

Battle of Yashima.

- I. A passenger on board a steamer bound for Kure from Kobe, may still see the once celebrated island of Yashima, now an isolated mountain, jutting out of the winding coast of Sanuki. In the tranquil scenery around, where beauty and softness mingle in such ~~a~~ happy proportions, he may scarcely conceive that the place was once the scene of a bloody battle which decided the star-crossed fate of the Taira clan.
- II. Poor clansmen of Taira, — peace for them! whose ^{fresh} chop-
less skulls and broken armour, may still lie buried in the dark ~~bottom~~ of the fair sea, unseen unnoticed after the lapse of five hundred years. — they enjoyed here but a few days' peace under their Emperor Antoku whom they defended to the last as the lawful sovereign of the fair land of the rising sun. In fact, the able leader of the Minamoto clan, lost no time in sailing hither in spite of the furious storm.
- III. It was one February morning in the first year of Juei that a little army consisting of only three hundred ^{of the} Minamoto clansmen, headed by the brave Yoshitune, attacked the hopeless fortress, defended by the five thousand Taira soldiers. ~~Three~~ hundred, after a perilous voyage through storm, against ^{the} fresh five thousand, ^{were no match} one may easily think, in ordinary cases. Yet those three hundred were the choicest ^{warriors} ~~flowers~~ of the clan. They had left behind them, with scorn, the mighty forces of sixty thousand who did not dare follow them on account of the stress of weather. They laughed to scorn all the menaces of and threats of the tempest; nay, they even defied the genius of weather to fight

with them, invulnerable as it was. And why would they shrink from any mortal foe, when they did not fear immortal spirits? Hurling into the misty morning air, a loud cry of war, they plunged themselves into the sea which was so shallow, between the coast and the island, as to afford an easy ford for them up to the gate of the fortress. The cry was answered by the Taira clansmen with equal shrillness. Thus the memorable battle (was) commenced amidst among the universal war cry, made three louder by the reverberation from the cliffs of Yashima.

IV The furious charge of the Minamoto soldiers was successfully repulsed by the desperate effort of their opponents who were determined to defend the fortress to the last. Many a time, Yoshitsune led his men to a fresh charge, but each time, he was driven from the first stockade where many heroic leaders of the Taira family spared no effort to encourage their men by the example of their valour and bravery.

V Towards the afternoon, Yoshitsune, mortified with the fruitless charges, took refuge ^{had resort} to a very different mode of attack which proved fatal to his enemy. He set fire to a pine forest which covered a patch of ground on the western side of the island, for the purpose of setting all the fortress on flame. The wind proved favorable. In an instant, the fire made its way into the stockade, thence into the inner part. Down came towers and battlements one after another in shapeless heaps. Scarcely an hour had passed ere all the fortress, together with the newly built palace, was reduced to ashes. Meanwhile

The enemy ^{prepared} set out their fleet, embarked with alacrity, the emperor, the ladies of the court, the knights, soldiers, one and all. They now arranged their fleet in a long line about two hundred yards off the coast where the small forces of the Minamoto clan were drawn up in a suitable position.

VI The two armies remained in this attitude for some time, when suddenly out of the enemy's line, a small craft (was) rowed forth, with a young maiden of exceeding beauty within it. ~~The rude soldiers of the East stood bewildered~~ A long pole mounted by a fan, was fixed at the prow of the craft. The rude soldiers of the East stood bewildered at this unexpected spectacle, when the craft suddenly stopped at a distance of about a hundred yards from the coast and the lady standing beside the pole waved ^{up} her fan, making as if she wished to draw ^{the} attention of the Minamoto clamen to the craft. The matter soon came to light. The enemy invited the brave knights of the East to try their skill in archery at the fan, by this malicious yet romantic means.

VII All on the shore looked at each other's face, wondering who would be so bold as to shoot his arrow at a mark on the tattering waves, one hundred yards off the coast. Those valiant warriors who had defied the genius of weather, now fled before the waving of a fair ladies' fan, not that they were destitute of courage, but that they heeded their ~~honour~~ honour. At this awful moment, a tall knight clad in black armour, mounted on a black horse appeared on the beach, attended by a page who held his

master's long bow and arrow-psi. He now untied his helmet, removed it ~~off~~ ^{from} his head and gave it to his page. When the whole army turned their eyes on this singular knight, they saw a handsome but sunburnt countenance of a young man of twenty half shaded by a rich profusion of long black hair. No sooner did they perceive the manly features, than the shout of "yoichi! yoichi! the brave knight from Nasu!" resounded through the camp. With an air of suppressed agitation, he took his bow and a shaft from his page and with a mute graceful bow to his general, he wheeled round his horse towards the craft.

VIII The sun was now declining in its glorious splendor. The mellow effulgence of the last rays was still lingering on the cliffs of the Yashima, as if it were unwilling to part ~~with~~ ^{from} the place without seeing the wonderful exploit of the knight from Nasu. Out on the dark sea, the gloomy veil of night was fast spreading itself, struggling with the ^{waning} astrayed light of day which streaked it with a thousand diversities of hues. The number-^{red}less steamers of the Taira clan flew in the air with ten fold brilliancy shot by the lingering rays of the setting sun.

Yoichi, bending on his saddle, breathed a heart-felt prayer devoted all his heart ^{N.F.} in a deep prayer; then raising his eyes up to ^{the} heaven, he said, "Neither the personal ambition nor the winning smile of the yonder maiden has drawn me hither. I bend my long bow whose ^{single} shaft may dash to pieces the skulls of two worthy knights, at this flimsy

mark, a little fan, only for ~~the sake of~~ the whole
 clan's sake. I must pierce my throat with my own
 arrow and make excuse for the disgrace which
 I may put on them, in case of failure. Oh God!
 throw light on the path of honour!" With those
 words, he applied his shaft to his bow and drew
 the string to its full stretch. All awaited the issue
 with in deep anxiety, mute and breathless. The
 profound silence was only broken by the groan
 and murmur of the wind which constantly
 set the craft in a slight motion and so kept
 the mark of aim in no fixed position. Not dis-
 heartened by this, however, he took a deliberate
 aim, & made a sufficient allowance for the
 wind. With the cry of "go!", the arrow whistled
 and the fan flew into the air. A faint murmur
 of applause which first arose in the camp of
 the Minamoto Clan and was answered by the
 enemy, grew louder and louder until the
 universal shout of admiration burst ^{out} forth
 in an uncontrollable excitement both on sea
 and land, the sound of which was heard at
 a mile's distance.

X The contest of the day was brought to an end
 with this adventure. The Taira fleet set sail
 for Danoura during the night.

Paragraphs.

1. The distant view of yashima
2. & Short Remarks about the Taira Clausmen
3. The Assault of yashima by yashitane
4. Attacks and Repulses
5. The Burning of yashima
6. Challenge for Archery
7. Nasuno Yoiichi
8. Evening Scene
9. The Adventure of Yoiichi
10. Conclusion

Battle of Yashima
 J. C. Matsume
 with gr. illustration
 I drew the armor & the sword
 & drew the hand & the tail

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