in being kind to her. It was from one of them that she learned, when she asked to be taken to Shikoku, that she was still many miles from her destination, and to get there she would have to cross the sea.

Miyo stood on the bridge over the Awaji River

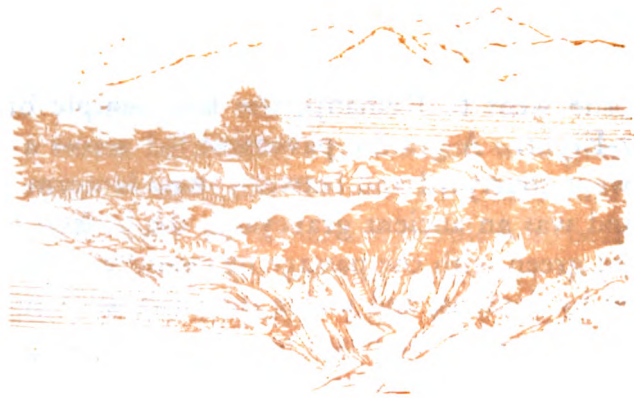
as the sun went down behind Mt. Rokko, and the lights came out along the water. Not knowing which way to turn, she at last asked a policeman, who guided her to the wharf and kindly bought her a half fare ticket. On the boat there was a married couple who befriended her, and did what they could to make her first voyage pleasant. It was still dark when they reached Muya, and she parted with these friends at the landing after they had shown her where to find the waiting room. There she sat alone, crouched up in a corner until morning. Part of the time she folded her arms upon her bundle and snatched what sleep she could. Again and again she heard the cocks crowing for dawn. Daylight came, with people stirring about. She asked eagerly "Where is Shikoku?"

She still thought that there was but one place for her to visit, and that it would be near. They tried to explain it to her— that the Shikoku Pilgrimage is more than two hundred miles long; that it means visiting Eighty-Eight Temples. She was to learn for herself that many are on high mountains. She was to count the stone steps at Kotohira, and pull herself up the precipices of Gokensan. Now they told her that many weeks of travel were before her. But she still believed that she would be healed at once.

So she went to Reinanji, the first temple of the Eighty-Eight. A granite pavement led across a bare, well-swept courtyard and between stone lanterns. On one hand was an ancient graveyard, the broken tombs gray and green with the passage of centuries. Behind, guarded by demons, and under the shadow of mighty cryptomerias, stood the hoary temple. Candles glowed beneath the gilded Goddess of Mercy and lighted up the lovely lotus flowers around the red-draped altar. Miyo's sun-blinded eyes could just see the wooden saints, all blue and white and red, and thick with dust, sitting in solemn state in the darkness.

She was trembling as she stood on the highest stone step and chanted the prayer her father had taught her. Over and over again, now high, now low. Surely she must be patient and not expect the gods to listen at once to a child. At last a black-robed priest took pity and came and told her she had prayed enough. She opened her clasped hands to see if the miracle had come. Then she stumbled down the steps, choked with disappointment.

The priest was good. He did what he could to comfort her. Afterward he stamped a paper which



she was to carry until it bore the seal of each of the Eighty-Eight Temples. Then, he told her, she would surely be healed. He found a place for her to stay that night, and next day she started out on her journey again.

The lepers who make the Pilgrimage find shelter where they can. In the cities there are inns where they may stop, and they pay with the money they have begged along the way. Beside the country roads there are little empty houses without doors, where those who will may take refuge for a night. Sometimes in winter a whole company will camp in the gravel river-bed under a bridge.

On the second night of Miyo's travels she came to a place where an evil man lived and made what he could off passing pilgrims. He was clothed in tatters of what had once been a priest's robe, and she supposed him to be a holy man. He called to her to stop, and asked her story. And as she wept, he pretended to give her the sympathy for which she was yearning. He told her he would cure her, and searched her stuff for what pennies he could find. Miyo heard afterwards that he found her father's address and wrote to



him for money, which the father sent. Nagata tells the rest of the story thus: "Begging for health, she poured into his hands all that she had. Thinking he really would cure her, she stayed, and he fed and sheltered her. But he came upon her suddenly, and seized her cruelly while she screamed and struggled. When this was known to the villagers, they came and drove this demon from them."

Months passed, and winter came. But it was mild, and people were kind. Miyo stayed here and there until March. When the flowers were beginning to bloom and the birds to sing, and a faint haze was lovely on the hills, she took up her way again, visiting temple after temple. Her clothing was old and torn, and her heart heavy. One night she stopped at an inn far up in the mountains beside a wonderful green and white stream. Next her, as she rolled to her place on the mats, was a dirty, ragged woman, crying. She seemed so wretched that Miyo spoke to her, and when she turned, Miyo saw that she was blind. Blind, and a leper, and all alone, for that day she had been deserted. In the morning the two wandered out together, aimless vagrants. For it had been gradually borne in on Miyo that she would not be cured. And time went on and on.

Four years of trial was Miyo's pilgrimage. Measuring her age as other girls do, she was now sixteen. At last, one summer day, she came with her shaven

head to Oshima, for even in the never-ending stream of destitute pilgrims, she had attracted the attention of the police, and they had taken her from the road. For many years now, she has been safe and sheltered, and the doctors have stayed the progress of the disease. She has found peace of soul in the little Chapel of the Cross. But beyond the beauty of the sea around her, she can look to the mountains of Shikoku, and she knows that hundreds of homeless wanderers still crawl to those temples for relief.

Often it all comes back. When the winds rage, they whip again her ragged garments, and she feels the rain drip into her flimsy shelter. Heat and hunger are not forgotten, nor cold and weariness and pain. One little pilgrim suffered so much, and many, many still are suffering. . . .



X

LOVE'S GIFT

X

LOVE'S GIFT

Love gave a gift to God—
A little thing—
He used that gift to make
Nagata sing.

Some widow brought her mite,
And through God's grace
That glorious light was born
On Keizo's face.

Christ walks no roads today,
But 'tis His will
That those who love Him shall
Touch lepers still!





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