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The Kitsune Book

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND TO APPRECIATION

IN Japan, Kitsuné is considered to be the most interesting and popular animal in tradition. You will find the tradition of the fox existing everywhere you go in the country. And Kitsuné is loved and worshiped by the people.

All the principal authorities on ancient customs and ideas tell us that animal worship has prevailed in every part of the globe. And whatever may be the origin of this worship, a good authority on Hindu religion asserts that it is to be accounted for by the working of one or other of the motives of gratitude, fear, or awe, operating separately in the separate cases. Men, in not understanding the ways and powers of animals, considered them as higher than themselves and hence worshiped them and copied them in some of the habits.

In this connection, it is interesting to note how the American Indians, good hunters as they were, feared and worshiped the animals of woods and forests.

"The animal people lived," says an Indian legend, "before the days of the first grandfather, long, long ago, when the sun was new and no larger than a star, when the earth was young, and the tall firs of the forest no larger than an arrow." A beautiful legend, this.

Indeed it was the fox, the Silver Fox, that created the world, according to the legend of the Hat Creek Indians, who live in the Northwest of America.

The word Kitsuné comes from two Japanese syllables: kitsu and né. Kitsu is the sound made when a fox yelps, and né is a word signifying an affectionate feeling, a suitable name for such an interesting creature as a fox.

Foxes are rarely seen nowadays in Japan even in rural districts. In ancient times, however, they would roam about leisurely in any place, wagging their long pointed muzzles and dragging their long busy tails.

Late at night, in the stillness of a deserted village, the plaintive barking of a fox would be heard.

"Kitsu* is yelping. Kitsu is yelping again," a mother would tell her infant, giving the breast to him in bed.

In ancient times, according to the Nihon Ryakki, one of the oldest books of records, a great number of foxes lived even in the national capital, Kyoto: In the reign of the Emperor Kammu (737-806), foxes barked at night in the Imperial Palace in December, 803; and in the reign of the Emperor Saga (786-842), foxes walked up the stairs of the Imperial Palace in September, 820.

Yoshida Kenko, the famous writer-recluse of the middle part of the 14th century, writes in his Tsure-zuregusa as follows:

*Kitsuné was called Kitsu in ancient times. Not an abbreviation here. (See the chapter Fox in Poetry.)

"In the palace at Horikawa, a servant was bitten in the leg by a fox while he was in bed fast asleep. A petty priest of the Ninnaji temple was passing one night in front of the main building of the temple when three foxes attacked him. He unsheathed his sword to defend himself and lunged at two foxes. One of them was killed, the other two scampered away. The priest was injured in several parts of his body. However fortunately he was not so seriously wounded."

You can see by the above statement made by Kenko that foxes were still rampant in the 14th century capital of the country.

In Japan, says the Nihon Shoki, the annals compiled in 720, Kitsuné was formerly held in respect as an animal of good omen. In 720 a black fox was presented from Iga Province to the Emperor Gemmyo (661-726), an empress-regnant, the founder of the capital of Nara.

However in the 10th and the 11th centuries when poetry was flourishing, Kitsuné was not treated with affection. The animal, then, was merely considered to be weird and uncanny. Kitsuné, in those days, was associated in literature in general with such a thing as an apparition or a wraith.

To understand the tales (including, of course, those of Kitsuné) told in the era during which The Genji Monogatari or The Konjaku Monogatari was written, we must know the social conditions. The foregoing stories were written in the epoch dominated, to all intents and purposes, by the military men. And it must also be remembered that the religion of these

military men was Power. Each of the war barons, who wanted to be the master of the capital by conquering his rival, had no leisure to resign himself to his fate. He simply strove against it, casting aside effeminate fatalism. He engaged in internecine feuds. He would break his promises. And only the brave could win the laurels of victory.

On the other hand, the masses in those days, who lived in the world of disturbances, must have found themselves exhausted physically and spiritually. They had previously suffered under the tyrannical government. And now they could not seek a place for peaceful living because of wars. Therefore they were obliged to take refuge in superstition, a natural course for them to take.

Superstition is a thing calculating and materialistic in any age, common to all. Superstition instantly captivates the masses by its momentary pleasure and immediate advantage. It always avails itself of the disadvantages of people. They lose their reason when blinded by superstition. Thus there were two different currents in those days

—power-worship and the addiction to superstition, as seen in the military class and the lower people, phenomena totally contradicting each other in nature. The faith of the latter was under pressure by the former.

Now we must look back upon the later era—the Édo Era (1615-1847), during which such famous tales as *The Ugétsu Monogatari* and *The Hakken-den* were written. We find there a different aspect of life—totally

different from that of the above-mentioned age.

Tokugawa-Iyéyasu, who assumed the reins of government after Toyotomi-Hidéyoshi in the early part of the 17th century, was an extremely shrewd statesman-general. He believed not only in Power, but also in religion—as a policy, and he was afraid of his fate after death, like an ordinary man.

As for the populace in this era, they saw peace ensured by the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate. However the class system, the samurai class and the lower classes still existed. It was still the world of samurai. In consequence, the populace could do nothing but resort to their faith for the relief of their sufferings. However after the insurrection of Shima-bara, a great revolt of Christians in Kyushu in 1637, a strict surveillance was exercised over religion—their only safety-valve. It was natural that they began to indulge merely in pleasure.

The samurai class, at the same time, sank into effeminacy by the neglect of military discipline; and began to follow the example of the people in general as they became used to peace. As a result, they became as superstitious as the populace.

Tsunayoshi, the 5th Shogun of the Tokugawas, for instance, believing blindly in the preaching of Priest Ryuko, established several big temples and issued an order to protect animals, especially dogs, because he was born in the Year of the Dog (The year falling on one of the twelve horary signs, Dog). Dogs, therefore, thrived, and the streets of Édo, as might well be imagined, were full of their feces, and they called Tsunayoshi the Dog-Shogun. He was a wise and learned shogun. However superstition made him such a man.

The literature, and especially the stories told of foxes in those days, naturally reflect this tendency to superstition. When, for instance, a maniac or maniacs appeared on the street of Édo (present Tokyo) and cut women's hair and they could not apprehend the culprits, they attributed the offence to the act of Kitsuné, calling them hair-cutting Kitsuné.

The hair-cutting Kitsuné was the town-talk in the days of the great artist Utamaro (1753-1806). The outrageous act must have caused considerable alarm among the women at that time who prized their hair so much, as shown in several block-printed genre-pictures.

To the minds of the people, Kitsuné seemed to take delight: 1) in assuming the form of human beings; 2) in bewitching human beings and 3) by possessing human beings. The people of the Heian Era (781-1185) and the Édo Era (1615-1867) believed in these things and the superstition still survives in some rural districts of the country.

Kitsuné, it must be remembered, was real in the minds of these people. They lived with Kitsuné. They shared joy and sorrow with Kitsuné. They fell in love with Kitsuné—and Kitsuné was infatuated with men—and women, as

you will read later in The Konjaku Monogatari and other tales. The writers of these books, of course, related stories about Kitsuné believing in Kitsuné, the animal of romance and mystery.

The author of this book, therefore, sincerely hopes that the reader will live with those people—believing in Kitsuné endowed with supernatural power. Then you can appreciate him fully and enjoy the tales found in this volume.

CHAPTER 2 CONCERNING THE INARI SHRINE

THE Inari shrine, one of the most popular and prosperous shrines of Japan, is so closely related to Kitsuné tradition that the animal, with the Japanese people in general, is synonymous with the shrine.

The Inari shrine with its characteristic red torii (a symbolic entrance to the precincts of a shrine) and a pair of white fox images, the messengers of the deity, will be found everywhere in the country—in towns, in villages—and a miniature one, in private houses, geisha houses, on department store roof gardens and other places.

The Inari shrine was originally erected in 711 as their patron deity by the influential Hatas, the descendants of the Korean prince naturalized in the 4th century.

Because of the fact that the Inari shrine is greatly concerned with the tradition of the fox in Japan, I will speak here about the shrine in detail.

The shrine is dedicated to Inari, the God of Rice. The name Inari is derived from the word of iné, rice plant. Inari means literally the growing of rice plants. It means, in substance, rice crop. Rice, in Japan, is the symbol of agriculture—the symbol of life in ancient times. In the phenomenon of the sprouting

of rice plants—in the growth of rice plants, the young and fresh spirit of the Inari God was to be felt. Thus the name Inari was given by the founder of the shrine, the Hatas.

Speaking of Inari it is interesting to note, from the etymological point of view, that there are many Japanese archaic words with the suffix of ri. For example:

Ika-ri (anger), oko-ri (origin), hika-ri (light), aka-ri (source of light), ino-ri (prayer), mamori (protection), mino-ri (crop) and others.

As it is clearly seen from the above instances, the Japanese suffix ri means something related closely to the divine work or power of God: Ikari (anger) is a word originally used in expressing a strong emotion aroused at seeing a gushing spring. Later, this word was used in expressing the intense feeling of God and men.

Okori (origin) means the power of Mother Nature. Hikari (light) and akari (source of light) have something to do with the mysterious power of God for which human beings are grateful. Inori (prayer), in any language, is the act of offering reverent petition, especially to God. And, in the case of inari, meaning ine-nari (rice crop), it signifies the fruit of the farmers' labor gained by the grace of God.

All the foregoing words with the suffix of ri are religious words. The name of Inari, therefore, was given by the Hatas to their tutelary god out of gratitude to the God of Rice.

Some people think that the white foxes, the guardians and messengers of the shrine, are identical with the deity of Inari. It is true that this is one of the characteristics of the faith. However this, it must be remembered, is only an aspect of the Inari faith. This can be proved by the fact that the god of foxes has never been deified in the Inari shrine as the object of worship, though there is a tributary shrine dedicated exclusively to the sacred white foxes in the precincts of the shrine at Fushimi, Kyoto, the site of the great Inari shrine.

In former years, the Inari shrine was supposed to have the senior grade of the first Court rank—Sho-Ichii. The fox gods, however, had no rank though they were enjoying general popularity. To illustrate this point, here is a poem by Issa, a haiku poet of the early 19th century, a humorous haiku composed by him on the occasion of the festival of Hatsu-uma held annually at the Inari shrines throughout the country in February:

O spring season's gaities!

The white foxes bark In a festive mood

With no Court rank of mark.

The white foxes of the Inari shrine are also called

myobu. Here is the legend why they are so named:

In the reign of the Emperor Ichijyo (980-1011), there lived a charming Court lady with a rank of myobu (a Court rank conferred on ladies) whose name was Shin- no-Myobu. She was a devotee of Inari God. She went to the shrine at Fushimi, Kyoto, to confine herself there for prayer for a period of seven days. After she had completed her term of worship, it is said, she won the heart of the Mikado and later became his consort. She attributed her good luck to the white foxes guarding the shrine and the name of myobu was given to them.

And here is a mythological story telling us how the white foxes became connected with the Inari shrine:

To the north of the capital, Kyoto, there lived a pair of very old white foxes in the neighborhood of Funaoka hill. The he-fox was a silver-white-furred animal and looked as if he were wearing a garment of bristling silver needles. He always kept his tail raised while walking. The she-fox had a deer's head with a fox's body. Their five cubs would follow them wherever they went. Each of these cubs had a different face.

During the Koin Era (810-823), the two white foxes, accompanied by the five cubs, made their way to the Inari shrine at Fushimi leaving their earth near Funaoka hill. When they reached the Inari-yama hill on which the shrine stood, they prostrated themselves in front of the shrine and said reverently:

"O Great God! We are naturally gifted with wisdom though we were born as animals. Now we sincerely wish to do our part for the peace and prosperity of the world. We regret, however, that we are not able to realize our purpose. O Great God! We pray from the bottom of our hearts that you would graciously allow us to become members of the household of this shrine so that we will be able to realize our humble wish!"

Greatly impressed by the sincerity with which these words were spoken, the sacred altar of the shrine instantly shook as if by an earthquake. And the next moment, the foxes heard the solemn voice of the Inari God coming from behind the sacred bamboo screen:

"We are always endeavoring to find some means to bestow the divine favor of Buddha on all men by doing our best. Your desire, foxes, is really praiseworthy. We will allow you, all of you, to stay here to do your service in this shrine forever. We expect you to assist with sympathy the worshipers and the people in general with the faith. We order you, He-Fox, to serve at the Upper Temple. We give you the name of Osusuki. And you, She-Fox, shall serve at the Lower Temple. We give you the name of Akomachi."

Hereupon each of the foxes including the five cubs made ten oaths and began to comply with the wishes of all the people. (It is generally believed that if any person with the Inari faith actually sees the natural shape of a white fox, or even sees it in a dream, he is receiving a divine revelation of the God of Inari through the medium, the messengers of the deity.)

And here is a reliable record of how the white foxes of the shrine became closely connected with the Inari God: Imperial Princess Toyuké, Goddess of Crops, to whom the Inari shrine is dedicated, was commonly called Goddess Mi-Kétsu. People wrote the word of Mi-Kétsu using a phonetic equivalent of Mi-Kétsu—

Three Foxes. Since then they believed that the deity was a fox-deity and also were under the impression that the Inari shrine was sacred to Kitsuné, a fact proving that the thought of ancestor-worship was combined with that of animal-worship.

Consequently they thought that when they had faith in the Inari God, the fox-messenger would make its appearance doing an act of charity and benevolence. (See the legend of Sanjyo Kokaji, the swordsmith, appearing in the chapter Fox in Nō Plays.) Thus the fox-faith nourished throughout the country.

It is a well-known fact that all religions had a messenger for the communication of God and men. In Christianity, for instance, we see the Holy Sheep or angels effecting the connection between the celestial world and the lower world, and we also see other messengers transmitting the Christian doctrine.

In the case of Buddhism, we see a sort of Buddha, Bodhi-sattva, next to Buddha in rank, and also Jizo (Ksitigarbha), a guardian deity of children. They are the messengers of Buddha endeavoring to bring about the redemption of all men. (See these messengers of Buddha appearing in the tales of The Konjaku Monogatari, to

be introduced later.) And Inari God has the white foxes as his messengers. There are many messengers in the service of temples and shrines in Japan such as: Snakes, Pigeons, Crows, Deer, etc.

In this connection, it must be added that the foxes in the service of Inari God have nothing to do with the bewitchery or mischief of other foxes which are commonly called *nogitsuné*, or wild foxes. One of the

duties of the Inari shrine at Fushimi in Kyoto was to purge or chastise these *nogitsuné*. The direct descendants of the Hatas, founder of the shrine, had a secret method of driving away wild foxes possessing men.

There is a very interesting document treasured in the Onishi family, the descendants of the Hatas, a note sent to the shrine from Toyotomi-Hidéyoshi, the Tycoon (1536-1598), the first commoner in Japan to rise to the highest state office, and the unifier of the Japanese Empire.

The note was written by Hidéyoshi when the daughter of his adopted son, Ukita-Hidéiyé, was reported suffering from fox-possession. It runs as follows:

To the Inari God:

Ukita's daughter is now babbling, apparently possessed by a wild fox. I hope that the fox will ' be dispersed immediately. When no suitable measures be taken, a nation-wide fox-hunt will be ordered.

P.S.

The chief priest of the Yoshida shrine* also notified concerning this matter.

Hidéyoshi (signature)

Note: Sending a note of protest to a god demanding him to drive away a wild fox supposedly possessing his adopted son's daughter is Hidéyoshi's way of doing things. Hidéyoshi reflects the spirit of the age: He believed in Power. However he also believed in the Inari God, and built the two-storied gate of the shrine.

*Also a shrine in Kyoto with *Kitsuné* messengers.

CHAPTER 3 CONCERNING THE KONJAKU

MONOG ATARI

IN *The Konjaku Monogatari*, or *Tales, Present and Past*, you will find many stories relative to Kitsuné —and the book treats of Kitsuné, in literature, as a hero or heroine, for the first time in Japan. It is appropriate, therefore, to say a few words concerning the book and its author.

The *Konjaku Monogatari* is a rare book written by Minamoto-no-Takakuni, known as Uji Dainagoft (1004- 1077) in the closing years of the Heian Era (781-1185). The oldest as a collection of narratives in Japanese, the book consists of 31 volumes, divided into Three Sections: Tenjiku (ancient name for India), Shintan (ancient name for China) and Japan.

A wonderful book, this. The author was evidently a man who read extensively and learned abundantly by hearsay. He possessed many friends in every walk of life. He was energetic, systematic, accurate, and wrote with a powerful pen. Nobody could hope to start such a great work, and finish with success, unless he were a man holding views above the general level of opinion.

In the book, the Section of Tenjiku comes first,

followed by Shintan and Japan. The author compiled the book in this order out of respect toward Tenjiku, the country in which Buddhism arose and where Sakyamuni was born—and Shintan, the country of culture—the two great nations to which Japan owed a debt of gratitude.

Why did Takakuni write this book of narratives, comparable only with such books as AEsop's Fables or *The Arabian Nights'* Entertainments? Did he finish the work just finding it an occupation to his taste? Without any meaning? Without any prime object? And did he simply endeavor to collect and record tales of a strange nature?

In Japan, in the latter part of the remote ages, Buddhism, became more and more popular, and it was at the zenith of its prosperity in the early years of the 9th century after the brilliant Nara Era (645-780). Meanwhile, with the lapse of time, the old trend of things had been superseded by the traditions of China, and those of India coming through China had a great influence on the Japanese people—in ideas and in knowledge.

The author of *The Konjaku Monogatari*, no doubt, added the two sections of Tenjiku and Shintan for the purpose of enlightening people concerning the two great countries of culture and wisdom. Takakuni told them, through his work, of things which were being preached and observed in Tenjiku and Shintan as the truth, and therefore, he thought, should be observed in Japan.

Takakuni taught in his narratives that the law of nature was firm and stable forever, like the sun shining high up in the sky. And he preached by telling them that it was Buddhism that taught them this everlasting truth. He informed them of the importance of knowing the great truth of samsarā, or transmigrationism, and karma or inevitable retribution.

With this in mind, Takakuni gave to the Japanese people the narratives he had garnered. Therefore on many occasions, he never forgot to tell the people of karma, the inevitable consequences of some fault committed in a previous state of existence even when he was speaking of worldly things. However it is interesting to see that he was, on the other hand, a humorous person, a fact shown well in some of his tales.

The Konjaku Monogatari teaches us to be grateful, sympathetic, to keep to our sphere in life—warning us not to despise other people, not to be captivated by beautiful women, not to go anywhere without any knowledge of the place, not to confide in anybody (reflecting the conditions of life in those days) even in one's wife, and so on.

The Genji Monogatari, written by Murasaki Shikibu, Lady Purple, deals almost exclusively with the life of the upper classes. When we read the Genji, the Book of Love and Romance of the handsome Imperial prince and the beautiful ladies, we breathe the very air of the brilliant Heian Era with the Court noblemen, effeminate and superstitious—and the gay and intellectual noblewomen.

In The Konjaku Monogatari, however, we meet the common people as well as noblemen and noblewomen.

And the fact that Buddhism, especially the Tendai sect (a sect the fundamental doctrine of which is the Sutra of the Lotus) was prevalent at that time is clearly reflected in the writing.

Takakuni also extolls the benevolence of Kanzéon, or the Goddess of Mercy, and Jizo, the guardian deity of children. He believes in the transmigration of the soul. Many phantoms in various forms including Kitsuné appear in the narratives. However as in the case of later years, they are not ferocious or wicked in nature. They are, to my mind, rather good-natured, and they reveal their true character easily when cornered.

Minamoto-no-Takakuni came of a noble family. His grandfather was an Imperial prince of the Emperor Daigo (385-930); and Fujiwara-no-Michinaga, the most influential Prime Minister in the age, was his uncle. Still, according to the records, he was democratic enough to invite travelers passing in front of his mansion at Uji, near Kyoto, the capital; and he wrote The Konjaku Monogatari by listening to what they told him.

Reading the book, we learn the manners and customs, the thoughts, morality and superstitions of the people of the Heian Era as well.

Now before we proceed with such tales as those found in The Konjaku Monogatari, containing a great number of the foxes resorting to their subtle art of bewitchery, we deem it necessary to tell you concerning the matter of metamorphosis in general.

It is true that the folklore relative to such a thing as bewitchery, or metamorphosis, is now regarded as concerning things of the past. However in Japan, the idea of the mysterious power of Kitsuné is deep-rooted among the populace; and a superstition such as Inu-gami¹ or Hébi-gami² is still prevalent in some rural districts in the country, and the case of Kitsuné-mochi³ or Izuchi-mochi⁴ is also prevalent in some part of Japan.

Such things as these, no doubt, are a superstition fermented by tradition. However it cannot be denied that there is—in each of them—a fixed form. Why there is such a fixed form?

Now let us study the metamorphosis tradition of such an animal as Kitsuné. In the form of metamorphosis, there is a difference between the case of a human being turning himself into an animal; and the case when an animal changes its shape into a human being. An interesting contrast will be observed between these cases.

And there is also a form—a fixed one—in the conjugal relation between human beings and animals in tradition. For instance, there exists in legend some hindrance in the marriage of human being and serpents

1 Literally, Dog-god. A sort of possession by evil spirits. The natural shape of it, however, is not a dog. Supposed to be an animal about the size of a rat with a supernatural power.

2 Literally, Snake-god. A sort of possession by the evil spirit of a small snake.

3 A specific family supposed to have a supernatural power through the influence of Kitsuné.

4 Same as Kitsuné-mochi.

(as seen in the case of a man marrying a serpent in the guise of a charming girl, in *The Ugétsu Monogatari* by Akinari), or otters or badgers, animals supposed to have the power of turning themselves into human forms. In the case of the union of human beings and foxes, they do not have any such drawback.

In the tradition of a human being changing his form into that of an animal, there is no record of matrimony between the person changing his form and other human beings. However, in the case of an animal changing its shape into that of a human being and the real human being, you will find many tales of matrimony.

The case of the human being changing his form into such an animal as a fox—or the case of the human being joining the fox family by marrying a fox—will be found in the legends of China. However in the case of the latter, the form of the human being is not changed: He will just become a fox-man without changing his form, though perhaps, a slight change may be seen in his appearance or voice.

In this connection, it may be added that there are many stories of foxes turning themselves into women, but no stories of women assuming the shape of foxes in any Japanese fox-tradition.

There are various ways in the art of bewitching men on the part of Kitsuné. The method of metamorphosis differs according to the districts. Kitsuné is supposed to emit fire, Kitsuné-bi, by stroking its bushy tail. And it is also believed that it will put a skull on its head and bow in veneration to the Dipper before turning itself into a human shape. When the skull does not fall off, it will be able to turn itself into a human form successfully, it is said.

As the method of assuming a human form, especially a beautiful girl, Kitsuné adopts the process of covering its head with duckweed or reeds. Japan's fox is an expert in changing itself into any form, and its specialty is

assuming the shape of a charming and seductive woman, to captivate a young man and an old gentleman susceptible to female charms.

According to the fox-marriage legend, the fox in the guise of a pretty woman will lead men into temptation to satisfy its desire. All the foxes will turn themselves into the shape of fascinating women and exhaust the energy of their victims. The men victimized, it is believed, are to die, sooner or later.

Kitsuné, as you will read in such a book as *The Konjaku Monogatari*, is an animal wanton by nature. It is supposed to satisfy its desire by having relations with men through the art of bewitchery. Apart from the question of the possibility of this, you will notice, in the fox tradition, that Kitsuné is making use of its superior brains in various ways in bewitching men. This is the time-honored tradition of Japan in regard to the bewitchery of Kitsuné.

CHAPTER 4 THE FOX IN THE KONJAKU MONOGATARI

The Story of a Young Samurai Who Copied the Sutra of the Lotus For the Repose of a Fox's Soul

ONCE there was a young and handsome samurai living in Kyoto, the capital, name unknown.

One evening, on his way home, he was passing near the Shujaku gate of the Imperial palace when he saw a girl with a graceful figure, about 18 years old, attired in an exquisite robe of silk, standing on the main road.

She looked so beautiful with her raven-black locks straying in the gentle breeze that the samurai was instantly fascinated by her. He approached the girl and invited her to go inside the gate and have a chat for a while with him. She complied with his request, to his great delight.

They stayed in a quiet place inside the gate and talked together. Soon the stars began to twinkle here and there in the sky and even the Milky Way was seen faintly. It was a balmy evening.

Said the young man: "We have met here by a happy chance-by the Providence of God, I might say. Therefore you should accede to my request-in every way. We should share the same feelings. I love you-and you must love me."

Answered the girl: "If I comply with your request in every way, I must die. This is my lot."

"Your lot-to die?" the young samurai echoed her words, "It is hardly possible. You are simply avoiding me by saying so."

And he tried to gather her up in his arms.

The girl shook herself loose from his grasp, and said tearfully: "I know you are living with your wife; and that you are telling me you love me on the spur of the moment.

I am weeping because I must die for a man of mood's."

He denied what she said, again and again until she acquiesced. In the meantime the stars and the Milky Way were shining more brightly in the heavens. A night of romance.

They found a shed in the neighborhood, and spent the night together there. A lone cricket was heard chirping throughout the night....

The summer morning broke soon. The girl said: "Now I am going home-to die because of you, as I told you last evening. When I pass away, please say a mass for the repose of my soul by copying the Sutra of the Lotus and offering it to the merciful Buddha" Said the young man: "It is the way of the world that man and woman

have intimate relations with each other. You are not destined to die necessarily. However if you should die, I will not fail to do as you wish. I promise."

Said the girl sadly, tying back her stray locks: "If you care to see whether what I am now telling you is true or not, come to the neighborhood of the Botoku-den* this morning."

The young samurai could not believe what was told him by the beautiful girl.

She said in a mournful tone: "Let me keep your fan as a memento."

She took the fan. He took her hand, and looked straight into her eyes.

He followed her outside, and stood looking after the departing figure until it faded into the grayish veil of the morning mist.

The young man could not bring himself to believe what the girl had said. However during the morning, he went to the neighborhood of the Butoku-den as he was very anxious to know the fate of the girl.

There he saw an old woman sitting on a stone, bitterly weeping.

"Why are you crying so? What is the matter with you, old woman?" he asked her.

"I am the mother of the girl you saw near the Shujaku gate last night. She is now dead," she answered.

*The place where the Emperor used to see archery on horseback, horse races, and the like. Located to the west of the Imperial palace.

"Dead?" the young man said with a dubious look.

"Yes, she is dead. I have been waiting for you here —to break the sad news to you. The dead person is lying over there."

So saying, the old woman pointed to a corner of the big hall—and the next moment she was gone like magic no one knows where.

The young samurai, approaching the spot pointed, found a young fox lying dead on the floor, its face covered with an open white fan, the very fan given by him!

"So this fox was the girl I met last night!" he said mournfully to himself. He could not help but feel pity for the poor fox.

He returned home with a heavy heart.

He started copying the Sutra of the Lotus immediately, as was requested by the fox in the form of a beautiful girl. He found the task a hard one. However, he copied one sutra every week and offered it to Buddha and prayed for the repose of the soul of the dead fox, night and day.

One night, about six weeks later, the young samurai dreamed a dream, a strange dream in which he met the beautiful girl. She looked so noble and divine that he thought her to be a celestial nymph.

Said the girl in the dream:

"You have saved me by copying the Sutra of the Lotus and offering several of them to Buddha. I was re-born through your efforts in Paradise delivered from sin. I am eternally grateful to you!"

So saying, she ascended to Heaven to sweet celestial music. She was accompanied by two maids of honor, and he saw the Great Buddha sitting calmly with his saints in front of the Castle of Heaven, and several scrolls of the Sutra of the Lotus were seen flying in the air like so many birds as if welcoming the girl!

It was a dream. However the young samurai still continued to copy the Sutra of the Lotus for the repose of the soul of the young fox who died for him.

The Story of a Fox Coming Disguised As a Wife

ONCE the wife of a zoshiki* went out at dusk on urgent business. She did not, however, come home for quite a long while. Her husband, naturally, felt it strange.

After a while, however, the wife returned home to the relief of the husband. Then, to his surprise, another woman entered the house. She was a woman exactly like his wife: The same face—the same figure—the same voice—the same manner—in the same dress!

The zoshiki samurai was puzzled, to say the least of it. One of them must be a fox, or something in the guise of my wife, he thought. How to tell one from another? This was a very difficult thing for me to decide.

*A petty officer, low in rank, not allowed to wear the robes of regular color. He wore a parti-colored dress. Zoshiki literally means parti-colored. Hence the name.

In desperation, the zoshiki finally pulled his sword from its sheath in an attempt to kill the woman coming home after the first one.

Said the woman, crying:

"Are you going to kill me? Have you lost your mind?" Then the man, again in desperation, and reckless rushed toward the woman returning first, with the sword raised overhead. The woman screamed and implored him to spare her, clasping her hands. At this juncture, however, her behavior raised suspicion in the mind of the zoshiki. Therefore he seized her by the arm as he

wanted to take her captive.

This woman, however, turned herself instantly into the shape of a fox, made water on the man, and ran away through the open door barking, and disappeared into the gathering twilight.

The zoshiki samurai was angry with the fox for making a fool of him. But it was now too late. He should have set his mind to work a little earlier. It was his fault. In the first place, he should have caught both women and bound them with ropes. If he had done so, the fox would have revealed its natural shape sooner or later.

However the fox was lucky in effecting its escape. The animal had evidently seen the wife of the zoshiki and wanted to disguise itself as the wife for fun. In such a case, one should be cautious not to be deceived by such a crafty and mischievous beast as a fox. The zoshiki was also lucky not to have killed his own wife.

The Story of a Fox Repaying Kindness For Returning Its Treasured Ball

ONCE there was a woman believed to have been possessed by a fox.

Said this woman to those present one day:

"I am a fox, but I am here not to bring evil upon people. I just came as I thought I could find some food here and there."

Presently she produced a whitish ball about the size of a mandarin orange, and she played with it by throwing it up in the air and catching it as it fell with her hands. The people who saw it thought that she had the intention of cheating them by some trick.

A young samurai who happened to see it took the ball when it was thrown—and pocketed it.

Said the woman possessed by a fox:

"How mean you are! Return the ball immediately!

Give it back to me!"

The young fellow, however, laughing, would not return it to her.

The woman said again, with falling tears:

"It would be useless for you if you do not know how to use it. However it is a thing indispensable to me. If you do not give it back to me, therefore, I will cast an evil spell on you. If, on the other hand, you will be good enough to return it to me, I will protect you as your guardian angel."

"Is that true?" said the samurai doubtfully.

"Without fail," answered the woman. "In such things, I never tell a lie. And, mind you, I am not an ungrateful fox, either."

The young man produced the whitish ball of the size of a mandarin orange and gave it back to the woman, who received it gladly.

The woman believed to have been possessed by a fox came to herself a little later, thanks to the prayers offered by an ascetic who visited the house. Then they searched the woman for the whitish ball. Strange to say, however, it was missing! It must have been taken away by the fox who possessed the woman, they said.

Later the young samurai who returned the whitish ball to the woman possessed by a fox went to Uzumasa, the suburbs of Kyoto, the capital, one evening.

He went by way of Omuro. So it was quite dark by the time when he was passing the Oten gate. He did not know the reason why, but, at that time, he felt a chill creep over him. He was sure something was to happen and that he was in danger. He was wondering whether he could find some way of escape. Now he recalled what had been told by the woman possessed by a fox.

"She might protect me in such a case," he thought.

Therefore he cried aloud in the dark:

"KITSUNÉ! KITSUNÉ!"

The fox did come. It came out from somewhere, barking softly in response to the call.

Said the samurai to the fox:

"You did not tell me a lie. I am very glad that you came, glad, indeed, to see that you are a reliable animal. I felt a chill creeping over me while I was passing here.

I thought something is wrong. I hope you will go along with me for some distance."

The fox seemed to understand what was said to it. It walked ahead of the samurai, turning back anxiously now and then. The road along which he was now being led by the fox, he found, was overgrown with low striped bamboos, a path he was not accustomed to walk before. He was tracing the path, following the fox proceeding at a trot.

Occasionally the fox stopped and looked around— and continued to walk stealthily with bent back. The man walked, following the example of the animal.

Soon the young samurai was conscious of the fact that there were signs of some people lurking somewhere. They were armed with bow and arrow and swords and halberds, and were a band of robbers. They were, as he thought, planning to break into somebody's house.

He could now understand well that the fox walking ahead of him had successfully passed the spot without being perceived by those rough men.

The fox left the samurai, barking softly again at the end of the path.

He came home safely. After that, it is said, the fox would act as his guardian angel, as it had promised, on several occasions. He found that Kitsuné was an animal very grateful, repaying the kindness of man.

The Story of a Fox who Got Killed Assuming the Form of a Cedar Tree

NAKADAYU, nephew to the chief Shinto priest of the Kasuga shrine at Nara, was once roaming about with his servant towards evening in a lonely mountain when they espied a gigantic cedar tree standing ahead of them, about 200 feet high.

Said Nakadayu to his servant:

"I never saw such a big cedar tree standing near here in this mountain before. Can you see the tree yonder?"

"Yes, master," answered the servant, "I can see a big cedar tree over there."

"I don't think we have such a gigantic cedar tree even in other parts of this province," said Nakadayu.

"We have cedar trees in this province. However I have never seen such a big one before," agreed the servant.

"In that case," observed Nakadayu, "we might have been bewitched by a fox. We had better go home now."

They had been walking about the mountain to cut plenty of grass for the horse kept at Nakadayu's house. They were unaware of the passing of time. In the gathering dusk, they saw the moon rise and cast a weird light on the gigantic cedar tree. A nocturnal bird screeched somewhere. A bush hard by rustled in the stillness of the mountain as if a bandit lurking behind it were coming out.

Master and servant exchanged glances, and each of them fixed an arrow to the string of the bow they were carrying for self-defence. A squirrel appeared and quickly vanished across the path.

"Before we go home," said the servant, "let us shoot the cedar tree and come here again tomorrow morning to see it."

They notched an arrow upon their bows.

"We had better shoot the cedar tree from a shorter distance," advised the servant.

They proceeded a little farther—drew their bows to their full extent—and both shot at the giant tree at the same time.

"Whiz!" went the arrows—and the next moment they saw the huge tree disappear!

They were afraid that it might be the act of some uncanny hand, so they left the spot without delay.

The following morning they found an old fox shot dead with two arrows stuck in its body at the very spot where the gigantic cedar tree had been observed standing by Nakadayu and his servant.

The prank of the fox cost it its life.

CHAPTER 5 THE FOX IN THE KONJAKU

MONOGATARI (Continued)

The Story of a Fox Fond of Riding On a Horse's Buttocks

A YOUNG pretty girl would stand on the bank of the Kaya river to the east of the Ninnaji temple, Kyoto, of an evening. When she saw a man passing there on horseback in the direction of the capital, she would ask him to give her a ride.

The girl would invariably say:

"I want to go to the capital riding on your horse's buttocks."

The rider would answer:

"All right. You may ride on my horse's buttocks."

However when he went on for about 500 yards with the girl riding on the horse's back, she would slip down from on the horse and run away in the shape of a fox, barking with delight.

The mischief mentioned above was repeated several times, and the victims were always men passing on horseback along the bank of the Kaya river to the east of the Ninnaji temple.

Now at the Station of the Takiguchi (the Head-quarters of the Guards belonging to the Imperial palace), somebody spoke about the girl riding on the horse's buttocks, on the bank of the Kaya river. On hearing this, a young takiguchi officer (we will call him the takiguchi in this narrative) said:

"Well, I will catch her and teach her a lesson." Other takiguchi officers present said with one voice: "Certainly we will catch her!"

Said the takiguchi who spoke first:

"I will capture her tomorrow evening." Said somebody:

"Can you?"

"Certainly I can!" was the answer.

The takiguchi, on the following evening, went by himself to the bank of the Kaya river, riding a very intelligent horse. The girl in question, however, was not to be seen there. Disappointed, the takiguchi was riding back in the direction of the capital when he saw a girl standing by the roadside. On seeing the takiguchi coming riding, she said cheerfully:

"Hey, give me a ride on your horse's buttocks, won't you?"

"Surely. Climb on quickly. Where are you going?" said

the takiguchi.

Answered the girl:

"To the capital. It is getting dark, so I want to go there, riding on your horse's buttocks."

As soon as the girl got on the horse's buttocks, the officer tied her by the wrist to the saddle with a rope used for hitching a horse.

Said the girl:

"Why do you do such a brutal thing to me?"

Replied the takiguchi:

"To prevent you from getting away from me, of course. I am now taking you to my quarters—to sleep with you tonight, my girl."

They continued riding. It was now quite dark. After passing Ichijyo, they proceeded along the road toward the east. When passing Nishi-no-Omiya, the takiguchi saw a procession approaching toward him from the east preceded by a forerunner on horseback, holding a pine-torch to light the road. By torch-light, the takiguchi could see some carriages drawn by oxen moving in stately fashion to the musical creak of their heavy wheels—with two men walking before each carriage, holding pine-torches in their hands. Their figures were seen in relief against the darkness of night.

The takiguchi thought it was the procession of some personages of high rank. Therefore he turned back out of respect, and went on, riding along the road of Nishi-no-Omiya toward the east—from Higashi-no-Omiya to Tsuchimikado.

At the gate of the Tsuchimikado palace, the Takiguchi called out to his followers whom he had previously ordered to wait for him there.

Said about 10 men under the takiguchi, coming out: "At your service, sir."

Then the takiguchi pulled the girl down from the horse after unfastening the rope; and he ordered his men to make a fire on the ground. And then he went to the Takiguchi Station.

Aroused by the clamor, all his fellow takiguchi officers emerged from the station.

Said the captor of the girl:

"I have caught her."

The girl began to cry and entreated to be released. The fire was now burning brightly on the ground. Said all takiguchi officers with one consent: "Release her! into the fire with her!"

The takiguchi who had caught the girl said that she might escape if this were done. However they said that it would be fun to throw into the fire and shoot her with bows and arrows in a volley.

About 10 takiguchi officers notched their arrows upon their bows. The takiguchi who had been holding the girl coming from the bank of the Kaya river threw her right into the fire!

The girl, however, turned herself, in a twinkling, into the shape of a fox and, before they could send a volley of arrows, effected her escape, putting out the fire....

In the dark, the takiguchi called to his men.

No response. Not a single man was there. And, to his surprise, he found himself on a lonely plain!

He could see that he was now in the midst of the cremation ground at Toribé-no, located in the suburbs of the capital. (The only crematory in the Heian Era, Toribé-no was a word used as synonym of death in those days.) He thought that he had dismounted from his horse at the gate of the Tsuchimikado palace. He was mistaken. He recalled that he had turned back to go to Tsuchimikado. He was mistaken. He had come to this desolate and death-like crematory, instead. He imagined that he had seen many pine-torches burning in the dark after passing Ichijyo. He remembered seeing all these things clearly, including the two torch-carriers walking on each side of a carriage drawn by an ox. He was deplorably mistaken. Now he knew that the torches were nothing but the fire produced by foxes by stroking their tails.

Brave as he was, the takiguchi had no alternative but to go on foot. He had no horse to ride on. He returned home dog-tired and chagrined about midnight.

His fellow takiguchi officers at the station at Tsuchi-mikado, on the other hand, wondering what had become of the takiguchi since he left on his adventure, sent a messenger to the takiguchi's quarters to look for him two days later.

The takiguchi, in the evening of the third day, presented himself at the station, feeling like a sick man.

Asked his friends:

"Did you go to catch the fox-girl the other evening?" Replied the takiguchi with some asperity:

"No, I did not. I was ill, very ill." Asked his fellow officers again:

"What are you going to do now?"

"I will go and catch her this evening," was the rejoinder.

Said another takiguchi, laughing:

"Catch two of them this evening, I hope."

The takiguchi left the station without saying a word. This time he said to himself:

"The fox may not come this evening as it was out-witted by me the other night. If it appears this evening, I will never loosen my hold on it. Never! I will hold it all through the night. If it does not appear this evening, I will not present myself at the station, but keep to my quarters for some time."

He set out on horseback followed by several strong men for the Kaya river. He soliloquised once more:

"Going to make myself a fool again, eh? I cannot help it, though, since I said I would catch her."

The fox-girl was not in sight when the takiguchi crossed the Kaya river by a bridge. However when he was coming back disheartened, he saw a girl standing at the edge of the river. He found that she had a different face.

The girl accosted him, and said:

"Hey, give me a ride on your horse's buttocks, won't you?" I want to go to the capital."

The takiguchi obliged her. However, the moment she was on horseback he lost no time in tying her up with a rope as before.

It was getting darker and darker as the takiguchi was riding along the Ichijyo road in the direction of the capital, accompanied by his men. He ordered his followers to kindle pine-torches and carry them ahead of him and beside his horse. They went on, but they saw nobody until they reached the Tsuchimikado palace.

The takiguchi got off his horse. He seized the fox-girl firmly by her hair. She cried. But he would not have mercy on her. He brought her to the Takiguchi Station. He was deaf to her entreaties; and she seemed quite to realize the situation this time.

The fellow officers came to see the captive. "So you have caught her at last, eh?" they said. The fox-girl was tortured and tortured until she

could stand it no longer—and she turned herself into the form of a fox.

They scorched the animal with pine-torches. "O spare me!" the fox yelped plaintively.

The takiguchi said:

"We have given it a lesson. Set it free!"

They released the fox. It scampered off, limping.

About 10 days later, the takiguchi went to the Kaya river. He wanted to see the fox-girl again out of curiosity. She was there. She looked ill—and beaten.

Said the takiguchi to the fox-girl:

"Don't you want to ride on my horse's buttocks?" Responded the fox in the guise of a pretty girl weakly: "I should like to ride on your horse's buttocks; but I

don't like to have my precious fur scorched. No thank you."

With that, she vanished.

This is a very strange thing. Nevertheless it did happen—and not long ago, so this writer (Takakuni, the author of The Konjaku Monogatari) was told by the narrator of this tale.

The Story of the Man Infatuated with a Fox Saved by the Goddess of Mercy

HE was feeling very lonesome, a man of fifty, with his wife gone to the capital, Kyoto, on business. It was an evening in the autumn of 895. Yoshifuji, of Kayo County in Bittchu Province, was seen rambling alone

along the country road. A rich man engaging in exchange business; he was wanton by nature and in the habit of taking to amours.

Presently he met an attractive woman. She was an utter stranger in the community. Yoshifuji, however, found it impossible to control himself. She smiled a charming smile as she approached him. She had a set of pearly teeth.

"A nice evening," he accosted her. With women his talk was usually gentle and soothing. "Where are you going? And who are you? I have never seen you before."

"I am nobody," the woman said laughingly. Yoshifuji was now completely swayed by passion. "Come with me," he said.

"No. I am going home," replied the woman, "you come with me."

"Where you live?" asked the money man.

"I live over there. Not far from here. Come with me," she invited him again.

They walked together. Yoshifuji soon saw a splendid house standing at a short distance.

"That is our house," told the woman.

He had never seen such a fine house before, in this neighborhood, a fact that puzzled him considerably. However he was now so fascinated with the woman that he did not pay much attention to that.

When he arrived at the house, he was welcomed by everybody as if each member of the household had known him well.

"You are welcome here!" they said heartily.

Yoshifuji spent the night there, with the woman.

The following morning, another woman who seemed to be the mistress of the household came and said:

"I am so glad you came. There is a Providence in it. I sincerely hope that you will stay here as long as you wish."

On seeing the woman, Yoshifuji instantly became infatuated with her. He decided to stay in the house as long as possible. Capricious by nature, Yoshifuji was inconsistent in love.

Thus he stayed in the house for a long period of time.

In the household of Yoshifuji, on the other hand, they were wondering what was the matter with him. He did not come back in the evening. He was away from home at night. Was he philandering somewhere, as usual? Midnight still found him not at home. Gone for a long trip? No. It could not be so. He had left his house in his white robe (abbreviated clothes worn in those days, a wadded garment with skirt).

The day broke in alarm.

They combed the village for Yoshifuji. The where-abouts of the man were still unknown. Had he joined the priesthood, having grown weary of the world?— or drowned himself, realizing the uncertainty of life? Strange, this thing, they thought.

Now to return to the luxurious house where Yoshifuji, the wanton man, was leading a licentious life with the fascinating mistress. The woman with whom he was intimately related had given birth to a child, and they, the man and the woman, were bound up with each other, and their love was growing with the years.

Yoshifuji had two brothers: Toyonaka, his elder brother; and Toyotsune, his younger brother. The former was the chief of a sub-prefecture; and the latter, the priest of a big temple. Both of these people were also rich. They wanted to find the body of Yoshifuji at all costs through the favor of Kanzéon, the Goddess of Mercy. So they made her image out of a huge oak tree—and prayed night and day kneeling down before it.

They implored the goddess for the repose of the soul of the departed man. However their efforts seemed not to bear fruit. Still they continued to pray awake or asleep with untiring zeal.

Now it so happened, one day, that a person carry-

ing the long staff of a priest came to the house where Yoshifuji was staying.

"Here he comes!"

The members of the family cried in consternation on seeing this person. Then they flew in all directions.

The caller made Yoshifuji come out of a narrow place by prodding him on the back with the staff.

On the evening of the thirteenth day since Yoshifuji dropped out of sight, his people were talking together about him, sitting in a room when they saw a strange black creature looking like a monkey come creeping, on all fours, with his hips raised high, from under the floor of a warehouse standing facing the house.

Said the strange creature:

"I am here, folks."

He was no less a person than Yoshifuji!

Tadasada, his son, felt it strange. However it was the voice of his father that he heard. Therefore he got down on the ground and pulled him up.

Said Yoshifuji:

"I was staying alone at home feeling lonesome. I went out, and strolling along the road met a woman, who led me to her house, where I was obliged to become the father of a child. He was a boy and he was so cute and lovely that I used to hold him every day in my arms fondling him. I named him Taro (meaning first son). Therefore I will call you hereafter— Jiro (second son), as I respect his mother."

Asked Tadasada:

"Where is the child, father?"

"Down there!" replied Yoshifuji, pointing to the warehouse.

Tadasada and others, on hearing the words of Yoshifuji, were greatly surprised. They looked at Yoshifuji again. He looked haggard and sick. He was wearing the white robe he worn when leaving the house, a dirty robe now, and it smelt bad.

A servant was sent to look under the floor of the warehouse. At the approach of the servant, several foxes were seen running away helter-skelter. The servant found where his master used to sleep—under the cobwebby floor.

Now they learned for the first time that Yoshifuji had been bewitched by foxes and that he had forgotten to return to his own house, after becoming the husband of a female fox-beauty.

They called in a high priest to pray for his speedy recovery from the fox's witchcraft and a man exorcising evil spirits to purify him. They washed him several times, too. Still he did not look as he used to be.

Gradually, however, he came to his senses. He believed that he had lived with the fascinating fox-woman in the luxurious house for a period of thirteen years; but, in reality, he had spent only thirteen days with her under the floor of the warehouse. Now it was revealed that he had been saved by the favors of Kanzéon, the Goddess of Mercy, appearing in the form of a priest carrying a long staff.

This story, by the way, was told by Miyoshi-no- Kiyotsura, the feudal lord of Bittchu Province in those days.

The Story of an Imperial Household Guard Officer Disillusioned by an Act of a Fox

A TONÉRI (whose duty was to guard the Imperial palace in the Heian Era) by the name of Yasutaka was a man of romantic disposition.

Now you see him going home from the Imperial palace to bring one of his retainers who had failed to arrive at the palace. He was waking alone in the grounds of the palace. A refreshing night, with a bright moon, about the middle of September.

Presently, the tonéri officer caught sight of a young woman when he was approaching the pine-grove there. She was attired in an aster-colored dress of figured cloth. She had a superb figure, a fact he perceived at a glance.

She must be a beautiful thing, Yasutaka imagined.

The moonlight seemed to enhance her charm. Yasutaka followed her. He was wearing a pair of high wooden clogs.

Click-clack, click-clack...he walked after her bathed in the moonlight. One or two suzumushi (a kind of cricket with a sweet and sonorous chirping) were singing in the pine-grove.

Soon Yasutaka overtook the attractive figure. He walked drawing near her. She seemed shy. She walked covering her face with a pictured fan. She looked pretty, with her stray tresses of the side-locks playing on her forehead and cheeks. Yasutaka drew close to her and touched her. She was faintly redolent of ranjatai (a precious incense first imported from

Korea in the reign of the Emperor Shomu in the early part of the 8th century).

Said Yasutaka:

"At this hour of the night, where in the world are you going?"

A sweet voice responded from behind the pictured- fan:

"I am going to the house of a person living at Nishi- no-Kyo."

Said Yasutaka:

"You had better come with me, to my house. I live at Nishi-no-Kyo, too."

Said the girl with a sweet smile in her eyes, a pair of clear eyes:

"You know me, do you?" Yasutaka simply smiled back.

She was, to the delight of the tonéri officer, a woman endowed with personal charms. They walked together in the moonlight....

Presently the girl entered the Konoyé gate of the palace.

Now Yasutaka said to himself:

"They say that there lives a fox in the habit of bewitching people here in this premises. Is this charming girl a fox? And she is still covering her face with the fan. Very strange, this. Well, I will put the matter to the proof."

Yasutaka seized the girl abruptly by one of her sleeves and said:

"Wait, girl. Stay right here for a moment. I want to say something to you."

On hearing this, the girl looked more bashful, covering her face with the pictured-fan. Said Yasutaka still seizing her by the sleeve: "Now I am going to disrobe you. Do you hear me?" So declaring, the tonéri officer unsheathed his short sword, about 8 inches long, a glittering blade; it looked cold and shiny like an icicle.

Continued Yasutaka:

"I am going to cut your throat. Take off your clothes!"

The tonéri officer now seized the girl by the hair. He pinned her against a pillar of the gate. He was on the point of plunging the sword into her throat when, unexpectedly, his nostrils were assailed with a pungent and offensive smell, so pungent and offensive, in fact, that, tough and daring as he was, Yasutaka loosed his grip on the girl, sneezing.

In an instant, the fascinating girl changed herself into a fox and took to flight. The fox was soon heard, barking somewhere in the distance outside the gate. The Imperial guard officer was left with the smell still hanging in the night air.

Yasutaka felt chagrined at his unsuccessful attempt. Later, it is said, he went out nightly to see the fox assuming the shape of the charming girl. He wanted to see her again—in spite of the smell. No further opportunities occurred, however.

One should not try to become friendly with a charming girl walking alone of a night. In the case of Yasutaka, however, he was clever and cautious enough not to be cheated by a fox, they said.

CHAPTER 6 THE FOX IN THE KONJAKU

MONOGATARI (Continued)

The Story of General Toshihito Who Employed a Fox for His Guest, Exercising An Influence Upon It

IN the 10th century, there lived a general whose name was Toshihito. He was in the service of Moto-tsune, the Prime Minister, in his younger days. Brave and intelligent, he was promoted to the rank of general and he married the daughter of an influential man of Tsuruga in Echizen Province, a province very far from the capital, Kyoto. Therefore the general lived there in his mansion.

One year, during the New Year's celebrations, a great banquet was given in the mansion of the Prime Minister. Previously it was customary to give the leavings of the table to the beggars coming for them when the banquet was over. On that particular occasion, however, the remnants of the dinner were eaten by the officials and others in the service. Among those shared them was an official with the 5th grade Court rank (a low rank).

During the repast, this official with the 5th grade Court rank was heard saying:

"O how I wish I could eat imogayu¹ to my heart's content!"

General Toshihito, who had been listening attentively to the remark made by this official, stroking his left side-whisker with his strong hand, said:

"Well, Tayu,² have you not eaten imogayu to your heart's content yet?"

Answered the tayu:

"No, sir. To tell you the truth, I have never eaten imogayu to my heart's content in my life." Said the general:

"In that case, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you eat imogayu to your heart's content some day."

Said the tayu:

"That is good, very good, indeed." Asked the general:

"Would you accept my offer?"

"With great pleasure, General," was the reply.

Four or five days later, towards evening, General Toshihito came to the quarters of the tayu.

"Come with me, Tayu. I am going to take you to a place near Higashiyama where, I hear, there is a good hot-spring.

Said the tayu in glee:

"That is good, very good, indeed. I will go with you

1 Rice gruel boiled with the juice of sweet arrow-root after putting in sliced yams, a tidbit enjoyed by the nobles in those days.

2 The person with the 5th grade Court rank was commonly called tayu.

with great pleasure, General. Incidentally I am at present feeling itchy, especially this evening. I am afraid I shall not be able to sleep well tonight. By the way, is there any means of conveyance to take me there?"

The general assured him:

"Two horses are ready at the gate."

The joy of the official with the 5th grade Court rank knew no bounds.

"That is good, very good, indeed," he said, "Please wait [or a moment, I will put something on."

Now the tayu put on, for the occasion, two thinly padded garments, one over the other, a worn-out green-colored skirt of silk, a hunting suit of the same color, the shoulders of which were somewhat out of shape. He did not take the trouble of wearing an underskirt, as was the custom at that time.

The tayu was a man with a prominent nose, the tip of which was reddish. The nostrils were always wet in winter, a fact proving that he was not in the habit of wiping his nose, apparently. The back of the aforesaid hunting suit was rumpled as he tied the sash tightly. The tayu presented a comical sight.

The general and the tayu proceeded toward Higashi-yama where, the general had told the tayu, the good hot-spring was. The tayu rode ahead of the general. They came to the Kamogawa river beach. The tayu was not accompanied even by a boy footman. General Toshihito had as attendants a man carrying arms, and a servant. After passing the Kamogawa river beach, they were approaching Awadaguchi.

Asked the tayu:

"Where are we now?" He was told.

Then they passed Yamashina. Then they passed Sekiyama. They went on and on. . . . The hoofs rang on the deserted road. Then, to the surprise of the tayu, they arrived at Miidera temple.

"Do we stop here?" inquired the tayu, "is this the place where there is a hot-spring?"

"No, Tayu," answered General Toshihito, "not here. To tell you the truth, I am taking you to my place in Tsiiruga, in Ftsliixen Province."

The tayu said that Elchizen Province was a distant province, and that he should have brought his servants with him from Kyoto to accompany him.

General Toshihito stroked his left-side whisker as usual and said:

"Do not worry, Tayu. When I go with you, you may consider yourself accompanied by an army of one thousand men."

On hearing this, the tayu seemed to have felt much relieved.

After taking a meal, they left the temple for their destination, Tsuruga in Fichizen Province.

Now the general was riding ahead of the tayu, taking a quiver from his man and carrying it on his back. They were passing along a lonely road again. The north wind was blowing over the withered grass and the paddy-fields with only stacks of rice-straw and stubble of rice plants.

They heard the muffled sound of a distant bell— coming evidently from the Miidera temple, from which they had departed.

When they were riding along Mitsu-no-Hama beach, a

fox was seen running hurriedly.

On seeing the fox, the general started in pursuit of it, saying:

"O splendid! A good messenger for you, Tayu!"

The fox ran as fast as its legs could carry it. The general rode after it at a gallop.

Finally when the horse was running abreast of the fox, General Toshihito lowered himself on the flank of his horse, seizing the animal by one of its hind legs.

Said the general to the fox:

"Fox, you go to my mansion at Tsuruga tonight, you understand? Tell my family that I am taking a guest home. Tell them to come to see me with two saddled horses—near Takashima—at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, you understand? If you should fail to fulfil your mission, Toshihito will handle you roughly. You understand? Now, run along!"

So saying, the general set the fox free.

The tayu saw the fox run away at full speed and disappear behind a wood in the distance.

Said General Toshihito to the tayu:

"An exceptionally good messenger, isn't he? Wait and see, he will do as he was told without fail."

They stayed at an inn that night.

On the following morning, they got up very early, and proceeded toward Tsuruga, the end of their journey.

At about 10 o'clock in the morning, the general said to the tayu:

"It is about the time."

"About what time?" asked the tayu.

"Wait and see," answered the general.

Presently the tayu saw a party of horsemen coming, galloping toward the general's party.

"My men have come for us," said the general. "Are they your men?" said the tayu, "Really?"

"Yes," replied the general. "The fox reached my mansion all right. A clever animal."

"A strange thing. Very strange, indeed. Unbelievable!"

The tayu could not bring himself to believe it. Before long, the party came nearer.

The general called out:

"Have you brought two saddled horses?" One of this men responded:

"Yes, my lord. We have brought the two saddled horses."

General Toshihito heard the following: "About 8 o'clock in the evening," recounted one of the men, "her ladyship at the mansion felt a sharp pain in her breast. We did not know what the matter with her ladyship. Presently, however, her ladyship said: 'I am a fox, nobody else. I happened to see his lordship today at Mitsu-no-Hama beach. He was unexpectedly coming home from the capital with his guest. I wanted to run away. However. I was caught by him. He came galloping after me, faster than me.

" 'He told me to reach the mansion within a day and tell the people to bring two saddled horses at 10 o'clock in the morning on the following day, to Taka-shima. The general said I must do as I was told, if I did not want to be handled roughly by him.'—"This