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### THREE REFLECTIONS.



A long long time ago there was a man who had only one son They lived together alone, and were very happy and needed no other company.

Father and son were very much alike in face and figure,



and so devoted were they to each other that they were seldom seen apart. The son was already beginning to get on in years, but he was so contented and happy with his old father that he had never thought of seeking a wife.

One day, however the father said to him, "I have been thinking my son that it is time you were getting married: indeed it is more than time, but we two are so happy and get on so well together that I have been in no hurry to bring a stranger into our peaceful home."

"I am quite contented as I am, Father," replied the son, "I shall never love anyone half so much as I love you, so let us go on just as we are."

But the father pointed out that he was becoming an old man, and could not expect to live for ever, and that it was high time for his son to take upon himself the responsibilities of head of the family, marry and bring up children, lest he should, in a short time, find himself desolate and alone in the world.

The counsels of the father prevailed. A suitable wife was found, and the marriage took place. The wedding ceremonies had not long been concluded however when the old man began to fail.

His dutiful and devoted son waited upon

him tenderly, but in spite of all that he and his wife could do, the old father gradually became worse. At length, to the bitter grief of his son, who had never been for a day, scarcely for an hour, separated from him, the old man died.

Sad indeed was the affectionate son, and lonely the days spent at work in the fields; nor did the pretty face of the little wife at home blot out the memory of the dear old father, who had been his friend and companion so long.

After a time the young man, hoping to throw off his melancholy, resolved to pay a visit to the city of Kyoto where he had never been, and to which was indeed a long journey from his home.





After seeing the temples and various other sights he was strolling through the streets of the great city, when he was attracted by a mirror shop and stopped to look and admire, for such things as mirrors he had never seen or heard of before.

The people of the shop received him politely, and seeing that he was a stranger from the country brought out a variety of mirrors for him to choose from, and pressed him to buy. What was the astonishment of the young man to see, in the very first one he took up, the face of his father looking at him!

The father appeared strong and healthy and young, just as his son could remember him years ago. Overjoyed at this discovery,

but afraid to say a word, lest the mirror-seller should try to prevent him from taking his father with him, he timidly asked the price.

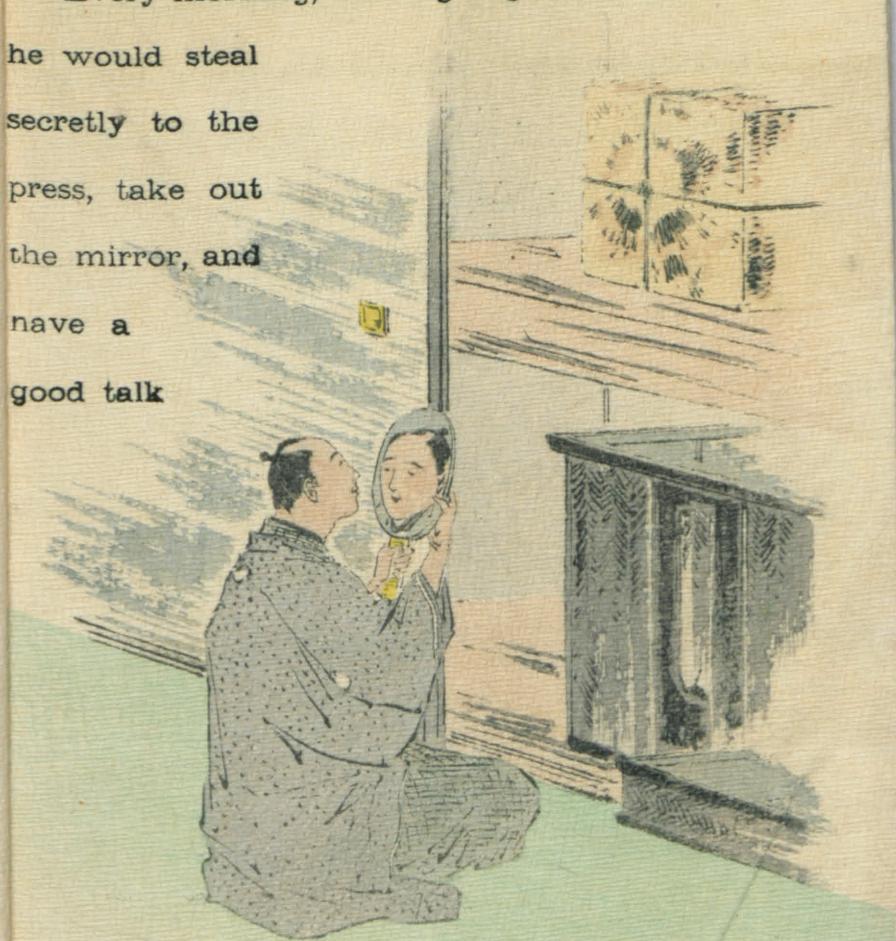
"Only two *bu*, and a great bargain it is," answered the mirror seller.

The young man, trembling with excitement, pulled out his bag of copper cash and joyfully counted out the money. Then, with his prize carefully wrapped up and placed in its wooden case, he at once set out on his homeward journey.

When he reached home he felt shy of speaking to his wife about what he had brought home with him. So, without saying a word to her, he carefully shut up the box which contained his *father* in the

*today*, or press.

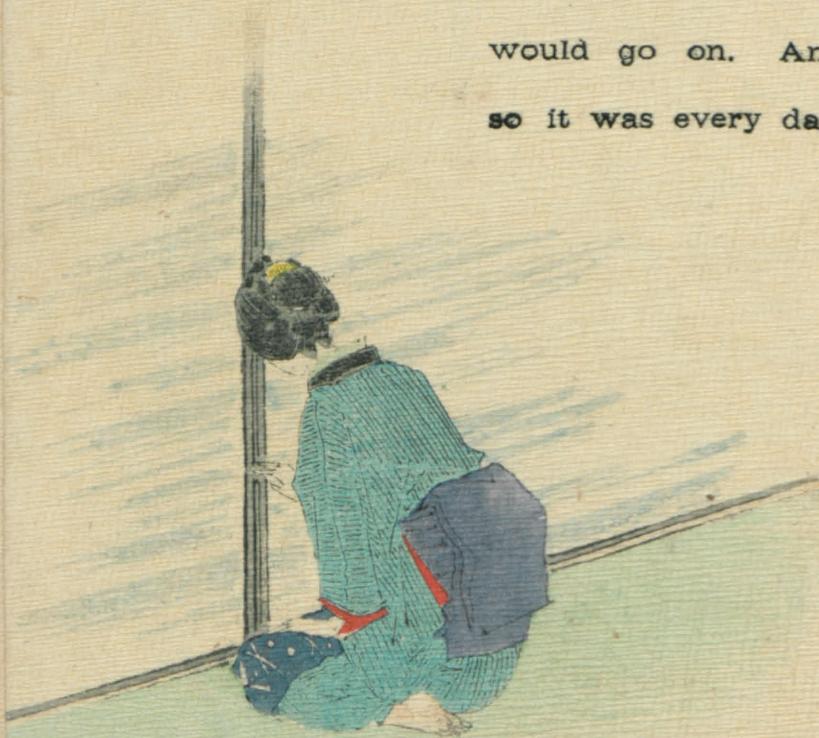
Every morning, before going to his work, he would steal secretly to the press, take out the mirror, and have a good talk



with the image he saw reflected there.

"Good morinnng, Father! Beautiful weather to-day! I hope you have had a good night. I am just off to the rice field now, but I will see you again shortly."

At night the same kind of thing would go on. And so it was every day.



The young wife would hear her husband's voice talk, talk, talking to somebody, and yet nobody seemed to be there. She became first curious, and then suspicious.

At length she said one day. "Who is that I hear you talking to for such a long time every night and morning?"

And when the husband became confused and hung his head, she insisted, saying, "Who is it? I must, and will know."

Then the husband told her, saying, "That time, when I went to Kyoto I found my father in a shop there. I was so glad to see him again, looking so strong and young too, that I bought him at once for two *bu* and brought him home. I did not like to speak to you about it, so I just hid

him in the *todana*, there, and of course I go to pay my respects to him night and morning, and tell him how things are getting on." The wife was astonished at these words, and only half believed them; but she saw that there was some mystery, and was determined to get to the bottom of it. She only waited until she was alone in the house. Then she went straight to the press, opened its sliding doors, hunted high and low, but found nothing strange, except a little flat wooden box.

"I'll soon see what's inside *you*, anyhow," she exclaimed.

When she took off the lid, what was her astonishment to find herself confronted

with an excited and angry, but withal pretty woman's face!

"Ah! Ah! That's what you keep hidden in the press, is it? Old father indeed! I'll old father you when you come home!"



So, no sooner did the husband come in from his work than he was met by a torrent of reproaches and abuse from his angry wife.

"Why did you deceive me in this wicked way?" she said, "old father, indeed!"



"Well, I have told you now at any rate, so don't be angry about it any more."

"But why did you say it was your father, and try to deceive me?"

"Because it is my father," cried he, astonished.

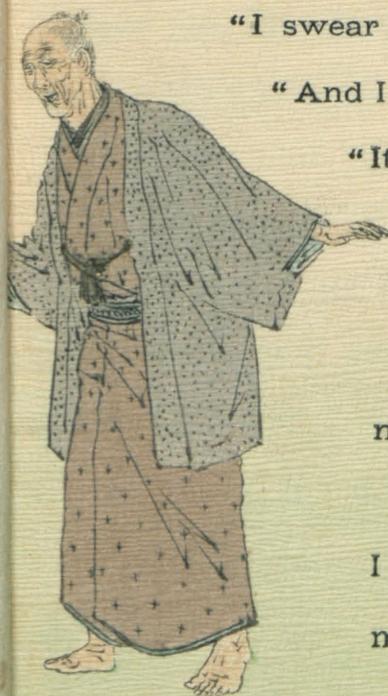
"I swear it isn't," cried she.

"And I swear it is," cried he.

"It is a bold, pert, horrid looking girl," said she.

"What do you mean?" said he.

"I mean just what I say, and why did you marry me if you did not like me? I wont

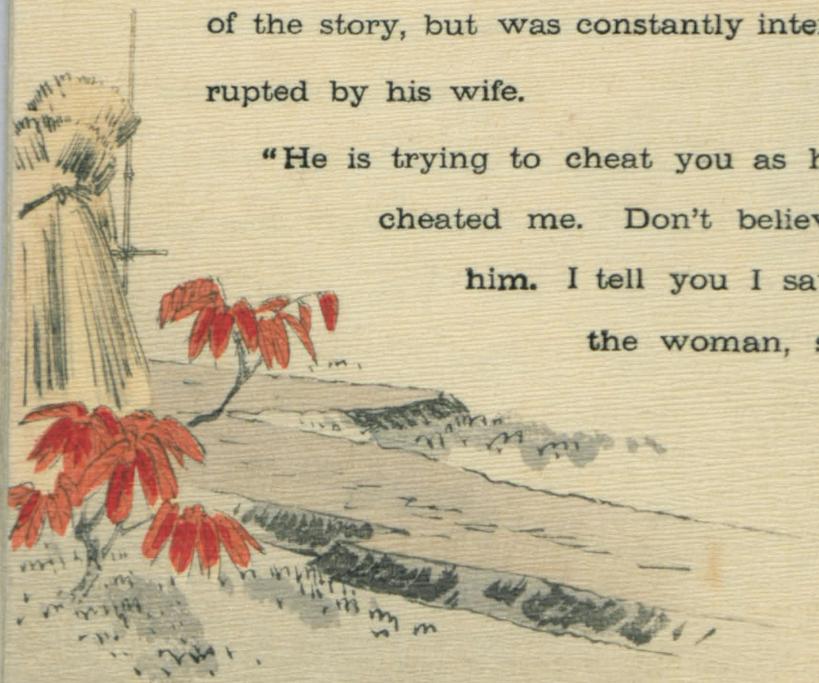


stay here to be treated so, I won't! I won't!  
I won't! I won't!"

And so a very pretty little quarrel arose, and they made such a noise over it that the neighbours came flocking round to see what was the matter.

The husband tried to tell his version of the story, but was constantly interrupted by his wife.

"He is trying to cheat you as he cheated me. Don't believe him. I tell you I saw the woman, so



I must be in the right, and I won't bear it, no, I won't."

"I am afraid my wife must be out of her senses, for I do assure you, good neighbours, it's only my old father."

"Old father, indeed!"—And so the quarrel went on.

At last one of the neighbours obtained a hearing, and spoke thus.

"You will never come to an understanding in this way; I will tell you what you had better do. Go to the Cloister and consult the Lady Abbess; we all know how pious and good she is, how wise also; she will be certain to give you just the advice which you need, and find a way for you out of this trouble."

The Abbess received them graciously, and asked in what way she could help them. The husband then told his story; how he had found his father in Kyoto, bought him for two *bu*, and brought him home; but that now, to his horror and dismay, his wife accused him of keeping a young woman shut up in the cupboard.

"I have *seen* her, so I think I ought to know," said the wife, "however, I am willing to abide by whatever the honourable Lady Abbess may in her wisdom decide."

The husband then handed the box to the abbess, she took out the mirror, and looked in it long, with the greatest interest and amazement. Then, after due consideration and reflection, she gave her decision in these words,

"It is evident that this poor young woman has been so much distressed by the bitterness of the quarrel which has taken place between you on her account that she has already become a nun! This place being a nunnery is surely the most



fitting abode for her. I will therefore take her to live here with me, where she will be peaceful and happy, and can be the cause of no further trouble between you. Go home now, and let bygones be bygones, and try to live harmoniously together for the future."

This the young couple did; the wife triumphant, and the husband only too glad to do anything for a quiet life.

But he was convinced in his own mind that there was a mistake somewhere, for he would have staked his life upon it that it was his old father whom he had bought for two *bu* at Kyoto?

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