

years ago, samurai was ashamed to know himself to be in love. I steadied myself, nevertheless, and calmly sang out:

Ka-ba-ka ri-ni
A-wa-ro-to Ko-so-wa
O-mo-ho-u-ro
Ha-na-no Ko-ko-ro-zo
I-ka-ni A-mi-ra-um.

(While thus and so I love thee, O beautiful flower, I wonder where thy thoughts be?)

"The flower told me they were on me, about me, but that was years afterward. The *chokus* of warmed *sake* now went their rounds. Tai-soup; boiled *hirams*; sliced *katsu oya*; mother of pearl in vinegar; pigeons and snipes, cut in bits, and roasted whole; but away with the inventory. The time flew fast and the sun was now low. The blossoming cherries glowed and reddened in its departing rays.

"We were in the height of our rustic revelry when Yokone took us by surprise by coolly saying: 'I admire that poetry, but it is for those of elder age and gentler sex; we have gratified them both. But we samurai glory in the martial arts; let us have now our turn.' And he challenged me to a fencing bout. I refused—refused till common sense and modesty could no longer hold their string of patience.

"We alighted on the ground, Nejiro and I—and fought with a *shinai* (bamboo swords). I easily won the first, but gave him the second round, for he was drunk. Upon his victory, however, Yokone became decidedly unpleasant, and abused not only myself, but my honored father as well. There were there the five of his pupils, one of whom had the contour on his flat head frightfully altered by me. There were also fair Miyo and other girls and women of the vicinity, listening to him.

"Poor Nejiro must have thought it a right good opportunity to avenge himself on the son of his master, who had rightly disgraced him. Nejiro challenged me for the third time. I was not yet intoxicated and refused it. Nejiro's pupils chuckled and said loudly among themselves that I was wise. Nejiro repeated the challenge; I accepted. My *shinai* whistled savagely, and, before I knew, the good Professor lay in an almost unconscious heap, blood streaming from a cut on his forehead, which he got on falling against a sharp-cornered step-stone.

"You may well imagine the confusion that ensued. The banquet broke up suddenly, and Nejiro was hurriedly carried away on a litter. In sincere regret I offered to accompany the wounded professor to his house, but the poor fellow stopped me hysterically, saying: 'Avant! thou coward! Knowing me drunk, thou hast violated the courtesy of the true samuraihood. Thou dog! None of thy hypocrisy!' I kept my peace. The situation was extremely awkward. As soon as Nejiro was carried out, I said my adieu to the host, not forgetting to add a word of gratitude as well as of deep regret. Mr. Hori would not listen to me; on the contrary, he invited me to stay with him for the night at least, and even much longer if it did not inconvenience me much. I almost suspected the man. Somehow, however, I was loth to leave the house, so that I was easily prevailed upon.

"What next happened was that the following morning found the Professor Nejiro Yokone groaningly ill, which caused a vacancy in no less a position than that of Mr. Hori's family tutorship, and I became temporarily installed in this grave office. The wheel of events was on its freak, I thought. Nevertheless, it gave me an immeasurable satisfaction, in the frame of mind I then was. For happy were the days that followed—the flowers smiling gladsomely on the growing spring. My pupils—my Miyo and Taro—came regularly at nine in the morning, and we had our physical lessons. Taro, my great favorite, was quite an adept in *kenjutsu* (the long-sword fencing), while his sister was wonderfully clever at *kaiken* (stiletto.) As a teacher I was to be sentimentless. But, the mischief! How pretty and contented Miyo used to look as I stood by and took her by the hand, showing her the way. I used to wonder then if she knew that I was trembling. In the afternoons we read together the leaves of the old sages. With a long, honest face I used to expostulate on their love-forbidding tenets, while secretly my heart was in wild rebellion.

"It was probably for ten days that I stayed with Mr. Hori; but now I often look back to the time as if it were months. Ah, the visions of the past, how enlarged they appear as time stretches out their shadows! Shadows! Nay! I see now the very path which led the way from my room's veranda to the centre of the orchard, and then sloped upward to top of a little height. I used to road on its winding course, evening after evening, and always unexpectedly meet my fair pupil tripping gently under the flowering trees. She was always with a chaperon who was her nurse. The latter would each time take it upon herself to explain to me that her young mistress had lately grown very sombre, in spite of the gayety of the season, so that she thought an evening's stroll would do her some good. 'Come,' the woman would say, 'let us climb the hill, and Mr. Okada will tell us of his adventures.' On the top of the hill we used to sit under a large cherry tree, and I would start equeezing about the corners of my memory bag, and, lo, the good woman would find some excuse or another to slip away for a time, and then reappear at the right moment—a good soul as she was. Left alone, Miyo and I would talk on till the golden sunset gradually changed into the purple mist of distant mountains; and then, in the uncertainty of darkening twilight, our heart-strings revealed on the flash of our glances, met and tied themselves into knots such as friendly silence and solitude could alone seal. Withal, Miyo and I were pupil and master distanced from each other by the rigor of an inherited spirit. Our unexpressed love was therefore all the more intense.

(To be Continued.)

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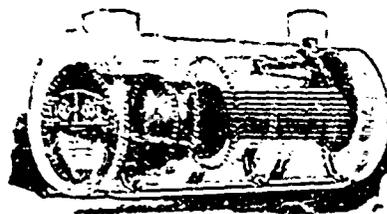
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