

BRIC-À-BRAC.

Urashima: A Japanese Rip Van Winkle.



URASHIMA REBUKES THE LAD.

AWAY off in Japan, a great many years ago, there lived a lad called Urashima. He loved to fish, and spent all his time on a big rock waiting for a bite; but he was a lazy fellow and liked to nap, so often missed his fish. However, he had a kind heart, and one day, as he was passing along a lonely road outside the village, he saw a bad boy tormenting a poor green turtle that had somehow gotten far away from the water. Urashima



URASHIMA ON THE TURTLE'S BACK.

rebuked the lad, and gently placed the turtle in a pool near by. Then he strolled toward the sea, and, getting his nets and lines ready, leaned back and went to sleep.

A great splashing awoke him, and looking down he saw the head of a monstrous turtle appearing above the waves. The turtle told the astonished boy that he was the helpless turtle so recently saved, and showed how he could change himself into any shape when in the water. He invited Urashima to journey with him, and beating the sea with his huge flipper, straightway made the water so still and clear that Urashima saw far below a great city and waving forests beyond it. It was a fair sight, and our hero loved adventure. Thither the turtle begged to take him. Urashima was timid, but his curiosity was stronger than all his fears. He took off his hat, drew in his fishing-poles, and laid them with his baskets upon a flat stone out of reach of the tide.

"I shall soon return," he murmured.

As they descended Urashima beheld many strange sights; great fishes peered at him with goggle-eyes, beautiful sea-plants waved all about him, and, while he admired them, changed into living creatures. He passed through the water, but his garments were not even damp, and he breathed as easily as on the dry land.

Very soon they came to a fine sandy beach, and the turtle bade Urashima dismount, for they had come to the Sea-King's country. Right before them was a gateway guarded by a queer-looking creature, half fish, half man, who in a deep voice demanded of Urashima his business. The turtle answered for him, and, slipping a pretty glass ball into his hand, bade him roll it before him without fear and he would be guided straight to the palace.

The gate-keeper swung the door wide open and Urashima passed in. Then the door shut with a clang, and he was left alone on the sands.

He dropped the glittering toy; at once it started, rolling gently over and over as if it quite enjoyed

the exercise. Urashima followed, and soon found himself in a great forest. Tall ferns, as large as trees, but of beautiful colors, swayed gently in the breeze, and the ground was carpeted with ten million flowers; and, as he followed the narrow path, he seemed to hear the tinkling of a thousand silver bells.

He walked a long distance, and was beginning to be a little weary, when he beheld far away a large building with a dome of clearest crystal rising high in the air; and its summit could not be seen, for a golden cloud was dropped over it like a veil.

The ball rolled straight to a small golden door



THE GATE OF THE SEA-KING'S COUNTRY.



URASHIMA BEFORE THE SEA-KING.

of the great house and gave a gentle tap. Immediately it flew open, and a beautiful sea-nymph stood before Urashima.

"Are you a mortal?" she asked.

He told his story, and she clapped her hands with joy. She said her name was Otohime and her father ruled the sea-country.

With her he passed through a fairy-land of beautiful grottoes, where charming maidens left their sport in the clear green pools to form a body-guard for Otohime, and went with them toward a heavy curtain of many-colored sea-weed kept fresh by the spray from seven fountains. Beyond the curtain sat the old Sea-King upon a throne, with a scepter of coral in his hand, and at his side a shell into which he blew whenever he wished to call his subjects together.

Now when the King asked who the stranger was, the Princess told him that she had sent *Kame* [the turtle] to the upper world in search of a beautiful young man, and that the search had till then been fruitless. Then she said that the stranger pleased her, and asked that he might become her husband.

The King smiled, and summoned his court with a blast of his shell, and ordered a feast in honor of the stranger.

When the feast was ready, Urashima was introduced to all the councillors and statesmen, and the sea-nymphs were brought to him that he might see their beauty. But Otohime moved among them as the moon among the stars, and Urashima felt his heart drawn to her.

For seven days he wandered through the great mansion. He climbed the crystal dome and from it beheld the wonders of the deep sea. He visited the "Cave of the Winds," and saw the beginnings of water in a thread-like stream trickling from the center of a pure white stone. He sat by the Enchanted Fountains, his cheek bathed with the spray, and watched the nymphs sporting in the pools. And the lovely Otohime was always his companion.

One day the Sea-King called him to his side, and

asked him to remain and be his daughter's husband. He consented.

Again the King blew upon his shell, and ordered the wedding-feast to be prepared.

That night the sands were illumined by millions of insects that massed themselves in groups like lanterns. The musicians were there. Foremost among them were the *fugu* [a kind of fish], who tuned his *samisen* [banjo] and gave directions to the other players, and the Devil-Fish, who excelled in the fan-dance.

When Urashima and Otohime had pledged each other in a cup of wine, the instruments twanged, the Devil-Fish flourished his eight fans all at once, and the mermaids and mermen broke into a song of praise to the newly wedded pair; while all the fishes, great and small, crowded and jostled each other to see the brave sight. Nor was the good turtle absent. He appeared, and, rearing himself on his hind-flippers, solemnly saluted the bride. It was a joyous occasion.

Weeks flew swiftly by, for nobody took account of time in the sea-kingdom, and Urashima was very happy with his charming bride. But by and by he began to think of his father and mother and little sister, and day by day his wish to visit the earth grew stronger. He said nothing, but he laughed no more, and his ruddy complexion paled; he grew thin, and Otohime, who had noticed all, finally obtained the King's permission for him to make a journey home. But she was very sad.

One dawn the whole court escorted Urashima through the forest to the shore-boundary of the sea-kingdom; then Otohime blew a call upon the polished shell suspended from the string of pearls about her neck. Quickly *Kame* appeared.

She gave her husband a box wound about with a purple cord tightly knotted, and said gently:

"I beg that you will take this box; keep it carefully; never lose sight of it; and above all things, *do not open it*. Return, I pray you, speedily!"

She covered her face with her floating tresses, and fell back among her maidens, weeping bitterly.



THE WEDDING-FEAST OF URASHIMA AND OTOHIME.



THE PARTING OF URASHIMA AND OTOHIME.

Urashima promised, and leaping upon the turtle's broad back, soon reached his native shore. The sea still rolled its great waves upon the beach. The rocks were the same, but where his native village used to be stood a great city, and in the crowded streets he saw no familiar faces.

At length he saw in a veranda an old couple who strongly resembled his parents. Joyfully he rushed to meet them, but they would not own him. So he told his story.

"Urashima, Urashima!" said the old man in a thoughtful voice. "Ah, I remember the story now; how dare you claim to be he? While fishing he fell from the rocks into the deep sea, and his body was never found. That was three hundred years ago, and you are a young man. Fie, my lad! may the gods forgive you for playing tricks upon the aged."

"Three hundred years ago!" quoth Urashima; "why, it was only a few weeks——"

"Come away, good wife; a demon doubtless inhabits the young man"; and they slipped inside, and closed the sliding door.

Urashima sighed deeply, and walked slowly along, asking everybody:

"Do you know the story of Urashima?"

Some nodded, others muttered a hasty "Yes, yes," and an old man who smoked his pipe amid a heap of sandals said the story had been handed down from father to son for three hundred years.

Urashima waited to hear no more. Sadly he wandered on. No parents, no friends! He was indeed alone.

That night he slept in a little house where some laborers kept their tools, and while, next morning, he made ready to return to his beautiful wife, his eyes fell upon the box which he had borne about with such care. All at once he became intensely curious to learn its contents.

Forgetting his wife's command, he snatched off the cover. What did he see? Nothing at all but a yellow-

ish cloud like mist or spray, which closed about him, and he began to feel, oh, so tired. Unhappy man! he had let loose the three hundred years which Otohime had gathered so carefully and stored away.

His hair grew white as the snows of Fuji-Yama, his beard, like hoar-frost, reached his waist, his eyes became dull, his teeth dropped out, millions of wrinkles seamed his face and aged hands, and he sank down on the earth a very old man. Just then the laborers returned, and to them he told, for the last time, his story. Then he shrunk together like a collapsed paper-balloon, and was no more.

If you should ever visit the province of Miyagi, you may see Urashima's tomb, and while you gaze, perhaps you will think of his last words:

"Beware of curiosity!"

Masayuki Kataoka.



URASHIMA OPENS THE BOX.

A Knot of Blue.

(FOR THE BOYS OF YALE.)

SHE hath no gems of luster bright
To sparkle in her hair;
No need hath she of borrowed light
To make her beauty fair.
Upon her shining locks afloat
Are daisies wet with dew,
And peeping from her lissome throat
A little knot of blue.

A dainty knot of blue,
A ribbon blithe of hue,—
It fills my dreams with sunny gleams,
That little knot of blue.

I met her down the shadowed lane
Beneath the apple-tree,
The balmy blossoms fell like rain
Upon my love and me;
And what I said or what I did
That morn I never knew,
But to my breast there came and hid
A little knot of blue.

A little knot of blue,
A love-knot strong and true,—
'Twill hold my heart till life shall part,
That little knot of blue.

Samuel Minturn Peck.