

## 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 *imogayu*<sup>1</sup> 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*,<sup>2</sup> 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

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

<sup>2</sup> 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 Higashiyama 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 nt Tsiiruga, in ftcliixen 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, lie ivill 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