



The Two Daughters

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Japanese

Intermediate
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At Akita, in the province of Inaba, lived an independent gentleman, who had two daughters, by whom he was ministered to with all filial piety. He was fond of shooting with a gun, and thus very often committed the sin (according to the teaching of holy Buddha) of taking life. He would never hearken to the admonitions of his daughters. These, mindful of the future, and aghast at the prospect in store for him in the world to come, frequently endeavored to convert him. Many were the tears they shed. At last one day, after they had pleaded with him more earnestly still than before, the father, touched by their supplications, promised to shoot no more. But, after a while, some of his neighbors came round to request him to shoot for them two storks. He was easily led to consent by the strength of his natural liking for the sport. Still he would not allow a word to be breathed to his daughters. He slipped out at night, gun in hand, after they were, as he imagined, fast asleep.

They, however, had heard everything, and the elder sister said to the younger: "Do what we may, our father will not condescend to follow our words of counsel, and nothing now remains but to bring him to a knowledge of the truth by the sacrifice of one of our own lives. To-night is fortunately moonless; and if I put on white garments and go to the neighborhood of the bay, he will take me for a stork and shoot me dead. Do you continue to live and tend our father with all the services of filial piety." Thus she spake, her eyes dimmed with the rolling tears. But the younger sister, with many sobs, exclaimed: "For you, my sister, for you is it to receive the inheritance of this house. So do you condescend to be the one to live, and to practise filial devotion to our

father, while I will offer up my life.”

Thus did each strive for death. The elder one, without more words, seizing a white garment rushed out of the house. The younger one, unwilling to cede to her the place of honor, putting on a white gown also, followed in her track to the shore of the bay. There, making her way to her among the rushes, she continued the dispute as to which of the two should be the one to die.

Meanwhile the father, peering around him in the darkness, saw something white. Taking it for the storks, he aimed at the spot with his gun, and did not miss his shot, for it pierced through the ribs of the elder of the two girls. The younger, helpless in her grief, bent over her sister's body. The father, not dreaming of what he was about, and astonished to find that his having shot one of the storks did not make the other fly away, discharged another shot at the remaining white figure. Lamentable to relate, he hit his second daughter as he had the first. She fell, pierced through the chest, and was laid on the same grassy pillow as her sister.

The father, pleased with his success, came up to the rushes to look for his game. But what! no storks, alas! alas! No, only his two daughters! Filled with consternation, he asked what it all meant. The girls, breathing with difficulty, told him that their resolve had been to show him the crime of taking life, and thus respectfully to cause him to desist therefrom. They expired before they had time to say more.

The father was filled with sorrow and remorse. He took the two corpses home on his back. As there was now no help for what was done, he placed them reverently on a wood stack, and there they burnt, making smoke to the blowing wind. From that hour he was a converted man. He built himself a small cell of branches of trees, near the village bridge. Placing therein the memorial tablets of his two daughters, he performed before them the due religious rites, and became the most pious follower of Buddha. Ah! that was filial piety in very truth! a marvel, that these girls should throw away their own lives, so that, by exterminating the evil seed in their father's conduct in this world, they might guard him from its awful fruit in the world to come!

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