Essays in Idleness

KENKŌ

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徒然草

Translated from the Japanese with AI (Claude) and edited



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INTRODUCTION

"With nothing to do all day, I sit facing my inkstone and jot down whatever trifles drift through my mind." So begins *Tsurezuregusa*, "Essays in Idleness," written around 1330 by Kenkō (c. 1283–c. 1352), a former court official who had taken Buddhist vows and lived as a recluse on the edges of Kyoto. He was known in his day as a poet and a scholar of court custom.

The book is a collection of 243 short pieces, some a single sentence, some a few pages: reflections on the uncertainty of life and the nearness of death, on the beauty of things that are imperfect, unfinished or passing ("Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, and the moon only when it is cloudless?"), on good taste and bad, friendship, drink, wealth and skill, alongside anecdotes of monks, courtiers and craftsmen and notes on the fine points of old court ceremony.

Kenkō writes in the plain, supple prose of the Heian court tradition, mixing Buddhist and Confucian ideas with a dry humor. Read for centuries as a guide to taste and conduct, *Tsurezuregusa* is one of the classics of Japanese prose and the model of the *zuihitsu*, or "following the brush," the loose form of the miscellaneous essay. The text is complete; the two parts follow its traditional division into two books.

Book One

上

The preface and sections 1–136: the ideal man of taste, impermanence and the nearness of death, the beauty of the seasons, old court customs, and anecdotes of monks and courtiers.

Pref. With nothing to do, all day long I face my inkstone and jot down whatever trifling thoughts pass through my mind, without order or aim—and it feels strangely like madness.[1]

1. THINGS TO WISH FOR

From emperors to monks: which stations in life are enviable, and the learning and arts a man should have.

1 Well, now: once we are born into this world, there seem to be many things we might wish for. The emperor's rank is awesome beyond words. Down to the last leaves of the bamboo garden, the imperial line is not of common human seed, and that is what makes it exalted. The bearing of the Regent goes without saying. Even among subjects, those high enough to be granted court attendants look magnificent. Their children and grandchildren, even if they have come down in the world, still have a certain elegance. As for those further down, who prosper in their time each according to their station and wear a self-satisfied look:

1 *Tsurezure* means idleness, tedium, having nothing to do. The title *Tsurezuregusa*, literally "grasses (jottings) of idleness", is usually rendered *Essays in Idleness*.

they may think themselves splendid, but it is a great pity.[2] Nothing is less enviable than a monk. Sei Shōnagon wrote, "People think of them as if they were scraps of wood," and so indeed it is. Even when they have great power and make a great stir, they do not look splendid. As the holy man Zōga is said to have put it, a craving for fame is painful and must go against the Buddha's teaching. A wholehearted recluse, on the other hand, may, if anything, be rather enviable in some ways.[3] For anyone, it is surely most desirable to be fine in looks and bearing. Someone whose speech is not unpleasant to hear, who has charm and does not talk too much: that is a person we would never tire of sitting with. When someone we thought admirable lets us down by showing their true nature, how disappointing it must be! Rank and looks we may be born with. But the mind: why should it not move from wise to wiser, if we move it? Even a person of good looks and good temperament, if lacking learning, falls in standing and, mixing among people of lower rank and plainer faces, is effortlessly outshone by them. That is a regrettable thing. What one would wish for is the true way of letters, composing Chinese verse, waka, music for winds and strings; and also, in court precedent and court ceremonies, to be a model for others. That would be splendid. For a man, it is good to write a running hand that is not clumsy, to have a pleasant voice and keep time to the music, and, while declining modestly when wine is offered, not to be unable to drink.

2. AGAINST EXTRAVAGANCE

Rulers who forget the people and love luxury; old precepts that urge plainness.

[2] There are people who forget the government of the sage rulers of old, know nothing of the sufferings of the people or the harm

2 "The bamboo garden" is a figure for the imperial family, after the bamboo garden of a Han-dynasty prince. The Regent (*ichi no hito*, "the first man") was the highest-ranking of the emperor's subjects.

3 Sei Shōnagon was the author of *The Pillow Book* (c. 1000). Zōga (917–1003) was a Tendai monk famous for his eccentric contempt of honors.

done to the country, lavish splendor on everything, think themselves magnificent, and swagger about taking up all the room. They seem distasteful and thoughtless. In the Testament of Lord Kujō, too, we find: "From robes and caps to horses and carriages, use what you have. Do not seek beauty and splendor." And in what Retired Emperor Juntoku wrote on the affairs of the palace: "For His Majesty's own attire, plainness is held to be best."[4]

3. A MAN WITH NO TASTE FOR LOVE

A man indifferent to love is like a jeweled cup with no bottom.

[3] A man who is splendid in every way but has no taste for love is very dull, like a jeweled cup without a bottom. Drenched with dew and frost, wandering without knowing where, his mind never at rest for fear of his parents' reproaches and the world's censure, torn this way and that, and yet mostly sleeping alone, with never a night of sound sleep: that is what is charming. And yet not to be given wholly to dissipation, but to be thought by women not easily won: that is how one would wish to be.

4. MINDFUL OF THE NEXT LIFE

Not forgetting the next life is admirable.

[4] Not to let the next life slip from one's mind, not to be a stranger to the Buddha's way: that is admirable.

5. THE MOON OF EXILE

In grief it is better to live quietly behind a shut gate than to rush into vows.

[5] When someone is sunk in grief through misfortune, rather than rashly resolving to shave the head, it is better, in its way, to shut the gate and pass the days and nights as if hardly there, expecting nothing. Middle Counselor Akimoto is said to have

4 Lord Kujō is Fujiwara no Morosuke (908–960), who left instructions for his descendants. Juntoku (1197–1242) wrote the *Kinpishō*, a guide to palace usage.

spoken of seeing "the moon of exile, without having committed a crime"; one can well feel that way.[5]

6. BETTER TO HAVE NO CHILDREN

Great men of the past who wished their lines to end.

[6] Whether one is of high rank or, still more, of no account at all, it is better to have no children. "The former Prince of Central Affairs, the Kujō Chancellor and the Hanazono Minister of the Left all wished their lines to die out. For the Somedono Minister, too, it is good that he had no descendants. To leave descendants behind is a bad thing": so says the tale of old Yotsugi. And when Prince Shōtoku had his tomb built in advance, he is said to have ordered, "Cut it off here, sever it there: I intend to leave no descendants."[6]

7. ON IMPERMANENCE

If life never ended, nothing would move us; it is uncertainty that makes it precious.

[7] If the dew on Adashino never vanished, if the smoke over Toribeyama never drifted away, and we went on living forever, how little the world would move us! It is precisely its uncertainty that is precious. Of all living things, none lives as long as we do. The mayfly lasts only until evening; the summer cicada knows neither spring nor autumn. Even a single year, lived through quietly, is long and leisurely beyond measure. But if we cling to life, never satisfied, then even a thousand years would feel like one night's dream.[7] In a world where we cannot live forever, what is gained by waiting until we grow ugly? The

5 Minamoto no Akimoto (1000–1047) took vows after the death of Emperor Go-Ichijō. To see the moon from a place of exile was a stock image of poignant beauty.
6 The "tale of old Yotsugi" is the *Ōkagami* (Great Mirror, c. 1100), a history narrated by an aged man named Yotsugi. Prince Shōtoku (574–622) was the great early patron of Buddhism in Japan.
7 Adashino and Toribeyama were burial and cremation grounds outside the capital. "How little the world would move us" renders *mono no aware*, "the pathos of things": the poignant feeling that things stir in us because they pass.

longer we live, the more shame we suffer. It would be seemly to die before forty at the latest. Past that age, one loses all shame at one's looks, wants to go out and mix with people, dotes on children and grandchildren in the evening sun of life, hopes to live long enough to see them prosper, grows ever deeper in craving for the world, and becomes insensible to the pathos of things. How wretched!

8. THE IMMORTAL OF KUME

Nothing leads the heart astray like desire; a hermit loses his powers at the sight of a woman's shins.

[8] Nothing leads people's hearts astray like sexual desire. What a foolish thing the human heart is! Scent is a passing thing; we know it is only incense burned into the clothes for a while, and yet an exquisite fragrance still sets the heart racing. The immortal of Kume, they say, lost his magic powers on seeing the white shins of a woman washing clothes. Truly, when arms, legs and skin are fair, plump and glossy, since that is no borrowed color, it is no wonder.[8]

9. THE ROPE OF A WOMAN'S HAIR

Desire is the one delusion that old and young, wise and foolish, find hard to give up.

[9] In a woman, it is fine hair, it seems, that most draws the eye. Her standing and temperament can be known from the way she speaks, even from behind a screen. On any occasion, even in her ordinary manner, she can lead a man's heart astray. And that women in general never sleep at ease, do not spare themselves, and bear patiently what seems unbearable—all this is only because they are thinking of love. Truly, the path of attachment has deep roots and a distant source. The pleasures and desires of the six sense-objects are many, yet all of them can be

8 The immortal (*sennin*) of Kume was a legendary hermit who could fly; he fell from the sky at the sight.

renounced. Of them all, only this one delusion is hard to stop, and in this the old and the young, the wise and the foolish, seem no different. So it has been handed down that a rope twisted from a woman's hair will hold even a great elephant fast, and that to a flute made from a woman's clogs the autumn deer will always come. This is the delusion we must guard against in ourselves, fear and beware of.[9]

10. A TASTEFUL DWELLING

A house shows its owner's character; Saigyō and the rope stretched against kites.

[10] A dwelling that is fitting and as one would wish it—though we know it is only a temporary lodging—is a pleasure. Where a person of good breeding lives at ease, even the moonlight shining in seems all the more moving. Not fashionable or glittering, but with trees that have grown old, garden grasses unforced yet full of feeling, a veranda and a lattice fence pleasingly placed, furnishings that carry a feeling of the past, everything calm: that is what seems truly tasteful. A house polished up with all the care of many craftsmen, set out with rare and exquisite furnishings from China and Japan, even the trees and plants of the garden forced into shapes against their nature: it is painful to look at, and very dreary. Can one go on living like that for long? At first glance one thinks: this too will go up in smoke in a moment. On the whole, a person's character can be guessed from the dwelling. The Go-Tokudaiji Minister once had a rope stretched across the roof of his main hall so that kites would not perch there. When Saigyō saw it, he said, "What harm could it do if kites perched there?[10] So that is the measure of this lord's heart," and after that he never visited him again—so I have heard. Then once a rope was stretched along the ridge of the Kosaka Palace,

9 The six sense-objects (literally "six dusts") are sights, sounds, smells, tastes, things touched and objects of the mind.

10 The Go-Tokudaiji Minister is Fujiwara no Sanesada (1139–1191). Saigyō (1118–1190) was a poet who had left the world to become a monk.

where the Prince of Ayanokōji lives, and I was reminded of that precedent. But someone told me, "Actually, birds were flocking there and catching the frogs in the pond, and His Highness saw it and was grieved." In that case, I thought, how admirable. Perhaps Tokudaiji, too, had some reason.[11]

11. THE MANDARIN TREE

A lonely hut in the hills is spoiled by a fruit tree fenced against thieves.

[11] Once, around the tenth month, I passed a place called Kurusuno and made my way into a mountain village to visit someone. Treading a long, narrow, mossy path, I came to a hut where someone was living in lonely quiet. Apart from the dripping of a bamboo water-pipe buried in fallen leaves, nothing made the slightest sound. Chrysanthemums and red leaves had been cut and laid on the offering shelf, so someone did live there after all. So one can live even like this, I thought, and as I looked on, moved, I saw in a garden beyond a large mandarin-orange tree, its branches bent under the fruit, fenced in tightly all around. That rather spoiled it, and I thought: if only that tree were not there.

12. A FRIEND OF LIKE MIND

The wish for a companion who agrees, yet differs enough to talk with.

[12] How glad one would be to talk quietly with someone of like mind and to find comfort in speaking openly of amusing things and of the world's fleeting ways. But since there can hardly be such a person, sitting across from someone and taking care not to differ in the slightest would, I think, feel like being alone. With someone whose words are worth hearing and agreeing with, yet who differs a little, one might argue, "I don't see it that way," or talk it through, "so that is why"—and that, one thinks, would relieve the tedium. But in truth, with someone who does

11 The Prince of Ayanokōji is Prince Shōe, a son of Emperor Kameyama, who had taken vows.

not share even one's small grievances, idle chatter about trifles may do, but as a true friend of the heart there is bound to be a great distance. That is sad.

13. FRIENDS IN BOOKS

Reading alone by lamplight, with the authors of the past for friends.

13 To sit alone by lamplight with a book open, making friends of people one never saw: there is no greater comfort. As for books: the moving volumes of the *Wenxuan*, the *Collected Works of Bai Juyi*, the words of Laozi, the chapters of the *Nanhua*. Among the writings of this country's scholars, too, the old ones have much that is moving.[12]

14. POEMS OLD AND NEW

Waka make even humble things graceful; old poems have a depth that new ones lack.

14 Waka, above all, are delightful. Even the doings of humble peasants and woodsmen sound charming once put into a poem, and the fearsome wild boar becomes graceful when called "the boar's bed of grass." Among poems these days, some seem to have a clever turn here and there, but compared with the old poems, somehow... none gives a moving sense of a scene beyond the words. Tsurayuki's "though it is not a thing twisted into thread" has been called, so they say, a scrap among the poems of the *Kokinshū*, but it does not look like something a poet of today could compose.[13] The poems of that age are full of this kind of form and diction. Why this poem alone should be singled out like this is hard to understand. *The Tale of Genji* gives it as "mono to wa nashi ni." For the *Shinkokinshū*, the poem people name is the one with "lonely on the peak, even the pine that remains";

12 The *Wenxuan* (Selections of Refined Literature) is a sixth-century Chinese anthology; the *Nanhua* (*Nanhua zhenjing*) is the *Zhuangzi*.
13 Ki no Tsurayuki (c. 872–945) was a compiler of the *Kokinshū* (905), the first imperial anthology of waka. The poem says that parting frays the heart, though the heart is not thread.

and this may indeed look a little loose in form. Yet Ienaga's diary records that this poem, too, was judged good at the group judging, and that later the retired emperor was especially moved by it and said so.[14] Some say that the way of poetry alone has not changed since ancient times. But I wonder. The same words and famous poetic places that people still use today are not at all the same things when the poets of old composed with them. Theirs seem easy and unaffected, clean in form and deep in feeling. The words of the songs in the *Ryōjin hishō*, too, seem to have much that is moving. With people of old, perhaps, even the most offhand turn of phrase sounds splendid.[15]

15. A SHORT JOURNEY

Travel wakes one up, and makes people and things seem fresh.

[15] Wherever it may be, going off on a short journey makes one feel wide awake. Wandering about the area, looking here and there, in rustic places and mountain villages, one finds so much that is unfamiliar. It is fun to find someone heading for the capital and send a letter, writing, "Don't forget this and that when you have the chance." In such places one is attentive to everything. Even of the things one has brought along, the good ones look better, and talented people and good-looking people seem more charming than usual. It is delightful, too, to go quietly into retreat at a temple or shrine.

14 "Mono to wa nashi ni" is a variant of Tsurayuki's "mono naranaku ni" ("though it is not a thing"). Minamoto no Ienaga (d. 1234) served Retired Emperor Go-Toba, who commissioned the *Shinkokinshū* (1205).

15 The *Ryōjin hishō* is a twelfth-century collection of popular songs compiled by Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa.

16. KAGURA AND MUSIC

Sacred dance and the instruments Kenkō likes best.

16 Kagura is elegant and delightful. Of instruments in general, the flute and the hichiriki; and what I always want to hear is the biwa and the Japanese zither.[16]

17. A MOUNTAIN TEMPLE

Retreat to a mountain temple clears the mind.

17 To shut oneself away in a mountain temple and serve the Buddha: there is no tedium, and one feels the muddiness of the heart grow clear.

18. XU YOU'S GOURD

The wise own nothing; Xu You throws away his gourd, and Sun Chen sleeps on straw.

18 It is best for a person to live simply, put away extravagance, own no wealth and not crave the world. Since ancient times, the wise have seldom been rich. In China there was a man called Xu You who had no possessions about him at all and drank water by scooping it up in his hands. Seeing this, someone gave him a gourd. Once he hung it on the branch of a tree, and when it rattled in the wind he found it noisy and threw it away. And again he drank water from his cupped hands. How clear and cool his heart must have been! Sun Chen had no bedding in the winter months, only a bundle of straw; at night he slept in it, and in the morning he put it away. Because the Chinese thought this splendid, they must have written it down and handed it on to later ages. People here would not even pass such stories on.[17]

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16 Kagura is the sacred music and dance of Shinto rites. The hichiriki is a double-reed pipe; the biwa a lute; the Japanese zither (*wagon*) has six strings.

17 Xu You is a legendary hermit who refused the throne offered him by the sage ruler Yao.

19. THE CHANGING SEASONS

A tour of the year's seasons and festivals, from spring blossoms to New Year's Eve.

[19] The turning of the seasons is moving in every way. Everyone says, "The pathos of things is deepest in autumn," and that is so; but what lifts the heart still more, it seems, is the look of spring. The birds' voices sound remarkably like spring, and from the time the grasses sprout by the hedges in the mild sunlight, spring deepens little by little, haze spreads everywhere, and the blossoms are just beginning to show their promise—when, as it happens, rain and wind come day after day, and they scatter in a hurried rush. Until the trees turn green with leaf, everything keeps the heart troubled. The orange blossom is famous for it, but it is still the scent of plum that brings back the past and makes us long for it. The clean look of the kerria, the hazy look of the wisteria: so much is hard to put out of mind. Someone once said, "Around the Buddha's Bathing and the Festival, when the young leaves on the treetops grow thick and cool, the pathos of the world and longing for others are at their deepest," and that is truly so.[18] In the fifth month, when sweet flag is laid on the eaves, when the rice seedlings are taken up, when the water rail knocks—how could these not make one feel forlorn? In the sixth month, white moonflowers glimpsed at a humble house, and a smudge fire smoldering against the mosquitoes, are moving too. The purification rites of the sixth month are delightful as well. The Tanabata festival is elegant. As the nights grow gradually colder, when the geese come crying, when the lower leaves of the bush clover turn color, when the early rice is cut and dried—autumn has more such things gathered together than any other season. And the morning after an autumn gale is

18 In poetry the scent of orange blossom recalls a former love. The Buddha's Bathing (his birthday) fell on the eighth day of the fourth month; "the Festival" is the Kamo Festival in the same month.

delightful.[19] As I go on like this, it has all been said before in *The Tale of Genji*, *The Pillow Book* and the like; but that is no reason not to say the same things again. Not saying what one thinks makes one feel bloated, so I let the brush run on. It is a futile pastime, something to be torn up and thrown away, not meant for others to see. Now, the withered scenes of winter are hardly inferior to autumn. Red leaves fallen and lying in the grass at the water's edge, a morning when the frost lies very white and mist rises from the garden stream: these are delightful. At the very end of the year, when everyone is hurrying about, it is moving beyond compare. And the sky after the twentieth of the month, when the moon, called dreary and watched by no one, shines cold and clear, is forlorn indeed. The Buddha Names service and the departure of the envoys with the tomb offerings are moving and solemn. Court ceremonies come thick and fast, on top of the preparations for spring, and the way they are all arranged and carried out is splendid. How delightful that the rite for driving out demons runs straight on into the Worship of the Four Directions! On the last night of the year, when it is very dark, people light pine torches and run about knocking at gates until past midnight, shouting grandly about who knows what, rushing around as if their feet never touched the ground; then toward dawn, after all, everything falls silent, and the last of the year feels forlorn.[20] The rite of honoring the spirits on the night when the dead return is no longer practiced in the capital these days, but it was moving to find that in the eastern provinces they still observe it. And so the sky grows light. It does not look any different from yesterday's, and yet it feels altogether new.

19 Tanabata, on the seventh night of the seventh month, celebrates the yearly meeting of two star-lovers, the Weaver and the Herdsman.

20 The Buddha Names service (*Butsumyō*) recited the names of buddhas to atone for the year's sins; the year-end offerings (*nosaki*) were sent to the imperial tombs. The demon-expelling rite was held on New Year's Eve, and the emperor worshipped the four directions at dawn on New Year's Day.

The avenues are lined with pines, bright and cheerful, and that too is moving.[21]

20. THE LAST TIE

A recluse says the only thing he will miss is the sky.

[20] A recluse whose name I forget once said, "For someone like me, without a single tie to bind me to this world, the one thing I will be sorry to leave behind is the sky." I can well believe it is true.

21. THE MOON AND WATER

Moon, wind and running water comfort the heart.

[21] Whatever troubles us, looking at the moon brings comfort. Someone once said, "Nothing is as delightful as the moon," and another argued back, "No, it is the dew that moves us." That was amusing. In its season, what is there that does not move us? The moon and the blossoms go without saying, but the wind, it seems, can stir the heart like nothing else. Water breaking on rocks and running clear is lovely in any season. I was moved when I read the Chinese poem that says, "The Yuan and the Xiang flow east day and night; not for a moment do they stay for the sorrowing man." Ji Kang, too, wrote, "Wandering among mountains and marshes, watching the fish and the birds, my heart is glad." Nothing comforts the heart like roaming where people are far away and the water and grasses are clean.[22]

22. THE OLD DAYS

Old things and old words are better; modern speech grows coarse.

[22] In everything, it is the old days I long for. Modern fashions seem to grow more and more vulgar. Even among the beautiful

21 In Kenkō's day the dead were also thought to return on the last night of the year, not only at the summer festival of the dead.

22 The lines on the Yuan and Xiang rivers are by the Tang poet Dai Shulun. Ji Kang (223–262) was one of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove.

things made by master woodworkers, it is the old shapes that please. In letters, the wording on old scraps of paper is splendid. Ordinary speech, too, keeps getting worse. "In the old days people said *kuruma motage yo* for 'Raise the carriage shafts' and *hi kakage yo* for 'Turn up the lamp'; people now say *mote-age yo* and *kaki-age yo*. Where one should say 'Housekeeping Office, form your ranks' (*ninju-date*), they say 'Make the torches bright' (*tachiakashi shiroku seyo*). And the Emperor's listening room at the Saishō Lectures, which should be called *gokō no ro*, they call *kōro*. It is a pity," a venerable elder once said.[23]

23. THE PALACE

Even in a declining age the palace and its old names keep their dignity.

[23] Though this is a declining latter age, the hallowed, time-worn air of the palace is still unworldly and splendid. Names like the Rodai Terrace, the Asagarei Room, such-and-such Hall, such-and-such Gate sound magnificent. Even the "little lattice shutter," the "little boarded floor" and the "high sliding door," things one might find in any humble house, sound fine there. "Prepare the guard post for the night" sounds splendid. And for the imperial bedchamber, "Light the lamps, quickly!" is fine too. The senior noble presiding at the guard post goes without saying. Even the underlings of the various offices, so practiced and so pleased with themselves, are delightful. It is charming to see them dozing here and there all through a bitterly cold night. "The sound of the bells at the Naishidokoro is splendid and refined," said the Tokudaiji Chancellor.[24]

23 The Saishō Lectures were an annual court reading of the Golden Light Sutra. In each pair the elder prefers the older, fuller court form.

24 The Naishidokoro was the palace sanctuary where the sacred mirror was kept and bells were rung in its rites.

24. SHRINES

The priestess at Nonomiya, and the elegance of Shinto shrines.

[24] The Ise Priestess's stay at the Nonomiya Shrine struck me as the height of grace and charm. It is charming, too, that they avoid words like "sutra" and "buddha" and say "the middle one" and "dyed paper" instead. Shrines of the gods in general have an elegance one cannot pass by. The ancient groves are already out of the ordinary, and when the sacred fence runs all round them and paper streamers hang on the sacred *sakaki* branches, how could that not be splendid? Especially delightful are Ise, Kamo, Kasuga, Hirano, Sumiyoshi, Miwa, Kibune, Yoshida, Ōharano, Matsunoo and Umenomiya.[25]

25. THE RUINS OF HŌJŌJI

Michinaga's great temple has fallen into ruin; nothing we build will last.

[25] This world is as inconstant as the Asuka River, whose deep pools turn into shallows. Times change and things pass, and joy and sorrow come and go. Places that were once splendid become empty fields where no one lives, and in houses that stand unchanged the people are new. The peach and the plum say nothing, so with whom can we talk of the past? Still more fleeting are the traces of a noble past we never saw. When I look at the Kyōgoku Mansion or Hōjōji, I am moved to see how the founder's intentions linger while everything has changed.[26] The Lord of the Midō built them in all their splendor and endowed them with many estates. He resolved that his house alone would be guardian to the emperors and pillar of the realm for all time. Could he have imagined then that, in any age, they would fall

25 The Ise Priestess (*saigū*), an imperial princess appointed to serve the Ise Shrine, spent a year of purification at the Nonomiya in Sagano before going to Ise. Buddhist words were taboo there.

26 The Asuka River image comes from a *Kokinshū* poem: "What in this world is constant? In the Asuka River, yesterday's deep pool is today's shallows."

into such ruin? The Great Gate and the Golden Hall stood until quite recently, but in the Shōwa era (1312–17) the South Gate burned down. The Golden Hall later collapsed and lies where it fell, and no one has raised it again. Only the Muryōjuin remains as a trace of what was.[27] Nine buddhas, each sixteen feet tall, sit there in a row, most venerable. It is moving that the plaque written by the Major Counselor Yukinari and the doors inscribed by Kaneyuki can still be seen clearly. The Lotus Hall and some others seem to be standing still. How long will they last? Of places where not even this much remains, some still have their foundation stones, but no one knows for certain what stood there. So it is futile to make plans for anything in an age we will not see.[28]

26. A HEART THAT CHANGES

A friend drifting away is sadder than a death.

[26] The flower of a person's heart fades even before the wind can blow on it. When I think of the years we were close, I have not forgotten a single word I heard and was moved by. Yet the way someone drifts out of one's world is sadder even than parting from the dead. So it is that some once grieved to see white thread dyed, and lamented the forking of roads. Among the poems of the Horikawa Hundred-Poem Sequence is this: "The hedge of the one I loved and visited long ago has gone to ruin; there are only violets, among the sedge." A lonely scene; something like that must have lain behind it.[29]

27 The Lord of the Midō is Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1027), the most powerful statesman of the Heian court and founder of Hōjōji.
28 Fujiwara no Yukinari (972–1027) and Minamoto no Kaneyuki were famous calligraphers.
29 Mozi wept to see white silk dyed and Yang Zhu wept at a crossroads, since either could turn many ways. The Horikawa Hundred-Poem Sequence was compiled around 1105.

27. ABDICATION

At an emperor's abdication, the retired sovereign is quickly forgotten.

27 When the ceremony of abdication is held and the Sword, the Jewel and the Mirror are handed over, it is unspeakably forlorn. In the spring after the new Retired Emperor stepped down, His Majesty composed this poem, they say: "The groundsmen of the Housekeeping Office keep their distance now; in the unswept garden the blossoms lie scattered." Caught up in the busy affairs of the new reign, no one comes to call on the retired emperor, and it looks lonely. It is at times like this that people's hearts are revealed.[30]

28. IMPERIAL MOURNING

The mourning hut, plain and solemn.

28 Nothing is as sad as a year of imperial mourning. Look at the mourning hut where the Emperor stays. The floor is lowered, reed blinds hang, and the cloth borders of the curtains are coarse. The furnishings are plain, and everyone's dress, down to their swords and sword-sashes, is unlike the usual. It is solemn and awe-inspiring.[31]

29. OLD LETTERS

Sorting old papers at night revives the past.

29 When I think quietly, there is no remedy for my longing for everything past. When everyone has gone to sleep, I pass the long night putting my odds and ends in order. Among the old papers I tear up so as not to leave them behind, I sometimes find the handwriting practice of someone now dead, or a picture drawn idly. Then it is just as if I were back in that moment. Even

30 The new Retired Emperor is probably Hanazono, who abdicated in 1318. The Sword, Jewel and Mirror are the imperial regalia.

31 During mourning for a parent, the emperor withdrew for a time to a temporary hut (*iro*) of deliberately rough construction.

letters from people still living make me wonder, once they have grown old, on what occasion and in what year they were written, and that is moving. And things the hand grew used to stay on unchanged for years, without feeling. That is very sad.

30. AFTER A DEATH

The rites after a death, and how the dead are slowly forgotten.

[30] Nothing is as sad as the time after someone dies. During the forty-nine days, the family moves to some mountain village and crowds into a cramped, inconvenient place to hold the memorial services, and it is all hurried and unsettled. The days pass with incomparable speed. On the last day, coldly, no one says a word to anyone. Each packs up briskly, as if they alone knew what to do, and they scatter. It is after they return to their own homes that there will be even more to grieve. "Such-and-such—heaven forbid! That is something to avoid, for the sake of the family," people say. At such a time, of all times, what does that matter? Human hearts still seem distasteful to me. Even as the years pass we do not forget at all. But as the saying goes, "The departed grow more distant day by day," and whatever we say, perhaps we no longer feel it as we did at the time. We talk of trifles and even laugh. The body is laid to rest in some desolate mountain, and we visit only on the proper days. Before long the grave tablet is covered with moss and buried in fallen leaves, and only the evening storm and the night moon come to call. So long as there are people who remember and miss the dead, well and good. But they too soon die, and do the descendants, who know only by hearsay, feel any grief? Then the memorial rites cease, and no one even knows who lies there, not even the name. Only the spring grasses, year after year, might move someone of feeling. In the end even the pine that sobbed in the storm is cut up for firewood before its thousand years are out,

and the old grave is plowed into a field. It is sad that even its shape is gone.[32]

31. THE SNOW LETTER

A friend scolds Kenkō for writing without a word about the snow.

[31] One morning when the snow had fallen beautifully, I had something to say to someone and sent a letter, without a word about the snow. The reply said: "How could I take seriously anything said by someone so wrong-headed as not to write even a line asking how I find this snow? It is a most disappointing heart." That was delightful. The writer is gone now, so even so small a thing is hard to forget.

32. THE DOOR LEFT OPEN

A woman lingers to watch the moon after her visitor leaves, unaware she is seen.

[32] Around the twentieth day of the ninth month, a certain person of rank invited me along, and we went about viewing the moon until dawn. My companion remembered a house nearby, had us announced and went in. The overgrown garden was drenched with dew, and a soft, unstudied fragrance hung in the air. There was a hushed sense of someone living quietly there that was deeply moving. My companion came out after a fitting while. But the grace of the place still held me, and I watched for a while from where I stood hidden. Then the double door was pushed open a little wider, as if to look at the moon. Had the door been bolted at once, what a pity that would have been. How could anyone inside have known that someone was still watching? Things like this can come only from care taken morning and evening. I heard that the person of that house died not long after.

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32 The pine cut for firewood and the grave plowed into a field echo one of the Nineteen Old Poems in the Chinese anthology *Wenxuan*.

33. THE COMB-SHAPED OPENINGS

A former empress spots an error in the rebuilt palace.

[33] When the present palace was built, it was shown to the experts in court precedent, who found no fault anywhere. The day of His Majesty's move was already near when Genki-mon'in looked it over and said, "At the Kan'in palace, the comb-shaped openings were rounded, with no border." That was splendid. Here the openings had been cut with notched edges and framed in wood. This was a mistake, and it was corrected.[33]

34. KŌKŌ SHELLS

A shell used in incense, and its local name.

[34] *Kōkō* is the lid of a shellfish like a small conch, with a long narrow lip that juts out. There were some at a bay called Kanazawa in Musashi Province, and the local people said, "We call it *henadari*."[34]

35. BAD HANDWRITING

Better to write in one's own poor hand than have others write for one.

[35] It is fine for someone with poor handwriting to write letters freely, without hesitation. To have someone else write them because one's own hand looks ugly is tiresome.

36. A WELCOME NOTE

A woman's practical note ends a lover's awkward silence.

[36] "When I had not called for a long while, I knew my neglect and thought how she must resent me, and I felt at a loss for words. Then the woman sent a note saying, 'Have you a servant to

33 Genki-mon'in (1246–1329) was consort of Emperor Go-Fukakusa. Kan'in had been the main residence of earlier emperors.
34 *Kōkō* is the operculum of a sea snail, ground and used in blending incense.

spare? Send one over.' That was rare and welcome. A woman of that disposition is a good one," someone told me. That is quite right.

37. COURTESY AMONG INTIMATES

Formality between close friends, and candor from strangers, both please.

37 Someone you have been close to morning and evening, without reserve, may at some moment turn formal and polite toward you. Some might say, "Why now, after all this time?" But to me that seems the mark of a truly well-bred person. And when someone we are not close to says something candid and unguarded, we are likely to feel drawn to that, too.

38. FAME AND PROFIT

Wealth, rank, fame and even wisdom are not worth pursuing.

38 To be driven by fame and profit, never having a moment's peace, tormenting oneself all one's life: that is foolish. Great wealth leaves one hard put to protect oneself. It is a go-between that buys harm and invites trouble. Even if you left enough gold after your death to prop up the Northern Dipper, it would only be a burden to others. The pleasures that delight the eyes of fools are futile too. Large carriages, fat horses, ornaments of gold and jewels: a person of sense would find them distastefully foolish. Throw gold away in the mountains; cast jewels into the deep.[35] Those lost in pursuit of profit are the most foolish of all. To leave a name that will not be buried, for ages to come, would seem desirable. But should we call people excellent just because they are of high and noble rank? Even foolish, inept people may rise to high rank and indulge in every extravagance, if they are born into the right house and meet with good times. And many splendid sages and saints have chosen to remain in low posi-

35 Gold propping up the Dipper is an image from Bai Juyi; throwing away gold and jewels echoes the *Zhuangzi*.

tions and ended their days without meeting their time. To set one's heart solely on high office and rank is the next most foolish thing. One would rather wish to leave a reputation for surpassing wisdom and spirit. But on careful thought, to love fame is to delight in what others say of us. Those who praise and those who blame both soon leave this world. Those who hear of it from them will quickly depart as well. Before whom should we feel shame, and by whom should we wish to be known? Praise, moreover, is the root of blame. A name that survives us is of no use at all. To wish for this is the next most foolish thing. But here is a word for those who insist on seeking wisdom and aspiring to worth: "When wisdom appeared, there came deceit."[36] Talent is only the passions grown larger. What is heard from others and learned from study is not true wisdom. What, then, should we call wisdom? Acceptable and unacceptable are a single thread. What should we call good? The true person has no wisdom, no virtue, no merit, no name. Who is there to know, who to pass it on? This is not because such a person hides virtue and clings to foolishness. It is because they never dwelt in the realm of wise and foolish, gain and loss. Such is what comes of seeking fame and profit with a deluded mind. All things are false. They are not worth speaking of, not worth wishing for.[37]

39. HŌNEN ON SLEEP

Hōnen's plain answers on the nembutsu.

[39] Someone said to Saint Hōnen, "When I recite the nembutsu I am overcome by sleep and neglect my practice. How can I get rid of this obstacle?" The saint answered, "Recite the nembutsu while you are awake." That was most venerable. He also said, "Rebirth in the Pure Land is certain if you think it certain, and uncertain if you think it uncertain." This too is venerable. And

36 The quotation is from the *Laozi*, chapter 18.
37 "The true person" (*zhenren*) and "acceptable and unacceptable are one thread" are from the *Zhuangzi*.

he said, "Even with doubts, if you recite the nembutsu you will be reborn there." This too is venerable.[38]

40. THE CHESTNUT GIRL

A girl who eats only chestnuts is refused permission to marry.

40 In Inaba Province there was a lay monk called something-or-other who had a daughter. She was said to be beautiful, and many men sought her hand. But the girl ate nothing but chestnuts and never touched rice or any grain. So her father said, "Such an oddity is not fit to marry," and would not allow it.

41. THE MONK IN THE TREE

At the Kamo horse races, a monk dozes in a tree; Kenkō says we are greater fools.

41 On the fifth day of the fifth month I went to see the horse races at Kamo. Common people stood in front of our carriage and blocked the view, so we each got down and went toward the railing. But the crowd was especially thick there, and there was no way to push through. Just then I saw a monk who had climbed a chinaberry tree opposite and was sitting in a fork, watching. Clinging to the branch, he kept falling fast asleep and waking again just as he was about to fall. The people watching him jeered and scoffed: "What a fool! How can he sleep so easily on such a dangerous branch?" I said just what had suddenly come into my mind: "Our own deaths may come at this very moment, and we forget that and spend the day watching shows. That is more foolish still." At this the people in front of me said, "Truly, that is so. We are the greatest fools." They all turned round, said, "Please, come in here," made room and called me in. Anyone could think of so simple a truth. But perhaps, coming at that moment, it took them by surprise and struck home. People are

38 Hōnen (1133–1212) founded the Pure Land school. The nembutsu is the recitation of Amida Buddha's name, invoking rebirth in his Pure Land.

not trees or stones, and at times they cannot help being moved by things.[39]

42. A STRANGE ILLNESS

A monk's face swells until it looks like a demon's.

42 Among the sons of a man known as the Karahashi Middle Captain was the Sōzu Gyōga, a monk who taught doctrinal studies. He had an illness in which the vital humors rose to the head. As he grew older, the inside of his nose became blocked and he could barely breathe. He tried all sorts of remedies, but it only grew worse. His eyes, eyebrows and forehead swelled out of shape and closed over, so that he could not see. He looked like the mask of the Ninomai dance. Then he became simply frightful, with the face of a demon: his eyes moved up toward the crown of his head, and his face turned all to nose. In the end he shut himself away and would not let even the people of his own quarters see him. Many years passed, he grew still worse, and he died. So there are diseases like this too.[40]

43. A YOUNG MAN READING

A glimpse of a young man reading in a quiet house in late spring.

43 Toward the end of spring, under a calm and lovely sky, I came upon a house of some standing. It lay deep within its grounds among old, weathered trees, and the blossoms lay scattered and wilting in the garden. I could not bear to pass by, so I went in to look. The lattice shutters along the south front were all lowered and the place looked lonely. But on the east side a hinged door stood open just enough, and through a tear in the blind I saw a handsome young man of about twenty. He was at his ease, yet he had an admirably quiet bearing as he sat reading a book

39 "People are not trees or stones" echoes a line of Bai Juyi.
40 The Ninomai is a court dance that comically imitates the dance before it, performed in masks with swollen, distorted faces.

unrolled on his desk. Who could he have been? I would like to find out.

44. THE FLUTE PLAYER

Kenkō follows a young flute player through moonlit fields to a mountain residence.

44 From behind a humble door of woven bamboo came a very young man. In the moonlight the colors were hard to make out, but he wore a lustrous hunting cloak and dark trousers, and he carried himself with great refinement. With one small boy attending him, he made his way along a narrow path through rice fields far from anywhere, wet with dew from the rice leaves, playing his flute exquisitely as the mood took him. There could hardly be anyone here to hear it and know how moving it was, I thought. I wanted to know where he was going, so I followed, watching him. He stopped playing and went in through a main gate at the foot of the mountain. A carriage stood there with its shafts propped on a stand. Somehow it caught my eye more than it would have in the capital. I asked a servant, who said, "A certain royal personage is staying here just now, and I believe there is a Buddhist service." Monks had gathered at the chapel. Carried on the chill night wind, the scent of incense burning out of sight sank deep into me. The ladies-in-waiting passing from the main hall along the corridor took care that a fragrance should trail behind them, even though this was a mountain village where no one would see. In the autumn fields, grown wild as they pleased and buried in overflowing dew, the insects' cries sounded reproachful, and the garden stream murmured softly. The clouds seemed to move faster than in the sky over the capital, and the moon kept changing between clear and clouded.

45. THE DITCH SŌJŌ

A bad-tempered monk keeps acquiring worse nicknames.

45 The elder brother of Kinyo of the Second Rank was the Sōjō Ryōkaku, a man of extremely bad temper. Beside his quarters

there stood a large nettle tree, so people called him "the Nettle-Tree Sōjō." "That name will not do," he said, and had the tree cut down. Its stump remained, so they called him "the Stump Sōjō." More furious than ever, he had the stump dug up and thrown away. That left a big ditch, so they called him "the Ditch Sōjō."[41]

46. THE BANDIT HŌIN

A monk named for being robbed so often.

46 Near Yanagihara there lived a monk who went by the name of "the Bandit Hōin." They say he was given the name because he had been robbed by bandits so many times.

47. THE SNEEZING CHARM

An old nun keeps saying a charm in case her foster son sneezes.

47 Someone was going to Kiyomizu, and an old nun was walking along too. All the way she kept saying, "Kusame, kusame." "Reverend nun, what is it you keep saying?" came the question, but she gave no answer and went on saying it. Asked again and again, she grew cross. "Oh, really! They say that if you sneeze and no one says this charm, you die. The young master I nursed is up on Mount Hiei, and I'm thinking he may be sneezing this very minute, so I'm saying it." What rare devotion she must have had![42]

48. LEFTOVERS UNDER THE BLIND

A courtier's seemingly rude act is praised as correct precedent.

48 Lord Mitsuchika was serving as commissioner for the Retired Emperor's Saishō lectures when he was summoned before His Majesty, who had food brought out and gave him a meal. When he had eaten, he pushed the tray, scattered with leftovers, in

41 Sōjō is the highest rank in the Buddhist clergy. The nettle tree (enoki) is a hackberry, a common large shade tree.
42 Kusame, also the word for a sneeze, was a charm spoken against the danger thought to come with sneezing.

under the blinds and withdrew. The ladies-in-waiting said to one another, "How filthy! Who does he expect to clear that away?" But His Majesty praised it again and again: "That is conduct true to court precedent—most admirable." So they say.[43]

49. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL OLD AGE

Death comes unexpectedly; practice the Way now.

[49] Do not wait until old age comes before you begin to practice the Way. Old graves are mostly those of the young. It is only when we unexpectedly fall ill and are about to leave this world all at once that we first realize how wrongly we spent the time gone by. The error is nothing other than this: we were slow over what should have been done at once and hurried over what could have waited, and now we regret what is past. What good will regret be then? We must simply keep it firmly in mind that impermanence is closing in upon us, and never forget it even for a moment. If we do, how could the impurity of this world not grow thinner, and our will to pursue the Buddha's Way not become earnest? In Zenrin's *Ten Reasons* it is written: "There was once a holy man who, when people came and spoke to him of business, his own or theirs, would answer, 'I have an urgent matter now; it is already upon me, this morning or this evening.' Then he would stop his ears and recite the nembutsu, and in the end he achieved rebirth in the Pure Land." A holy man named Shinkai was so conscious of how fleeting this world is that he never even sat down at his ease. He always stayed crouched on his heels.[44]

50. THE DEMON WOMAN

A rumor of a demon sends the whole capital running.

[50] Around the Ōchō era (1311–12), word went about that a woman who had turned into a demon had been brought up to the capital

43 Fujiwara no Mitsuchika (1176–1221) served Retired Emperor Go-Toba.

from Ise Province. For some twenty days after that, people from the capital and Shirakawa went rushing out every day to see the demon. "Yesterday she went to the Saionji residence." "Today she's going to the Retired Emperor's palace." "Right now she's at such-and-such a place," they told one another. No one said they had actually seen her, yet high and low alike talked of nothing but the demon. At that time I was on my way from Higashiyama toward the Agui area, and all the people from Shijō northward were running north. "There's a demon at Ichijō and Muromachi!" they were shouting. Looking from around Imadegawa, I saw that near the Retired Emperor's viewing stands the crowd was packed so tight no one could possibly get through. "So it seems this isn't groundless after all," I thought, and sent someone to look, but hardly anyone had actually come across her. Until dark they kept milling about like this, and in the end fights broke out and some shocking things happened. Around that time an illness spread everywhere that laid people up for two or three days, and some said, "That false tale of the demon was a sign of this."

51. THE WATERWHEEL

Local villagers fail; experts from Uji build a waterwheel that works.

51 The Retired Emperor wished to bring water from the Ōi River into the pond at the Kameyama Palace, so he ordered the people of Ōi to build a waterwheel. They were given a great deal of money, and after several days' work they finished it and set it up. But it hardly turned at all. They tried this and that to fix it, but in the end it never turned and just stood there, useless. Then people from the village of Uji were summoned to make one. They put it together with ease and presented it, and it turned

44 Zenrin is Yōkan (1033–1111) of Zenrinji, author of *Ten Reasons for Rebirth in the Pure Land* (Ōjō jūin).

just as intended and drew in water splendidly. In every field, someone who knows the craft is precious.[45]

52. THE MONK OF NINNAJI AT IWASHIMIZU

A monk visits only the shrines at the foot of the hill and misses the main one.

52 A monk at Ninnaji had grown old without ever worshipping at Iwashimizu, and this troubled him. So one day he made up his mind and went, all alone, on foot. He worshipped at Gokurakuji, Kōra and the rest, took that to be all there was, and went home. Afterwards he met a fellow monk and said, "I've done what I had meant to do for years. It was even holier than I had heard. But every visitor was climbing the mountain. I wondered what was up there and wanted to see, but I thought, 'Worshipping the god is what I came for,' so I didn't go up the mountain." Even in small matters, one would wish for a guide.[46]

53. THE MONK IN THE POT

A drunken monk puts a pot on his head and cannot get it off.

53 This too is about a monk of Ninnaji. A boy was about to become a monk, and as a farewell to his boyhood they all held a party. One monk, drunk and carried away with the fun, took a three-legged pot that was lying nearby and put it over his head. It was tight, but he squashed his nose flat, forced his face in, and came out dancing, to the boundless delight of everyone present. After dancing for a while he tried to pull it off, but it would not come off at all. The party fell flat, and they were at a loss what to do. Whatever they tried, it only cut into his neck so that blood ran, and the neck swelled up and up until he could hardly breathe. They tried to crack the pot, but it would not break easily, and the blows rang through his head unbearably. It was no

45 The Kameyama Palace was Retired Emperor Go-Saga's villa in Saga, west of the capital. Uji was known for its waterwheels.

46 The main shrine of Iwashimizu Hachiman stands on top of Otokoyama. Gokurakuji and Kōra are lesser shrines at its foot.

use, and there was nothing else to be done. So they draped a light robe over the three legs, which stuck up like horns, and leading him by the hand, with a stick to lean on, they took him to a physician in the capital. All along the way people stared at him in wonder. When he went into the physician's house and sat facing him, what a strange sight it must have been! When he spoke, his voice came out muffled and booming and could not be made out. "Nothing like this is found in the books, and there is no teaching handed down about it," said the physician. So they went back to Ninnaji. His close friends and his old mother sat by his pillow weeping and grieving, but it did not seem he could hear them. Then someone said, "Even if he loses his ears and nose, surely his life can be saved. Just pull with all your strength." They stuffed straw stalks all around his neck to keep the metal off his skin and pulled so hard his head nearly came off. It came free, though his ears and nose were torn away. He had escaped with his life, barely, and lay ill for a long time afterward.

54. THE BURIED PICNIC

Monks bury a picnic to surprise a boy, and someone steals it.

54 At Omuro there was a splendid boy acolyte, and some monks schemed to lure him out somehow for an outing. They brought in some talented entertainer monks and carefully prepared a fancy picnic in compartmented lunchboxes. They packed it into a sort of box and buried it in a suitable spot on Narabi-ga-oka, scattering autumn leaves over it so no one would ever suspect. Then they went to the palace and coaxed the boy into coming out.[47] Delighted, they wandered here and there, then sat down in a row on the mossy carpet where they had been before. "We're terribly tired," they said to one another. "Ah, if only someone would burn some autumn leaves for us! You monks with powers—try praying for it." They turned to the tree where

47 Omuro was the residence of the imperial prince who served as abbot of Ninnaji. Narabi-ga-oka is a low hill nearby.

they had buried the box, rubbed their rosaries, made the ritual hand signs with great show, and carried on extravagantly. Then they brushed away the leaves, but there was nothing at all to be seen. Thinking they must have the wrong spot, they searched the whole hill, digging everywhere, but it was not there.[48] Someone had watched them bury it, and had stolen it while they were at the palace. The monks were speechless. They quarreled in an ugly way and went home in a temper. Anything one tries too hard to make amusing is sure to fall flat.

55. BUILDING FOR SUMMER

Practical advice on houses.

[55] A house should be built with summer in mind. In winter one can live anywhere, but a poor dwelling in hot weather is unbearable. Deep water does not look cool; a shallow stream running along is far cooler. For looking at fine detail, a sliding door gives more light than a hinged lattice shutter. A high ceiling makes a room cold in winter and the lamp dim. As for building, people agreed when we discussed it that adding a space with no particular use is pleasant to look at and also comes in handy for all sorts of things.

56. TALKING WELL AND BADLY

How people of good and poor breeding tell stories.

[56] Someone you meet again after a long separation may go on and on, telling you every last thing that has happened on their side. That is tiresome. Even with someone you have grown close to without reserve, don't you feel a little shy on meeting again after some time? People of lesser breeding, after stepping out for even a moment, will tell you all about the amusing thing that happened, hardly pausing for breath and enjoying it hugely. When a person of good breeding tells a story, even if many

48 Burning autumn leaves alludes to a line by Bai Juyi about warming wine in the woods over a fire of red leaves.

people are present, it is addressed to one of them, and the others simply listen. Ill-bred people blurt it out to the whole company, to no one in particular, and tell it as though it were happening before their eyes. Then everyone laughs and shouts together—very noisy. Whether one is not much amused when something funny is said, or laughs heartily even when something dull is said: by this, one's breeding can be judged. When people are discussing someone's looks, good or bad, or some scholar and their learning, it is truly dismal when someone brings it all round to themselves.

57. POOR POEMS IN STORIES

It is tiresome to hear talk about arts one does not know.

[57] When someone tells a story about a poem, it is disappointing if the poem is a poor one. Anyone who knows even a little of the art would not tell it as though the poem were splendid. In general, to hear someone talk about a field they know nothing about makes one wince and is unpleasant to listen to.

58. WHERE TO SEEK THE WAY

The Way is hard to follow at home; even a poor recluse is better than the greedy.

[58] Some say: "If one has the will for the Way, it should not depend on where one lives. Even living at home and mixing with people, why should it be hard to aspire to the next life?" Whoever says this knows nothing at all of the next life. If one truly sees how fleeting this world is and is determined, without fail, to escape birth and death, what pleasure could there be in serving a master morning and evening, or in the business of looking after a household? The mind is drawn by conditions and shifts with them. Unless one is in quiet, the Way is hard to practice. Our capacity is not equal to that of the people of old. Even if we go into the mountains and forests, we cannot live without some means of staving off hunger and keeping out the storms. So naturally, as occasion arises, how could there not be things that

look like clinging to the world? Yet that does not make renunciation pointless. To say, "If that's how it is, why did you leave the world at all?" is quite unreasonable. After all, someone who has once entered the Way and turned away from the world, even if they still have desires, cannot be compared with the vast greed of the powerful. A paper quilt, a hempen robe, a bowl of food, a broth of goosefoot—how much of others' substance could these use up? What such a person seeks is easily had, and their heart is soon satisfied. And since they feel shame before the habit they wear, for all that is said, they mostly keep their distance from evil and draw closer to good. As a sign of having been born human, one would wish, by whatever means, to leave the world. To be wholly bent on grasping and never set out toward awakening—would that be any different from all the beasts?

59. THE GREAT MATTER

One who resolves to leave the world must not wait to settle affairs first.

59 Whoever resolves on the great matter must leave unfulfilled the things that weigh on the mind and are hard to let go, and cast them all aside just as they are. One may think: "Let me just finish this first." "While I'm at it, let me settle that other business." "About such-and-such, people may laugh at me, so let me arrange things so there'll be no trouble later." "It has gone on all these years—waiting for this one thing won't take long." "I mustn't cause a fuss." If one thinks like this, unavoidable matters only pile up more and more. There will be no end to them, and the day of resolve will never come.[49] Looking at people in general, even those with some sense all seem to pass their whole lives with such intentions. When a fire breaks out nearby, does anyone fleeing say, "Just a moment"? To save themselves, people flee without regard for shame, abandoning even their treasures. Does life wait for anyone? The coming of impermanence is swifter and harder to escape than the onslaught of flood or fire.

49 The great matter is the matter of birth and death, that is, release from them through practice of the Way.

When that moment comes, can one say, "My aged parents, my little children, my lord's favor, the kindness of others—these are hard to leave," and not leave them?

60. THE TARO-LOVING SŌZU

Jōshin, who lived on taro and pleased himself, yet was respected by all.

60 At Shinjōin there was a monk of high rank, the Sōzu Jōshin, a man of eminent learning. He loved taro roots and ate a great many of them. Even when lecturing on scripture, he would have them heaped high in a big bowl at his knee, and he read out the text as he ate. When he fell ill, he would shut himself away for seven days or fourteen, calling it treatment. He picked out the finest taro roots he could wish for, ate even more of them than usual, and so cured every illness. He never gave any to anyone else. He ate them all by himself.[50] He was extremely poor, and on his deathbed his teacher left him two hundred *kan* in coin and a monk's lodging. He sold the lodging for a hundred *kan* and set aside the whole sum, thirty thousand *hiki*, as his taro money. He deposited it with someone in the capital and had it sent to him ten *kan* at a time. He ate taro roots without ever stinting himself. Since he spent the money on nothing else, all of it went that way. "He came into three hundred *kan* when he was poor, and that is how he disposed of it. He truly is a rare man of the Way," people said. This Sōzu once looked at a certain monk and gave him the name "Shiro-ururi."[51] When someone asked, "What is a shiro-ururi?" he said, "I don't know either. But if there were such a thing, it would look like this monk's face." This Sōzu was handsome and strong, and a great eater. He surpassed others as a calligrapher, a scholar and a speaker. As a lamp of the dharma for his school, he was held in high regard throughout the temple. Yet he was an odd character who thought lightly of the

50 Shinjōin was a subtemple of Ninnaji; Sōzu is a senior rank in the clergy. *Imo-gashira* is the large central corm of the taro plant.

51 One *kan* was a thousand copper coins and one *hiki* ten coins, so thirty thousand *hiki* make three hundred *kan*.

world. He did everything as he pleased and hardly ever went along with anyone else. When he attended a service and sat down to a banquet, he did not wait until everyone had been served. As soon as his own tray was set before him, he would start eating by himself, and when he wanted to leave, he got up on his own and went. He did not eat his meals, the regular one or the irregular one, at fixed times like everyone else. He ate when he felt like eating, in the middle of the night or at dawn. When he was sleepy he shut himself in, even in the daytime, and however important the matter, he would not listen to what anyone said. Once awake, he would go many nights without sleep, wandering about with a clear mind, humming verses to himself. His ways were out of the ordinary, yet people did not dislike him, and he was forgiven everything. Perhaps his virtue had reached the highest degree.[52]

61. THE RICE STEAMER

A birth charm with no basis in precedent.

[61] Dropping a rice steamer during a birth in the imperial household is not an established rite. It is a charm used when the afterbirth is slow to come. If it is not delayed, this is not done. The practice began among the lower classes and has no real authority behind it. The steamer is sent for from the village of Ōhara. In an old painting in a treasure house, there is a picture of a steamer being dropped where a woman of humble rank is giving birth.[53]

62. A PRINCESS'S POEM

A little princess spells her longing in letters.

[62] When Enseimon'in was a little girl, she gave someone who was going to the retired emperor's palace a poem to deliver as a mes-

52 Monks took their regular meal (*toki*) before noon; a meal taken after noon was called *hiji*, "out of time."

sage: “The letter of two strokes, the letter like a cow’s horns, the straight letter, the crooked letter—that is how I think of you.” It meant that she missed him dearly.[54]

63. GUARDS AT THE NEW YEAR RITE

Armed guards at a sacred rite are a bad omen.

63 The presiding master of the Latter Seven Days rite gathers armed men around him because, they say, he was once robbed. Under the name of night guards it has grown into this grand affair. Since the omens for the whole year are said to appear in how things go during this rite, it is a disquieting thing to call in soldiers.[55]

64. THE FIVE-CORD CARRIAGE

Who may ride in the five-cord carriage.

64 “The five-cord carriage is not reserved for particular families. One rides in it on reaching the highest office and rank one’s station allows,” a certain person of rank once told me.[56]

65. COURT CAPS

Caps have grown taller.

65 “Court caps these days have become much taller than they used to be,” a certain person of rank once told me. People who own an old-style cap box add to its rim so as to use it now.

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53 The *koshiki*, an earthenware vessel for steaming rice, was rolled off the roof of the birthing chamber.
54 Enseimon’in was a daughter of Retired Emperor Go-Saga. The four kana described are こ, い, し and く, which spell *koishiku*, “longingly.”
55 The Latter Seven Days rite (*Go-shichinichi no mishiho*) was an esoteric Buddhist ceremony held at the palace from the eighth to the fourteenth day of the first month, for the emperor’s welfare.
56 The *itsutsuo* carriage had blinds trimmed with five cords and was a mark of high status.

66. BIRDS ON A BRANCH

A falconer explains how game birds are presented on a branch.

66 Lord Okamoto, the Regent, once ordered his falconer, Shimotsukeno no Takekatsu, to tie a pair of birds to a branch of red plum in full bloom and present them with it. Takekatsu replied, "I do not know how to tie birds to a branch in flower, nor have I heard of tying two to one branch." The Regent asked the kitchen staff and had others asked as well. Then he told Takekatsu again, "In that case, tie it as you see fit and present it." So Takekatsu tied a single bird to a plum branch without blossoms and presented that. Takekatsu explained it to me like this: "One ties them to a brushwood branch, or to a plum branch either in bud or with its blossoms fallen.[57] One also ties them to five-needle pine and the like. The branch is seven feet long, or six, and its end is cut with a back stroke of the blade, five *bu* long. The bird is tied at the middle of the branch. There is a branch to tie it to and a branch for it to stand on. It should be tied in two places with unsplit *shijira* wisteria vine. The ends of the vine are cut to the length of the bird's flint feathers and bent like a cow's horns. On the morning of the first snow, one carries the branch on one's shoulder and enters with due ceremony through the middle gate. One steps along the stones of the great courtyard so as to leave no tracks in the snow. One plucks a few of the bird's rain-cover feathers and scatters them, and leans the branch against the railing of the two-ridged hall. When a reward is bestowed, one drapes it over one's shoulder, bows, and withdraws. Even at the first snow, one does not go if the snow is too shallow to hide the toes of one's shoes. Scattering the rain-cover feathers is meant to show that the bird was taken by His Lordship's hawk, since a hawk seizes its prey by the small of the back." Why should one not tie a bird to a branch in flower, I wonder? In *The Tales of Ise* someone, around the ninth month, ties a

57 Lord Okamoto is Konoe Iehira (1282–1324), Regent (*kampaku*). Game birds were presented tied to a branch.

pheasant to an artificial plum branch with the words, "The flowers I break off for you know no season." Perhaps artificial flowers do no harm.[58]

67. THE KAMO SHRINES

An old shrine official answers Kenkō courteously.

[67] At Kamo, the Iwamoto and Hashimoto shrines are dedicated to Narihira and Sanekata. People are always mixing them up, so one year when I went there, I stopped an old shrine official who was passing and asked him. He said, "It is said that Sanekata's reflection fell on the purifying stream, so I believe his shrine must be Hashimoto, since it is nearer the water. And when the Reverend Yoshimizu wrote, 'The graceful man of old who loved the moon and gazed at the blossoms is here, Ariwara,' I have been told that he meant the Iwamoto shrine. But you, sir, may well know more about it than people like us." He said this so very courteously that I found it splendid.[59] Konoe, a lady-in-waiting to Imadegawa-in, has many poems in the imperial anthologies. When she was young she often composed a hundred poems at a time, wrote them out with water from before those two shrines, and offered them there. She truly had a distinguished reputation, and many of her poems are on people's lips. She also wrote Chinese poems and prefaces to poems splendidly.[60]

68. THE RADISH WARRIORS

Radishes eaten faithfully for years come to defend their owner.

[68] In Tsukushi there was a man who was something like the district constable of such-and-such a place. He believed that daikon

58 *The Tales of Ise* (10th century) is a classic of poems with prose narratives, centered on the poet Ariwara no Narihira.
59 Ariwara no Narihira and Fujiwara no Sanekata were Heian poets; the Reverend Yoshimizu is the monk-poet Jien. His poem puns on *koko ni ari*, "is here," and *Arihara*, Narihira's family name.
60 Imadegawa-in was the consort of Emperor Kameyama.

radish was a splendid cure for everything. For many years he had roasted and eaten two every morning. One day enemies chose a moment when there was no one in the residence, attacked it, surrounded it and pressed in. But two warriors appeared from inside the residence, fought without sparing their lives, and drove them all back. Much amazed, he asked them, "I have never seen you here before, and yet you fight for me. Who are you?" "We are the radishes you have trusted all these years and eaten every morning," they said, and vanished. When one puts deep faith in something, it seems, even this kind of blessing can come of it.[61]

69. THE BEANS AND HUSKS

A holy man hears beans and their husks complain to each other.

69 The holy man of Shosha had accumulated so much merit from reciting the Lotus Sutra that his six senses had been purified. Once, when he stopped at a lodging on a journey, he heard beans boiling over a fire of their own husks, popping and bubbling. "'You are our own kin,' the beans were saying, 'yet you are cruel enough to boil us and make our lot so bitter!' And the husks, crackling as they burned, answered: 'Do we do this of our own will? Being burned is unbearable for us too, but there is nothing we can do. Please do not resent us so.'" That is what he heard.[62]

70. THE MISSING FRET

A minister copes with a fret that falls off at a concert.

70 At a concert in the Seishodō hall in the Gen'ō era, at the time when the lute Genjō had been lost, the Minister of Kikutei played the lute Bokuba. On taking his seat, he first felt the frets,

61 Tsukushi is the old name for Kyushu. An *ōryōshi* was a provincial official charged with keeping order.

62 The holy man is Shōkū (d. 1007), founder of Engyōji on Mount Shosha. The scene echoes the Chinese poet Cao Zhi's poem of beans boiled over a fire of beanstalks, and puns on *kara,* "husk," and *karaki,* "bitter."

and one of them came off. He had rice glue in the fold of his robe and stuck it back on. By the time the offerings to the gods were brought, it had dried firmly, and nothing went wrong. Whatever her motive may have been, they say a veiled woman among the onlookers had gone up to the lute, pulled the fret off, and set it back as it had been.[63]

71. DÉJÀ VU

The feeling that something now happening has happened before.

71 As soon as we hear a name, we feel we can picture the face at once. Yet when we meet the person, no one ever has quite the face we had imagined. When I hear an old tale, too, I picture it as having taken place somewhere around the house of someone living today, and I find myself likening the people in it to people I see now. Does everyone feel this way, I wonder? And at certain moments, what someone is saying right now, what is before my eyes, what is in my own mind, all seem to me to have happened just so at some time before. I cannot recall when, yet I feel sure it really did happen. Am I the only one who feels this?

72. TOO MANY THINGS

Things that look vulgar when there are too many of them.

72 Things that look vulgar: too many furnishings around where one sits; too many brushes by the inkstone; too many buddhas in one's private chapel; too many stones, plants and trees in the garden; too many children and grandchildren in the house; too many words when one meets people; too many good works listed in a prayer of dedication. Things that are many and not unsightly: the books in a book cart, and the dust on a rubbish heap.

63 Genjō and Bokuba were famous lutes (*biwa*) of the imperial collection. The Gen'ō era ran from 1319 to 1321.

73. LIES

Most of what is handed down is false; how to treat stories and wonders.

[73] What is told and handed down in the world is mostly false. Perhaps the truth is too dull. People make things out to be more than they are even as it is. All the more, once years and months have passed and places lie far apart, they tell things however they please. And once it is written down, it soon becomes fixed. As for the marvels of masters in the various arts, ignorant people who do not know the art speak of them recklessly as though they were gods, but those who know the art do not believe a word of it. Hearing of a thing and seeing it are always different. Lies blurted out carelessly, with no thought that they are being exposed even as they are told, are soon recognized as groundless. Again, when someone repeats what another has said, thinking it untrue all the while, with the nose twitching smugly, the lie is not that person's own. But a lie told plausibly, hesitating here and there as if one did not know the details well, and yet with all the pieces fitted together—that is a fearful thing. A lie told in a way that does us credit is one we do not contest very hard. With a lie everyone is enjoying, it seems pointless to be the one person to say, "It wasn't like that." So we sit and listen, are even made into witnesses, and the story becomes all the more fixed. One way or another, the world is full of lies. If we simply take things to be as ordinary and unremarkable as things usually are, we will not go wrong in anything. The stories of people of low rank are full of things that startle the ear. People of good breeding do not speak of strange things. Even so, we need not refuse altogether to believe the miracles of gods and buddhas, or the lives of buddhas and bodhisattvas who appeared in human form. In such matters, it is foolish to believe the world's lies earnestly, and pointless to say, "That can't be so." In general, then, one should respond as though taking the story

seriously, neither believing it wholeheartedly nor doubting and mocking it.[64]

74. LIKE ANTS

People rush about, but all they can expect is old age and death.

74 People swarm like ants, hurrying east and west, running north and south. Some are high, some low. Some are old, some young. They have places to go and homes to return to. They sleep at night and rise in the morning. What is it they are all busy with? Greedy for life and seeking profit, they never stop. They nourish their bodies, but what are they waiting for? All they can expect is old age and death. These come swiftly, never pausing from one moment of thought to the next. While we wait for them, what pleasure can there be? The deluded do not fear them, because, drowning in fame and profit, they do not look at how near the end of the road is. Fools, for their part, grieve over them, because they want things to last forever and do not understand the law of change.

75. BEING ALONE

Complaining of idleness is foolish; solitude is best.

75 People who complain of having nothing to do—what can they be thinking? It is best to be simply alone, with nothing to distract one. If we follow the world, the mind is seized by the dust of outside things and easily led astray. If we mix with people, our words follow how others will hear them and do not come from our own hearts at all. We joke with people and quarrel over things, resent one moment and rejoice the next, and nothing is ever settled. Judgments spring up at random, and gain and loss never cease. On top of delusion, we are drunk; within drunkenness, we dream. Running about busily, dazed and forgetful—everyone is like this. Even if one does not yet know the true Way,

64 "People of good breeding do not speak of strange things" echoes *Analects* 7.21: "The Master did not speak of prodigies, feats of strength, disorder or spirits."

to leave one's involvements behind, keep oneself at leisure, take no part in affairs and set the mind at ease—that, at least for a while, may be called happiness. As the *Mohe zhiguan* says, "Put an end to all involvements: livelihood, human affairs, skills and learning."[65]

76. MONKS AT GREAT HOUSES

Monks should keep away from fashionable households.

76 At a house that enjoys high favor in the world, when there is a bereavement or a celebration and many people call to pay their respects, a holy man among them, sending in his name and lingering at the door, strikes me as something that need not be. Even with a proper reason, a monk would do well to keep apart from people.

77. GOSSIP

Kenkō dislikes outsiders who spread the news of the day.

77 When there is something everyone happens to be talking about, I do not care for it when someone who has no business meddling knows all the details, tells others about it and goes around asking questions. Holy men in remote places especially seem to inquire into other people's affairs as if they were their own, and spread the news about to such a degree that one wonders how they could possibly know so much.

78. NOVELTIES

People who flaunt fashions and in-jokes.

78 Spreading word of the latest novelties and making much of them is another thing I do not care for. Someone who has not heard of them until they have grown stale is admirable. When a newcomer is present, people who are in on some catchphrase or

65 The *Mohe zhiguan* (Great Calming and Contemplation) is the meditation manual of the Chinese Tiantai master Zhiyi (538–597).

name coined in their own circle exchange fragments of it, catch each other's eye and laugh, and leave the one who is not in the know bewildered. People unused to society and lacking good breeding always do this.

79. NOT KNOWING IT ALL

The well-bred do not parade their knowledge.

[79] In everything, it is best to look as though one were not deeply versed. Do people of good breeding speak with a knowing air about something just because they know it? It is someone who has come up from the depths of the country who answers as though versed in every art. Such people may indeed have things to say that put others to shame, but their air of thinking themselves splendid is boorish. To be slow to speak about an art one knows well, and to say nothing unless asked—that is truly splendid.

80. MARTIAL AIRS

Everyone loves what is foreign to their calling; courtiers and monks play at war.

[80] Everyone likes only what is remote from their own calling. Monks take up the way of the warrior, while eastern warriors, who do not know how to draw a bow, put on an air of knowing the buddha-dharma, compose linked verse and dabble in music. Yet they are bound to be despised for this even more than for their poor command of their own calling. Not only monks: senior nobles, courtiers, and even those of the very highest rank, all alike, very many of them love martial things. Even if one fights a hundred times and wins a hundred times, a name for valor is not yet secure. The reason is that when luck is with one and one crushes the foe, no one would say one is not brave. Only when the soldiers are gone and the arrows spent, when one still does not surrender to the enemy and meets death without flinching, does one's name at last become known: such is this way. As long as one lives, one should not pride oneself on mar-

tial prowess. It is conduct far from humanity and close to that of birds and beasts. Unless one is born to such a house, there is no profit in loving it.

81. FURNISHINGS

Clumsy pictures and fussy furnishings show poor taste.

81 When the pictures or the writing on folding screens and sliding doors are done in a clumsy hand, they strike one less as ugly than as a sign of the master's poor taste. In general, the furnishings people own can lower one's opinion of them. I do not mean that one must own only fine things. I mean making things graceless and ugly so that they will not get damaged, or adding useless features to make them novel, fussy contrivances of that kind. What is good is something a little old-fashioned, not too elaborate, not costly, and well made.

82. IMPERFECTION

Frayed covers and incomplete sets are better than perfection.

82 Someone remarked, "It is a shame that silk-gauze covers wear out so quickly," and Ton'a replied, "Gauze is at its best once it has frayed at top and bottom, and a mother-of-pearl roller once the shell has dropped out." That struck me as a finer sensibility. People call it unsightly when the volumes of a set do not match, but the Sōzu Kōyū said, "Insisting on making everything into a matched set is what people without taste do. Incompleteness is what is good," and I thought that splendid too. "In all things, it is bad for everything to be perfectly complete. To leave something undone and let it be is interesting, and gives a sense of room to breathe. Even when the palace is built, they always leave some part unfinished," someone told me. And in the writings of the sages of old, Buddhist and secular alike, there are a great many missing chapters and sections.[66]

66 Ton'a (1289–1372) was a poet-monk and a friend of Kenkō. The Sōzu Kōyū was a learned monk of the period; Sōzu is a clerical rank.

83. STOPPING SHORT

Ministers decline the highest office: what reaches its peak declines.

83 The Lay Monk Minister of the Left of Chikurin-in could have risen to Chancellor without any obstacle at all. But there seemed nothing special in that. Deciding to stop as First Minister, he took vows. The Minister of the Left of Tōin admired this, and he too had no ambition to become Chancellor. "The dragon that soars too high has cause for regret," as the saying goes, I believe. The moon wanes once it is full; things decline once they flourish. In all matters, whatever has reached its limit is on the road to ruin.[67]

84. FAXIAN'S FAN

A Chinese pilgrim's homesickness, defended as feeling.

84 When Faxian, the Tripiṭaka Master, went to India, he grew sad at the sight of a fan from his homeland, and when he lay sick he longed for Chinese food. Hearing this, someone said, "How very weak-hearted of so great a man, to let himself be seen like that in a foreign land." But the Sōzu Kōyū said, "What a gentle, feeling Tripiṭaka Master he was!" That struck me as admirably tasteful, and not at all like a monk.[68]

85. IMITATING THE WISE

Imitating the wise, even falsely, makes one wise.

85 Because people's hearts are not straightforward, there is no lack of falsehood. Yet surely there must be some who are honest by nature. Even those who are not straightforward themselves commonly envy the virtue of others when they see it. The

67 The Lay Monk of Chikurin-in is Saionji Kinhira (1264–1315); the Tōin Minister is Tōin Saneyasu (1270–1338). "First Minister" is the senior active minister, here the Minister of the Left; the saying is from the *Book of Changes*.
68 Faxian (c. 337–c. 422) traveled from China to India in search of Buddhist scriptures; "Tripiṭaka Master" is a title for a master of the scriptures.

utterly foolish, on the rare occasion they meet a wise person, hate that person for it. "They turn down a small gain in order to win a great one," they disparage; "they put on a false show to make a name for themselves." That they mock in this way because it runs counter to their own hearts tells us this: such people have a nature of the lowest folly, which cannot be changed. They could not decline even a small gain, not even in pretense. One must not imitate folly, even for a moment. If you run down the main street imitating someone mad, you are mad. If you kill a person imitating someone wicked, you are wicked. One who imitates a thoroughbred is of the thoroughbred's kind; one who imitates Shun is a follower of Shun. One who imitates the wise, even falsely, should be called wise.[69]

86. KORESHIGE'S PUN

A courtier jokes after Mii-dera is burned.

86 The Middle Counselor Koreshige was richly gifted in poetry. He kept a devout life, reciting the sutras all his days, and he lodged together with the Sōjō En'i, a Temple monk. When Mii-dera was burned in the Bunpō era (1319), Koreshige met the monk and said, "We used to call you a Temple monk, but since there is no temple anymore, from now on we shall call you simply a monk." It was a splendid witticism.[70]

87. THE DRUNKEN GROOM

A groom given wine attacks the monk he is escorting.

87 One should be careful about giving wine to servants. A man who lived at Uji was on close terms with an elegant monk in the capital who had left the world, called Gukakubō, for he was his brother-in-law. Once the man sent a horse to fetch him. "It is a

69 The *Analects* (17.3) says that only the very wise and the very foolish do not change. Shun is one of the sage emperors of Chinese antiquity.
70 Taira no Koreshige (1266–1343). "Temple monks" were those of Onjōji (Mii-dera), as against the "mountain monks" of Enryakuji on Mount Hiei, whose forces burned Mii-dera.

long way," said Gukakubō. "Let the groom have a drink first," and he brought out wine. The groom accepted cup after cup and gulped it down. With a sword at his side, he looked capable, and Gukakubō, feeling reassured, took him along. Near Kohata they met a party of Nara monks with many armed men. The groom stood up to them. "Suspicious, in the mountains after dark! Halt!" he said, and drew his sword. The others all drew their swords and nocked their arrows, but Gukakubō rubbed his palms together and said, "He is drunk and out of his senses. I beg you, please forgive him," and they all went past, jeering. Then the groom turned on Gukakubō. "What a disgraceful thing you have done, Reverend! I was not drunk at all. I was about to win a name for myself, and you made my drawn sword come to nothing," he raged, and hacked at him until he fell. Then he shouted, "Bandits!" The villagers rose up and came out, and he cried, "I am the bandit!" and ran at them, slashing all around, until many of them together wounded him, pinned him down and tied him up. The horse, smeared with blood, ran into the house on the Uji road. Aghast, the master sent many of his men running out, and they found Gukakubō lying moaning at Kuchinashihara and carried him back. He barely escaped with his life, but his back had been cut, and he was left disabled.

88. THE IMPOSSIBLE MANUSCRIPT

A collector treasures a copy that could not be genuine.

88 Someone owned a copy of the *Wakan rōeishū* said to be in the hand of Ono no Michikaze. Another person said, "I don't suppose the tradition handed down to you is groundless, but the anthology was compiled by the Shijō Major Counselor. Would the dates not be wrong for Michikaze to have copied it? It seems doubtful." "That is exactly why it is so rare a thing," said the owner, and treasured it all the more.[71]

71 The calligrapher Ono no Michikaze (894–966) died before the Shijō Major Counselor, Fujiwara no Kintō (966–1041), compiled this anthology of Chinese and Japanese verse.

89. THE NEKOMATA

A monk walking home at night is attacked by a monster cat.

89 "Deep in the mountains there is a thing called a *nekomata*, and it eats people, I hear," someone said. Another said, "Not only in the mountains—even around here, cats grow old and turn into nekomata and carry people off, so they say." A monk called something-Amidabutsu, I believe, who composed linked verse and lived near Gyōganji, heard this and thought that anyone who walks about alone had better be careful. Just at that time, he had been composing linked verse somewhere until late at night and was coming home all alone, when on the bank of a little stream the nekomata he had heard of, sure enough, came suddenly right at his feet, leaped on him at once and went for his throat.[72] He lost his wits; he had no strength to fend it off and his legs gave way. Tumbling into the stream, he cried, "Help! A nekomata! A nekomata!" People came running from the houses with pine torches, and when they looked, it was a monk they knew from the neighborhood. "What on earth?" they said, and lifted him out of the water. The prizes he had won at linked verse, a fan, a small box and the like, which he had been carrying in the front of his robe, had all gone into the stream. Looking like one who has had a narrow escape, he crawled into his house. It was the dog he kept, they say, which had known its master even in the dark and jumped up at him.

90. LORD YASURA

A servant boy cannot say whether his friend is a monk or not.

90 Otozurumaru, a servant boy of the Dainagon Hōin, had come to know someone called Lord Yasura and was always going there. Once, when the boy came back from an outing, the Hōin asked, "Where have you been?" "I went to see Lord Yasura," he

72 A nekomata is a monstrous cat with a forked tail, said to grow from a very old cat.

said. "This Lord Yasura—is that a layman or a monk?" the Hōin asked again, and the boy, folding his hands in his sleeves, answered, "I wonder, sir. I have never seen the head." Why should the head alone have been hidden from him?[73]

91. RED TONGUE DAYS

Lucky and unlucky days are nonsense; fortune depends on people.

91 Red Tongue Days are not dealt with in the Way of Yin and Yang. People of old did not avoid them. Who started it, I wonder, that people have lately begun to avoid them, saying, "Things done on this day do not last," and "What one says or does on that day does not come to pass, what one gains is lost, and what one plans does not succeed"? This is foolish. If one counted the undertakings begun on lucky days that did not last, the number would surely be the same. The reason is that in this realm of impermanence and change, what we see as existing does not endure, and what has a beginning does not reach its end. Aims are not fulfilled, desires never cease; the human heart is unsettled. All things are illusion. What abides even for a moment? People do not know this principle. It is said, "Do evil on a lucky day and it will surely turn out ill; do good on an unlucky day and it will surely turn out well." Fortune and misfortune depend on people, not on days.[74]

92. TWO ARROWS

An archery teacher's warning against relying on the second arrow.

92 Someone learning archery faced the target holding a pair of arrows. The teacher said, "A beginner should not hold two arrows. Relying on the second, you grow careless with the first. Each time, without thought of hitting or missing, think only that this one arrow must settle it." With only two arrows, in front of

73 A layman wore his hair tied up; a monk's head was shaved.
74 Red Tongue Days (shakuzetsu-nichi) recurred in a six-day cycle and were held to be unlucky in popular calendar lore.

the teacher, would anyone think of being careless with one? Yet even if one is not aware of one's own slackness, the teacher knows it. This warning applies to everything. Those who study the Way think in the evening that there will be a morning, and in the morning that there will be an evening, and expect to practice diligently later. How much less do they know that slackness lies within a single instant! Why is it so very hard to do a thing at once, in this very moment of thought?

93. THE DEAD OX

A debate on the value of life prompted by an ox that dies overnight.

93 "There was a man selling an ox. The buyer said he would pay the price the next day and take the ox. During the night the ox died. The would-be buyer gained; the would-be seller lost," someone related. Hearing this, a person sitting nearby said, "The owner of the ox did indeed suffer a loss, but he also gained greatly. The reason is this: living things do not know how near death is. So it was with the ox, and so it is with people. Unexpectedly the ox died; unexpectedly the owner survived. A single day of life is weightier than ten thousand pieces of gold; the price of an ox is lighter than a goose feather. One who gains ten thousand in gold and loses a single coin cannot be said to have suffered a loss." At this everyone jeered and said, "That reasoning need not be limited to the owner of the ox." He went on, "Well then, if people hate death, they should love life. Should we not enjoy, day by day, the joy of being alive? Foolish people forget this pleasure and toil after other pleasures; forgetting this treasure, they greedily risk themselves for other treasures, and their desires are never satisfied. Not to enjoy life while one lives, and then to fear death when facing it—that makes no sense. People all fail to enjoy life because they do not fear death. It is not that they do not fear death; they forget that death is near. And if someone were to say they are untouched by the forms of birth and death, that person could be said to have grasped the true principle." At this people jeered all the more.

94. THE IMPERIAL LETTER

A guard is dismissed for dismounting while carrying an imperial letter.

94 When the Tokiwai Chancellor was on his way to court, a guard of the Northern Quarter carrying an imperial letter met him and got down from his horse. Later the Chancellor said, "Guard So-and-so dismounted while carrying an imperial letter. How could such a man serve His Majesty?" and the guard was dismissed. One should hold up an imperial letter from the saddle and show it; one should not dismount, they say.[75]

95. CORDS ON BOXES

Where to fix the cord on a box.

95 "When fixing the cord to the loop on a box, on which side should it go?" I asked a person versed in court precedent. He replied, "There are two views, fixing it on the roller side or on the cover side, so neither is wrong. On letter boxes it is mostly put on the right; on toiletry boxes it is also usual to put it on the roller side."[76]

96. MENAMOMI

An herb for snakebite.

96 There is a plant called menamomi. If someone bitten by a viper crushes this plant and applies it, it heals at once, they say. It is worth learning to recognize it.[77]

75 The Tokiwai Chancellor is Saionji Saneuji (1194–1269). The guards of the Northern Quarter (hokumen) served at the palace of the retired emperor.
76 The sides of a box were named after those of a scroll: the "roller" side is the left, the "cover" side the right.
77 Menamomi is a medicinal herb, St. Paul's wort (Siegesbeckia).

97. THINGS THAT WEAR THINGS DOWN

Lice, rats, thieves, and other things that ruin what they cling to.

97 Countless are the things that attach themselves to something and wear it down and ruin it. The body has lice; the house has rats; the country has thieves; the petty person has wealth; the gentleman has benevolence and righteousness; the monk has the dharma.

98. SAYINGS OF HOLY MEN

Kenkō copies sayings he likes from a book of Pure Land teachings.

98 I once looked at a book called, I think, *Ichigon hōdan*, in which the sayings of venerable holy men had been written down. These are things that struck a chord with me:

Item: When you wonder whether to do something or not, it is generally best not to.

Item: One who thinks of the next life should not own even a pot for pickling in bran. To own fine things, down to the sutras one carries and one's own sacred image, is pointless.

Item: For a recluse, the best way is to manage to get by without missing what one does not have.

Item: The high-ranking should become low-ranking, the wise foolish, the rich poor, the able incapable.

Item: Aspiring to the Buddha's Way is nothing special. To become a person of leisure and not concern oneself with the affairs of the world is the foremost way.

There were other things too, but I do not remember them.[78]

99. THE OLD CHEST

Officials refuse to replace an old chest in the police office.

99 The Horikawa Chancellor was a handsome and wealthy man who loved extravagance in everything. When his son, Lord

Mototoshi, had been made Superintendent of the Imperial Police and business was being conducted at the office, the Chancellor found the Chinese chest in the office hall unsightly and ordered it to be splendidly remade. But this chest had been handed down from ancient times; no one knew its origin; it was several hundred years old. "Public property passed down through the generations takes its age and wear as its distinction. It cannot lightly be replaced," said the officials versed in precedent, and so the matter was dropped.[79]

100. THE MAGARI

A minister insists on the proper old cup.

100 The Koga Chancellor, at the palace, asked for water. When the attendant of the Housekeeping Office brought it in an earthenware cup, he said, "Bring a magari," and drank from a magari.[80]

101. THE FORGOTTEN EDICT

A secretary quietly rescues a noble who forgot the edict.

101 A certain noble, serving as presiding officiant at the banquet for the appointment of ministers, went up into the hall without taking the edict from the Secretary who was holding it. It was an extreme breach of etiquette, yet he could hardly go back for it, and he was at a loss, when Yasutsuna, a Secretary of the sixth rank, persuaded a lady-in-waiting, veiled in her robe, to carry the edict and hand it to him discreetly. It was splendidly done.[81]

78 *Ichigon hōdan* ("Fragrant Talks in a Word") is a Kamakura-period collection of sayings by Pure Land holy men.
79 The Horikawa Chancellor is Horikawa Mototomo (1232–1297).
80 The Koga Chancellor is Koga Michimitsu (1187–1248). A magari is a vessel of bent wood, the one prescribed by old precedent.
81 The presiding officiant (naiben) directed court banquets; the Palace Secretaries (naiki) drafted imperial edicts.

102. MATAGORŌ

An old guardsman who knows ceremony better than the nobles.

102 The Major Counselor Lay Monk Mitsutada, Director of the Board of Censors, was to preside over the demon-expelling ceremony and asked the Minister of the Left of Tōin about the order of proceedings. "There is no better plan than to take that fellow Matagorō as your teacher," said the Minister. This Matagorō was an old guardsman, well versed in court ceremonies. Once, when Lord Konoe took his seat in council, he forgot his kneeling mat and was calling for the Secretary, when Matagorō, who was tending the fire, murmured quietly, "Should you not call for your kneeling mat first, my lord?" It was quite delightful.[82]

103. THE RIDDLE

A riddle about a physician's foreign look offends him.

103 At the Daikakuji palace, the courtiers in attendance were making up riddles and solving them when the physician Tadamori came in. Lord Kinakira, the Jijū Major Counselor, turned him into a riddle: "Tadamori, who does not look like something from our land." When someone solved it, "A Chinese sake jar," and they all laughed together, Tadamori grew angry and left.[83]

104. A VISIT BY MOONLIGHT

A gentleman visits a secluded woman and leaves at dawn.

104 In a run-down house where no one came, a woman was living shut away with nothing to do, at a time when she had reason to keep out of sight. A certain gentleman, meaning to visit her,

82 The demon-expelling ceremony (tsuina) was held at court on the last night of the year.

83 Daikakuji was the residence of Retired Emperor Go-Uda. The pun is on heiji (sake jar) and Heishi (the Taira clan): it recalls Taira no Tadamori, mocked as an "Ise jar" in *The Tale of the Heike*, while hinting at the physician's Chinese descent.

came there secretly while the evening moon was still faint. A dog barked at him furiously, and a maidservant came out and asked, "Where are you from?" He had her show him in at once, and went inside. The forlorn look of the place made him ache to think how she could be living there.[84] He stood for a while on the rough plank floor, until someone said "This way" in a young voice, quiet and composed, and he went in through a sliding door that looked hard to open and shut. Inside, the place was not dreary at all but tastefully kept. The lamp was a faint glow at the far side, yet the sheen of the furnishings could be seen, and a fragrance that had not been lit just for the occasion made the room feel lived-in and very welcoming. "Bar the gate well. It might rain. Put the carriage under the gateway, and the gentleman's attendants over there," someone said. "Looks as if we'll get a good night's sleep tonight," came a whisper; it was said softly, but the house was small, and it could just be heard. Then he told her in detail all that had happened of late, until the first cocks crowed in the deep of the night. They talked earnestly of the past and of what lay ahead, and when the cocks crowed again, this time loud and insistent, he wondered whether day was breaking. But since this was not the kind of place one had to hurry away from in the dark, he lingered a little longer. When the chinks grew white, he said things not easily forgotten and took his leave. The treetops and the garden were all a wonderful fresh green: it was a dawn in about the fourth month. Remembering how lovely and charming it had been, even now, they say, he looks back as he passes until the great katsura tree is out of sight.

105. TALK ON THE GALLERY

A man and a woman talk at dawn on a temple gallery.

105 Snow lay unmelted in the shadow of a building on the north side, frozen hard, and the shafts of a carriage drawn up against it

84 The woman was probably in a period of ritual seclusion, such as mourning or abstinence.

glittered with heavy frost. The dawn moon was bright, yet not perfectly clear. On the gallery of a secluded temple hall, a man who looked to be of no ordinary standing sat with a woman on the sill, talking—about what, I wonder? It seemed their talk would never end. Her head and figure looked very fine, and a fragrance beyond words drifted over all at once: delightful. The snatches of their voices that reached me now and then made me long to hear more.

106. SAINT SHŌKŪ IN THE DITCH

A holy man rebukes a groom in Buddhist jargon, then flees.

106 Saint Shōkū of Mount Kōya was on his way up to the capital when, on a narrow path, he met a woman on horseback. The man leading her horse led it badly and made the holy man's horse fall into the ditch. The holy man, in a vile temper, rebuked them: "What unheard-of violence! Of the four classes of disciples, mark you, nuns are inferior to monks, lay brothers are inferior to nuns, and lay sisters are inferior to lay brothers. For a mere lay sister to have a monk kicked into a ditch is a wickedness without precedent!" The man leading the horse said, "What are you saying? I can't make head or tail of it." At this His Reverence grew even more furious and shouted roughly, "What did you say? You unpracticed, unlearned lout!" Then, looking as though he felt he had said something unspeakably outrageous, he turned his horse around and fled. It must have been a most venerable quarrel.[85]

107. THE CUCKOO TEST

Court ladies test young men's replies; Kenkō on women's nature.

107 Men who can promptly give a fitting answer when a woman speaks to them are rare, they say. So in the time of Retired Emperor Kameyama, some mischievous court ladies would test

85 The four classes of Buddhist disciples are monks, nuns, lay brothers and lay sisters, in that conventional order of precedence.

the young gentlemen whenever they came to court by asking, "Have you heard the cuckoo yet?" A certain Major Counselor, I believe, answered, "Someone as insignificant as I has not been able to hear it." The Palace Minister of Horikawa said, "I think I heard it at Iwakura." "This one is faultless.[86] 'Someone as insignificant as I' is awkward," they decided among themselves. Men in general, it is said, should be brought up so that women will not laugh at them. The former Regent of Jōdoji, so I am told, was said to speak so well because as a child he had been carefully taught by Ankimon'in. And the Minister of the Left of Yamashina used to say that even when a humble maidservant looked at him, he felt quite self-conscious and took care over himself. If there were no women in the world, no one would trouble to straighten robe or cap, whatever state they were in. One might think that women, before whom men are so self-conscious, must be splendid creatures; yet women's nature is all crooked. They are deeply attached to self, extremely greedy, and ignorant of the principles of things. Their hearts turn quickly toward delusion alone, they are clever with words, and when asked even about something harmless they will not answer. Just when you think them discreet, they come out, unasked, with things that are quite appalling. Just when you think their deep schemes and embellishments surpass even a man's wit, they fail to see that the truth will come out afterward. Crooked and yet clumsy: that is a woman. To follow their whims in order to be well thought of would be wretched. Why, then, should anyone feel self-conscious before a woman? And if there were a wise woman, she too would be distant and dreary. It is only when one takes delusion as one's master and follows it that women come to seem graceful and charming.

86 The first song of the hototogisu, a small cuckoo, was eagerly awaited in early summer and much celebrated in poetry.

108. EVERY MOMENT COUNTS

Do not waste the present moment; time is life.

108 No one begrudges a moment's time. Is this because people understand it well, or because they are foolish? To put it for the foolish and idle: a single coin is a trifle, yet pile them up and they make a poor man rich. That is why merchants are so keen to save each coin. An instant passes unnoticed, yet if instants keep going by without stopping, the time to end one's life arrives all at once. So one who follows the Way should not begrudge the days and months far ahead. One should begrudge letting this present moment of thought pass in vain. Suppose someone came and told you, "You will surely lose your life tomorrow." Until this day ended, what would you rely on, what would you set yourself to do? And how is this day we are living today any different from that one? In a single day we cannot help losing a great deal of time to eating and drinking, relieving ourselves, sleeping, talking and walking. In the little leisure that remains, to do useless things, say useless things and think useless thoughts—not only letting the hours slip by but wasting the days and passing the months until a whole life is spent—is the height of folly. Xie Lingyun was a scribe for the translation of the Lotus Sutra, yet because his heart was always full of worldly ambition, Huiyuan would not admit him to the fellowship of the White Lotus. Whoever lacks this awareness even for a moment is no different from a dead man. If you ask why we should begrudge the passing time, it is so that, with no idle thoughts within and no worldly business without, those who would cease may cease, and those who would practice may practice.[87]

87 Xie Lingyun (385–433) was a celebrated Chinese poet; Huiyuan (334–416) founded the White Lotus Society, a community devoted to rebirth in the Pure Land, on Mount Lu.

109. THE TREE CLIMBER

Accidents happen at the easy places.

109 A man known as a famous tree climber had someone climb a tall tree under his direction to cut the top branches. While the climber was at heights that looked very dangerous, the master said nothing. Only when the man was coming down and had reached about the height of the eaves did he call out, "Careful now! Watch yourself on the way down." I said to him, "At this height he could jump down. Why say that now?" He answered, "That's just it. While his head is spinning and the branches are dangerous, he is afraid on his own account, so I say nothing. Mistakes always happen once you reach the easy places." He was a humble commoner, yet his words accord with the warnings of the sages. In kickball too, they say, once you have kicked the ball out of a difficult spot and think the rest is easy, it is sure to drop.

110. PLAY NOT TO LOSE

A sugoroku expert's advice.

110 I asked a man said to be expert at *sugoroku* the secret of his play. He said, "You must not play to win; you must play not to lose. Work out which move is likely to lose fastest, avoid it, and choose the move by which you will lose more slowly, even by a single square." This is the teaching of one who knows his art, and the way to govern oneself and keep a country secure is the same.[88]

111. GO AND SUGOROKU

A holy man calls gaming worse than the gravest sins.

111 "People who love go and sugoroku and spend their days and nights at them commit, I think, a wickedness worse than the four grave offenses and the five heinous crimes." These words of

88 *Sugoroku* was a board game played with dice, similar to backgammon.

a certain holy man have stayed with me, and I find them splendid.[89]

112. CUTTING TIES

Someone who has grown old or left the world should drop social obligations.

112 Would anyone raise a matter that needs to be done at leisure with someone known to be leaving for a distant province tomorrow? Those busy with a sudden crisis, or deep in grief, pay no attention to other matters and do not inquire after others' sorrows and joys; nor does anyone resent their not asking. So it should be the same for someone who has grown old or is beset by illness—let alone one who has left the world. Among the ceremonies of human life, which is not hard to forgo? If one yields to the obligations of the world that are hard to ignore, and treats them all as things that must be done, one's wants multiply, the body suffers, the mind has no leisure, and a whole lifetime will end in vain, hemmed in by the petty details of trivial business. The day is ending and the road is long. My life has already stumbled. It is time to cast off all ties. I will not keep my word. I will not think of etiquette. Let those who do not understand this call me mad; let them think me senseless and heartless. If they censure me, I will not mind; if they praise me, I will not listen.[90]

113. UNBECOMING THINGS

Older men talking of love, and other unseemly behavior.

113 When someone past forty has a love affair, if it is kept quiet, what can one say? But to talk openly of love between men and women, and to joke about other people's affairs, is unbecoming and unsightly. In general, things unpleasant to hear and see: an

89 The four grave offenses (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false claims of attainment) and the five heinous crimes (such as killing one's parents or wounding a buddha) are the gravest sins in Buddhist law.

90 "The day is ending and the road is long" echoes words of Wu Zixu in the Chinese *Records of the Historian*; "stumbled" (*cuotuo*) echoes Bai Juyi.

old person mixing with the young and talking to amuse them. Someone of no account talking about a person of renown as if they were on intimate terms. A poor household fond of drinking parties, putting on a show to entertain its guests.

114. SAIŌMARU

A minister defends his ox-driver.

114 Once, when the Minister of Imadegawa was on his way to Saga, at a place near the Arisu River where water was running across the road, Saiōmaru drove the ox hard, so that the water kicked up by its hooves splashed right up onto the front board. Tamenori, who was riding at the back of the carriage, said, "What an absurd boy! Who drives an ox at a place like this?" The Minister's mood darkened, and he said, "You could never know more about driving a carriage than Saiōmaru. It's you who are absurd," and he knocked Tamenori's head against the carriage. This famous Saiōmaru was Lord Uzumasa's man, the ox-driver kept for His Majesty's use. The ladies-in-waiting in Lord Uzumasa's household were named, one Hizasachi, one Kotozuchi, one Hōhara and one Otoushi.[91]

115. THE BOROBORO

Two wandering mendicants fight a duel to the death on a riverbed.

115 At a place called Shukugawara, a great many boroboro had gathered and were reciting the nembutsu of the nine grades, when a boroboro came in from outside and asked, "Is there among you a boro called Iroshi-bō?" From among them came the answer, "Iroshi is here. Who is it that asks?" "My name is Shira Bonji. I was told that my teacher, a man called so-and-so, was killed in the eastern provinces by a boro named Iroshi. I hoped to meet that person and settle my grievance, so I have

91 The ladies' names appear to be taken from words to do with oxen; Lord Uzumasa was evidently devoted to them.

come asking for him."[92] Iroshi said, "It is good of you to come seeking me. That did indeed happen. But if I face you here, I will defile the place of practice. Let us meet on the riverbed in front. I beg of you, all you companions, do not take either side. If it causes much trouble, it will disturb the Buddhist service." Having settled this, the two went out onto the riverbed, met, ran each other through to their hearts' content, and both died. I wonder if there were no such people as boroboro in the old days. They say those called boronji, bonji and kanji in recent times were how they began. They seem to have renounced the world, yet they are deeply attached to self; they seem to seek the Buddha's Way, yet they make a business of fighting. Their conduct is dissolute and shameless, yet the way they make light of death and cling to nothing at all struck me as admirably clean, and so I have written this down just as it was told to me.

116. NAMES

Names should be plain, not clever.

116 In naming temples, and all sorts of other things too, people of old did not strain in the least; they simply named things as they were, without fuss. Nowadays the names sound as if people had pondered deeply, trying to show off their cleverness—very tiresome. With people's names too, trying to use unfamiliar characters is pointless. To seek out the novel in everything and to like unconventional views is, they say, the sure mark of shallow learning.

117. FRIENDS GOOD AND BAD

Seven bad kinds of friend and three good ones.

117 There are seven kinds of people who make bad friends. First, those of high and noble rank. Second, the young. Third, those

92 Boroboro were wandering mendicant monks, forerunners of the later flute-playing *komusō*; the nembutsu (invoking Amida Buddha) "of the nine grades" corresponds to the nine grades of rebirth in his Pure Land.

who are never ill and are robust. Fourth, those who love drink. Fifth, fierce and valiant warriors. Sixth, liars. Seventh, the greedy. There are three kinds of good friends: first, friends who give you things; second, doctors; third, friends who are wise.

118. CARP AND PHEASANT

Which foods are proper at court.

118 On a day you eat carp soup, they say, your sidelocks will not come untidy. Since glue is made from it too, it must be a sticky thing. Carp alone may be carved even in His Majesty's presence, so it is a noble fish. Among birds, the pheasant has no equal. Pheasant, matsutake mushrooms and the like may hang in the Oyudono without impropriety; anything else is distasteful. Once, when the Lay Monk of Kitayama saw a wild goose on the black shelf in the Oyudono of the Empress's quarters, he wrote to her as soon as he got home: "A creature like that sitting on Her Majesty's shelf just as it was, in its natural form—I have never seen such a thing, and it is unseemly. It must be because there is no one competent in attendance."[93]

119. BONITO

A once-lowly fish now served to the great.

119 The fish called bonito, from the sea at Kamakura, is held to be unrivaled in those parts, and it is much prized these days. Yet an old man of Kamakura told me, "Until we were young, this fish was never served before people of quality. Not even servants would eat the head; it was cut off and thrown away." In these last days of the world, it seems, even things like this make their way into the highest circles.

93 The Oyudono was a room beside the imperial bath where the ladies-in-waiting worked, among other things preparing food. The Lay Monk of Kitayama was Saionji Sanekane.

120. THINGS FROM CHINA

Apart from medicine, imports from China are unnecessary.

120 Of things from China, we could do without all of them except medicines. As for books, many have already spread through this country, so we can copy them. It is very foolish to load ships on the hard voyage from China with nothing but useless things, crammed in tight, and bring them across. "Do not treasure things from afar," and again, "Do not value goods hard to obtain"—so the books say, I believe.[94]

121. CAGED CREATURES

Except for horses, oxen and dogs, keeping animals is cruel.

121 Of the animals people keep, horses and oxen—it is pitiful to tie them up and make them suffer, but since we cannot do without them, what can be done? Dogs surpass even people at guarding and keeping watch, so one should certainly have one. But since every house has one, there is no need to seek one out specially to keep. All other birds and beasts are useless. Running beasts are shut in cages and fastened with chains; flying birds have their wings clipped and are put in cages, and their sorrow as they long for the clouds and pine for the fields and hills never ceases. If we would find such feelings unbearable were they our own, how could anyone with a heart take pleasure in this? To torment living things for the delight of the eye is the heart of Jie and Zhou. Wang Ziyou loved birds: he watched them enjoying themselves in the woods and made them the companions of his rambles. He did not catch and torment them. Indeed, as the books say, "Rare birds and strange beasts are not to be raised in the land."[95]

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94 The first saying is from the Chinese *Book of Documents*, the second from the *Laozi*.

95 Jie and Zhou were the proverbial tyrants who ended the Xia and Shang dynasties; the quotation is from the *Book of Documents*.

122. USEFUL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Letters, writing, medicine, archery, cooking and crafts.

122 Among human accomplishments, the first is to be well versed in letters and to know the teachings of the sages. Next comes writing a good hand: even if one does not make it one's main pursuit, one should learn it, for it is an aid to scholarship. Next, one should study medicine. Caring for one's own body, helping others, and fulfilling the duties of loyalty and filial piety are all impossible without medicine. Next, archery and horsemanship are counted among the Six Arts, and one should certainly gain some knowledge of them. Letters, arms and medicine: none of these may be lacking. No one who studies them can be called idle.[96] Next, food is heaven to people. One who knows how to season food well should be thought to have a great virtue. Next, craftsmanship has a great many uses. As for other things, having many skills is something a gentleman is ashamed of. Skill in poetry and excellence on strings and flutes belong to a way of profound subtlety, and rulers and ministers have prized them. Yet in the present age, trying to govern the world by them seems more and more foolish. It is like gold: gold is the finer metal, yet it cannot match iron for usefulness.[97]

123. FOOD, CLOTHING, SHELTER, MEDICINE

The four true needs; everything beyond them is extravagance.

123 Someone who spends the time doing useless things may be called a fool, or one who does wrong. For the sake of the country and of one's lord there are many things one cannot avoid doing, and one should realize that the leisure left over is small. What a person cannot avoid providing for is, first, food; second, cloth-

96 The Six Arts of Confucian education: rites, music, archery, charioteering, writing and mathematics.

97 "Food is heaven" echoes a Chinese saying recorded in the histories: "The people take food as their heaven."

ing; third, a place to live. The great needs of human life are no more than these three. Not to be hungry, not to be cold, not to be exposed to wind and rain, and to live quietly: that is happiness. But everyone falls ill, and when illness strikes the suffering is hard to bear. Medical care must not be forgotten. Adding medicine, to be unable to obtain these four things is poverty. To lack none of the four is wealth. To seek and strive for anything beyond the four is extravagance. If one is frugal in these four, who would find them insufficient?

124. ZEHŌ

A learned monk content with simple practice.

124 The monk Zehō, though he had no cause to feel ashamed among the scholars of the Pure Land school, did not set himself up as a learned man. He simply recited the nembutsu morning and night and passed his life in peace. That is a way of living I would dearly like for myself.[98]

125. THE CHINESE DOG

An odd compliment to a preacher, and wine compared to a double-edged sword.

125 Someone who had been bereaved invited a certain holy man to the Buddhist service on the forty-ninth day. His sermon was splendid, and everyone wept. After the officiant had gone, the listeners were saying to one another, deeply moved, "Today it felt more sacred than ever." In reply, someone said, "Well, naturally—a man who looks that much like a Chinese dog." At that the emotion evaporated, and it all became funny.[99] Is that any way to praise an officiant? The same man also said: "When you press wine on someone, drinking first yourself and then trying to force it on them is like trying to cut someone down with a

98 Zehō was a monk and poet of Kenkō's time.
99 The point of the comparison is obscure; Chinese lapdogs were rare and prized imports.

double-edged sword. Since it has blades on both sides, when you raise it you cut off your own head first, and so you never get to cut the other person. If you get drunk first and collapse, the other person will certainly not drink." I wonder whether he had tried cutting with such a sword. It was very amusing.

126. THE GAMBLER'S TURN

When not to play against a losing gambler.

126 "When a gambler's losses have hit bottom and he is about to stake everything he has left, do not play against him. You should recognize that the moment has come when his luck will turn and he will win again and again. Someone who knows that moment is called a good gambler," someone said.

127. LEAVE WELL ALONE

If change brings no benefit, do not change.

127 When changing something brings no benefit, it is better not to change it.

128. THE DOG'S LEG

A false tale costs a courtier his promotion; on cruelty to animals.

128 The Major Counselor Masafusa was learned and a man of good character, and the retired emperor was thinking of making him a general of the palace guards. Just then one of the retired emperor's attendants said, "I have just seen something dreadful." His Majesty asked, "What was it?" The attendant said, "Lord Masafusa cut the leg off a live dog to feed his hawk. I saw it through a hole in the dividing fence." His Majesty found this repugnant and hateful. His usual favor changed, and he did not promote Masafusa.[100] That such a man kept hawks was unexpected, but the story of the dog's leg was groundless. The lie was

100 Tsuchimikado (Minamoto) no Masafusa (1262–1302); the retired emperor is probably Kameyama.

unfortunate for him, but the heart of the sovereign, who on hearing of such a thing felt revulsion, was truly noble. In general, people who take their pleasure in killing living things, or hurting them, or making them fight, are of a kind with beasts that savage one another. If we look closely at how all the birds and beasts behave, down to the smallest insects, we see that they care for their young and cling to their parents, keep company as mates, are jealous and angry, full of desires, love themselves and hold on to life. Because they are entirely without understanding, they do all this even more intensely than people do. To inflict pain on them and take their lives—how could that not be pitiful? Anyone who can look on any sentient being without compassion is not truly human.

129. FRIGHTENING CHILDREN

Do not torment others, even children; the mind causes illness.

129 Yan Hui's aspiration was not to impose burdens on others. In general, one must never make people suffer or oppress any creature; not even the will of the humblest commoner may be taken from them. Then again, there are people who amuse themselves by tricking and frightening small children, or by teasing and shaming them. Grown-ups think it is nothing, since none of it is real, but to a young heart the fear, the shame and the dismay go right through them and must be truly acute. Tormenting a child like this for amusement is not compassionate.[101] The joy and anger, sorrow and pleasure of grown-ups too are all illusory, yet who does not cling to them as if they really existed? Wounding someone's heart harms them even more than injuring their body. Illness too is mostly contracted through the mind; few illnesses come from outside. We take medicine to make ourselves sweat, and sometimes it has no effect, yet a moment of shame or fear is sure to make us break out in a sweat: from this we should understand that it is the work of the

101 Yan Hui was Confucius' favorite disciple; his wish "not to impose burdens on others" is in the *Analects* (5.26).

mind. Nor is there lack of precedent: a man who wrote the inscription for the Lingyun Tower became white-haired.[102]

130. NOT COMPETING

Contending with others in games and jests breeds grudges.

130 Nothing is better than not contending with others: bending oneself to go along with others, putting oneself last and others first. People who love winning and losing in every kind of game do so for the pleasure of winning. They are delighted that their skill is superior. It follows that losing must feel like no fun. And if one set out to lose so as to please the other person, there would be no pleasure in the game at all. To amuse oneself by making others feel let down goes against virtue. Even in joking among close friends, some take their pleasure in tricking and deceiving others to show that their own wits are superior; this too is against courtesy. So there are many cases where something that began at a merry party ends in a lasting grudge. All of this is the fault of loving contention. If you want to surpass others, simply study, and aim to surpass them in knowledge. For if one studies the Way, one will learn that one must not boast of one's goodness or compete with one's fellows. To decline even high office and to give up gain is something only the power of learning can do.

131. KNOWING ONE'S LIMITS

Wisdom is stopping when one cannot manage.

131 The poor think of courtesy in terms of wealth; the old think of it in terms of strength. To know one's limits, and to stop at once when one cannot manage, should be called wisdom. If others do not accept this, the fault is theirs. To push oneself without knowing one's limits is one's own fault. Poor and not knowing one's

102 Wei Dan, hoisted high in a basket to write the name board of the Lingyun Tower, came down with his hair turned white from fear (*Shishuo xinyu*).

limits, one steals; with strength failing and not knowing one's limits, one falls ill.

132. TOBA BUILT ROAD

An old place name and a prince's carrying voice.

132 The name Toba Built Road was not given after the Toba Palace was built; it is an old name. The record of Prince Rihō says, I am told, that Prince Motoyoshi's voice, when he delivered the New Year's Day congratulations, was so remarkably fine that it carried from the Great Hall of State all the way to the Toba Built Road.[103]

133. WHICH WAY TO SLEEP

The direction of the emperor's pillow.

133 Someone once said, "In the emperor's bedchamber His Majesty sleeps with his head to the east. In general one should sleep with one's head to the east to receive the yang energy, which is why Confucius too lay with his head to the east. In arranging a sleeping hall, a pillow to the south is also common. Retired Emperor Shirakawa slept with his head to the north. North is to be avoided. And Ise lies to the south: how could he sleep with his feet toward the Grand Shrine?" However, when the emperor worships the Grand Shrine from afar, he faces southeast, not south.[104]

134. THE MONK AND THE MIRROR

A monk shuns mirrors after seeing his face; on knowing oneself.

134 A monk who performed the samādhi rites at the Lotus Hall of Retired Emperor Takakura—a Precept Master called something or other—once picked up a mirror and gazed long at his face. He

103 The diary of Prince Shigeakira (906–954), named for his office as head of the Ministry of Ceremonial; Prince Motoyoshi (890–943) was a son of Emperor Yōzei.
104 The dead are laid with the head to the north, as the Buddha lay at his death; the Grand Shrine of Ise honors the Sun Goddess, ancestor of the imperial line.

found his own ugliness and wretched looks so distressing that even the mirror seemed hateful, and from then on he dreaded mirrors and would not so much as take one in hand. He never again mixed with people. He took part only in the services at the hall, and otherwise stayed shut away. When I heard this, I thought it rare indeed. Even people who seem wise judge only others, and do not know themselves.[105] It makes no sense to know what is outside without knowing oneself. So only one who knows oneself can be called a person who knows. We are ugly, yet we do not know it. We do not know that our minds are foolish. We do not know that our skills are clumsy. We do not know that we count for nothing. We do not know that we have grown old. We do not know that illness is upon us. We do not know that death is near. We do not know that our practice of the Way falls short. Since we do not know our own faults, still less do we know of others' criticism. Still, someone might say: "My face I can see in a mirror. My age I know by counting. It is not that I don't know about myself, but since there is nothing to be done, it is as if I didn't know." I am not telling you to change your face or make yourself younger. If you know you are unskilled, why not withdraw at once? If you know you are old, why not rest quietly? If you know your practice is foolish, why not think of this, and keep your mind on this? In general, to mix with the crowd when no one wants one's company is shameful.[106] To go out into service when one is ugly and slow-witted; to mix with great talents when one is ignorant; to take a seat among masters with a skill that is not up to it; to stand beside people in their prime with a head white as snow; and, still more, to hope for what is beyond one's reach, to grieve over what cannot be had, to wait for what will not come, to fear others and fawn on them —this is not shame that others inflict. Led on by craving, one shames oneself. Craving never ceases because one does not

105 The Lotus Hall at Takakura's tomb, where monks performed continuous rites of the Lotus Sutra for his soul; Precept Master (*risshi*) is a clerical rank.
106 "Think of this, and keep your mind on this" echoes the *Book of Documents*.

truly know that the great matter of ending one's life has come, here and now.

135. SUKESUE'S CHALLENGE

A boastful courtier is stumped by a nonsense phrase.

135 A man known, I believe, as the Major Counselor Lay Monk Sukesue met Tomouji, the Consultant and Middle Captain, and said, "Whatever you might ask me, is there anything I couldn't answer?" Tomouji said, "I wonder about that." "Then challenge me," said Sukesue. Tomouji replied, "I have not learned even a scrap of anything serious, so there is no point in my asking about that. Among idle trifles, though, I will ask you about something I'm unsure of." "Shallow everyday things like that—all the more, whatever they are, I will explain them," said Sukesue. The attendants and the ladies-in-waiting declared, "What an amusing contest! You might as well have it out before His Majesty. Whoever loses must provide a feast," and so it was settled. When the two were summoned to face each other before His Majesty, Tomouji said, "There is something I have heard since I was a child, but whose meaning I don't know. What does it mean when people say '*uma no kitsuriyō kitsuni no oka nakakubore iri kurendō*'? I should like to be told." The Major Counselor Lay Monk was stumped. "That is nonsense, not worth talking about," he said. Tomouji replied, "I said from the start that I know nothing of the deep matters. It was agreed that I would ask you about trifles." So the Lay Monk lost, and paid the forfeit lavishly, they say.[107]

136. THE SALT RADICAL

A physician's boast is punctured by one question.

136 The physician Atsushige was in attendance on the late cloistered emperor when His Majesty's meal was served. He said, "If you will ask me about the various dishes now being

107 The phrase is gibberish, perhaps a children's rhyme; its meaning is unknown.

served—both how their names are written and what their properties are—I shall answer from memory, and you may check me against the *Materia Medica*. I shall not make a single mistake." Just then the late Palace Minister of Rokujō arrived. "Let me, Arifusa, take this chance to learn something," he said, and asked, "First of all, the character for *shio*, 'salt'—what radical does it have?" "The earth radical," said Atsushige. "The extent of your learning is already plain. That will do for now. There is nothing more I wish to know," said the minister. Amid a roar of laughter, Atsushige withdrew.[108]

108 The proper character for salt, 鹽, is written with the salt radical 鹵; the form with the earth radical, 塩, was considered vulgar. Minamoto no Arifusa (1251–1319) was Palace Minister.

Book Two

下

Sections 137–243: "Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom?", skill and mastery, wealth and desire, court precedent, and Kenkō's boyhood question about the first Buddha.

137. CHERRY BLOSSOMS AND THE MOON

Are we to look at blossoms only in full bloom? Beginnings, endings, and death's nearness.

137 Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, and at the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while facing the rain, or to stay shut indoors behind the blinds, not knowing how the spring is passing: these too are moving and full of feeling. Branches about to blossom, a garden strewn with faded petals: it is these that have the most to offer the eye. In the headnotes to poems, too, someone writes "On going to see the blossoms and finding they had already fallen," or "On being unable to go because something prevented me." Is that any worse than "On seeing the blossoms"?[1] It is natural to feel for the falling blossoms and the sinking moon. Yet it is the especially obtuse who say, "This branch and that one have shed their flowers; there is nothing left to see now." In all things, it is the beginnings and the endings that are delightful. And love between men and women: is it only a matter of being together? To grieve over an affair that ended before you could meet, to

1 Headnotes (kotobagaki) are the short prose prefaces that tell the occasion of a poem.

lament vows that proved empty, to sit alone through the long night until dawn, to send your thoughts to someone beyond distant clouds, to remember the past in a house overgrown with reeds: this is what we should call knowing love. Better than gazing at a cloudless full moon shining over a thousand leagues is the moon one has waited for until near dawn. When it finally rises, deeply tinged with blue, glimpsed between the treetops of the cedars deep in the mountains, or hidden for a moment behind clustered clouds as a shower passes, it is moving beyond compare. When it glints on leaves of the shii oak and the white oak that look wet, it pierces one to the heart. One wishes for a friend with feeling to share it, and longs for the capital. Are moon and blossoms, after all, things to be seen only with the eyes? To think of the spring without leaving the house, or of the moonlit night while staying in one's bedroom: this is deeply satisfying and delightful. People of good breeding never look wholly infatuated, and they enjoy things in an offhand way. It is people from the remote countryside who make a heavy fuss over everything. Under the blossoms they twist and push their way close, stare without taking their eyes away, drink sake and compose linked verse, and in the end thoughtlessly break off great branches. At a spring they plunge in their hands and feet. In snow they step down and leave footprints. Nothing do they look at from a distance. The way such people watched the Festival was quite extraordinary. The procession was very late in coming. Saying the viewing stand was of no use until then, they drank and ate in a room at the back and played go and *sugoroku*, leaving someone posted in the stand. When that person called out, "It's passing!", every one of them scrambled up the stairs in a panic. They pushed the blinds out until they nearly fell, shoving one another and staring so as not to miss a single thing. They remarked on every item, "This is like that, that is like this," and once it had gone by they said, "Until the next one passes," and climbed back down.[2] It seems they want to see nothing but

2 The Kamo Festival, held in the fourth month, was the great spectacle of the capital, watched from carriages and from viewing stands along the avenue.

the show itself. Distinguished people of the capital doze and hardly look at all. The young and the lower ranks, busy coming and going in service, and those waiting behind their masters, do not lean over in an unseemly way, and no one strains to see at any cost. Everything is hung with hollyhock leaves and has a quiet elegance. Before day has fully broken, the carriages that draw up discreetly make one curious. One guesses whose this one is and whose that one, and sometimes one recognizes an ox-driver or a servant.[3] Watching them come and go, charming or dazzling, each in its own way, one is never bored. Toward evening, the carriages that stood in rows and the people who were crowded into every space—where have they all gone?—soon grow few. Once the clamor of the carriages is over, the blinds and mats are taken down, and the scene grows desolate before one's eyes. Then one is reminded of the way of the world, and it is moving. To have watched the avenue: that is what it means to have seen the Festival. Among the many people passing back and forth before those viewing stands, a great many were people I knew, and from this I realized something. There are not so very many people in the world after all. Even if it were settled that I would die only after all of these had gone, I would not have long to wait. Fill a large vessel with water and pierce a tiny hole in it: though little drips out, if it leaks without pause, it will soon run dry. Among the many people in the capital, there can be no day on which no one dies. And is it only one or two a day? At Toribeno, at Funaoka, and on other moors and hills, there are days when many are carried off, but there is no day when none are. So those who sell coffins never have time to make them and set them aside. Not by youth, not by strength: the hour of death is what comes when least expected. That we have escaped it until today is a rare marvel. Can we feel at ease in the world for even a moment? In the game called mamakodate, played with *sugoroku* pieces set out in a row, no one knows which piece will be taken. Once the count lands on one and it is removed, the rest

3 For the festival, blinds, carriages and headdresses were decked with aoi leaves, usually translated "hollyhock" (actually a wild ginger).

seem to have escaped. But as the counting goes on again and again, picking them off one after another, it seems that none escapes.[4] Soldiers going into battle know that death is near, and forget their homes and forget themselves. For someone who has left the world to sit in a grass hut, quietly enjoying streams and rocks, and to think of death as something that happens elsewhere, is foolish indeed. Even deep in the quiet mountains, will the enemy, impermanence, not come charging in? To face death there is the same as advancing into the battle line.

138. WITHERED HOLLYHOCK

Leftover festival leaves should not be thrown away.

138 Once the Festival was over, a certain distinguished person said the leftover hollyhock was no longer needed and had all of it taken down from the blinds. I found this lacking in feeling. Yet since it was done by a person of good breeding, I thought it might be the proper thing. But Suō no Naishi wrote, "Hung up, yet no use, together with me, are the withered hollyhock leaves on the blinds," and her personal collection says it was "written on withered hollyhock leaves hanging on the blinds of the main hall."[5] The headnote of an old poem also says, "Sent attached to a withered hollyhock." And in *The Pillow Book* it is written, "Things that make one long for the past: withered hollyhock." What a wonderfully tender thought. Kamo no Chōmei, too, wrote in his *Tales of the Four Seasons*, "On the jeweled blinds the leftover hollyhock remained." It is sad enough that they wither of themselves. How could one throw them away without leaving a trace? [6] The herbal balls hung on the curtained dais are said to be replaced with chrysanthemums on the ninth day of the ninth

4 Toribeno and Funaoka were burial and cremation grounds outside the capital. In mamakodate ("stepchildren standing") pieces are counted round and every tenth one removed until one is left.

5 The poem puns on kaku ("hang" / "long for"), misu ("blinds" / "not see") and aoi ("hollyhock" / "day of meeting").

6 *The Pillow Book* is Sei Shōnagon's collection of observations (c. 1000); the *Tales of the Four Seasons* was attributed to Kamo no Chōmei, author of *An Account of My Hut*.

month, so the irises must be meant to stay until chrysanthemum time. After the Empress Dowager of Biwa passed away, withered irises and herbal balls were found still inside her old curtained dais. Seeing them, Ben no Menoto wrote, "Out of season, still I hang these roots," and Gō no Jijū replied, "The iris plants remain, and yet—."[7]

139. TREES AND PLANTS

Which trees and flowers to have at one's house.

139 The trees one would want at one's house are the pine and the cherry. Among pines, the five-needled pine is good too. Among cherries, the single-flowered kind is best. Double cherries once grew only in the old capital of Nara, but nowadays, I hear, they have become common everywhere. The blossoms of Yoshino and the Cherry of the Left Guard are all single. The double cherry is an odd thing. It is overdone and contorted. One could do without planting it. Late cherries are dreary as well. Those infested with insects are unpleasant. Among plums, the white ones, the pale pink ones, the single ones that bloom early, and the double crimson ones with their lovely fragrance are all delightful.[8] Late plums bloom together with the cherries, are thought less of and overshadowed, and wither clinging to their branches, which is a sorry sight. "The single kind blooms first and scatters first; it has a quick spirit and is delightful," said the Lay Monk Middle Counselor of Kyōgoku, and so he planted single-flowered plums close to his eaves. Two of them still seem to stand on the south side of the Kyōgoku house. Willows are delightful too. Young maples around the fourth month are lovelier than any flowers or autumn leaves. Mandarin orange and katsura: with either tree, old and large is best.[9] Among flowering plants: yellow kerria, wisteria, irises, pinks; in ponds, the lotus;

7 Herbal balls (kusudama) of iris and other plants were hung on the fifth day of the fifth month to ward off illness. Ne means both "root" and "weeping aloud".
8 The Cherry of the Left Guard stood before the Shishinden, the main ceremonial hall of the palace.
9 Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241), the great poet and editor of court poetry.

among autumn plants, reeds, pampas grass, bellflowers, bush clover, maiden flowers, thoroughwort, asters, burnet, kaya grass, gentians, chrysanthemums (yellow ones too), ivy, kudzu and morning glories. All are best when not too tall, on a modest fence, and not too thick. Other plants, rare ones, with Chinese-sounding names that grate on the ear and flowers one is not used to seeing, are not endearing at all. In general, anything novel and hard to come by is what people of poor breeding make a fuss over. One can do without such things.

140. LEAVING WEALTH BEHIND

The wise leave nothing behind when they die.

140 To die and leave wealth behind is something the wise do not do. If one has stored up worthless things, it looks foolish. If they are good things, people will think one was attached to them, and that is pitiful. A great heap of them is even more of a pity. People say, "It should be mine," and quarrel afterward, and it is an ugly sight. If there is something one means to give to someone after one's death, one should hand it over while still alive. One may keep what cannot be done without from morning to night; beyond that, I would wish to own nothing at all.

141. GYŌREN ON THE CAPITAL

A monk from the east defends the soft-hearted people of the capital.

141 His Reverence Gyōren of the Hidenin was, they say, of the Miura family by birth, and a warrior without equal. Someone from his home province came to visit and, in the course of their talk, said, "With people of the eastern provinces, you can rely on what they say. People of the capital are good only at saying yes; there's no truth in them." The holy man replied, "You may well think so. But I have lived in the capital a long time, and now that I know them well, I do not think their hearts are inferior.[10] They

10 The Hidenin was a charitable institution in the capital for the poor, the sick and orphans.

are generally gentle and kind, so they find it hard to bluntly refuse whatever people ask of them. They cannot say no outright to anything, and out of softheartedness they agree. They do not mean to deceive, but they are all poor and lack the means, so naturally their intentions often go unfulfilled. The people of the eastern provinces are my own people, but in truth they have no warmth of heart, are lacking in kindness, and are simply blunt. So they say no from the start, and that is the end of it. And because they are prosperous and well-off, people rely on them. That is how it is." That was how he explained it. This holy man spoke in a rough, harsh voice, and I had thought he might not understand much of the finer reasoning of the sacred teachings. After these words I came to admire him. I felt that the reason he, among so many, had been made head of a temple was that he had this gentleness in him, and that it did some good.

142. BONDS OF FAMILY LOVE

A fierce warrior on children; poverty, theft and good government.

[142] Even those who seem to have no feeling sometimes say something good. A fierce warrior from the eastern provinces, frightening to look at, asked a companion, "Do you have children?" "Not a single one," the man answered. "Then you cannot know the pathos of things," said the warrior. "It frightens me to think what an unfeeling heart you must have. It is through children that one comes to understand everything that moves us." That may well be so. Were it not for the bonds of family love, would there be compassion in the heart of such a man? Even those without filial devotion come to understand their parents' feelings once they have children of their own. One who has left the world and has nothing whatever to tie one down is wrong to look with contempt on people bound by many ties, seeing them flatter everyone and full of desires. If one puts oneself in their place, it must be truly hard. For the sake of parents, or of wife and children, one might well forget shame and even steal. So rather than arresting thieves and simply punishing wrongdoing,

I wish the world were governed so that no one went hungry or cold. When people have no constant livelihood, they have no constant heart. People driven to the limit will steal. If the world is not well governed and people suffer cold and hunger, there will be no end of criminals. To make people suffer, drive them to break the law, and then punish them for it is a pitiful thing to do. How, then, should people be helped? If those above put an end to their extravagance and waste, care for the people and encourage farming, there can be no doubt that those below will benefit. Only someone who does wrong while clothed and fed like everyone else deserves to be called a true thief.[11]

143. GOOD DEATHS

Stories of marvelous deaths should not be embroidered.

143 When I hear people tell how splendid someone's last moments were, it would be admirable if they said only that the person died calmly and without confusion. But foolish people pass on stories of strange and unusual signs, and praise the words and conduct of the dying in whatever way suits their own taste. I think this cannot have been what that person wished in life. This great matter cannot be judged even by a buddha in human form. Nor can the most learned scholar fathom it. If one does not stray from oneself, it does not depend on what others see or hear.

144. ASHI, ASHI!

Myōe hears a holy syllable in a stableman's words.

144 Once, when the holy man of Toganoo was passing along a road, a man washing a horse in the river was calling out, "Ashi, ashi!" ("Foot, foot!"). The holy man stopped. "How holy!" he said. "Here is a man whose good karma from past lives has come to flower. He is chanting 'A-ji, A-ji', the letter A! Whose horse is this?

11 The opening line paraphrases *Mencius*, which says the common people without a constant livelihood will have no constant heart.

It strikes me as so very holy." "It belongs to His Honor the Fushō," the man answered. "How wonderful!" said the holy man. "It is 'the letter A, originally unborn'! What a happy bond with the dharma I have made!" And he wiped away tears of joy, so they say.[12]

145. THE SIGN OF A FALL

A bodyguard predicts a rider's fatal fall.

145 The imperial bodyguard Hata no Shigemi said of Shingan, the Lay Monk of Shimotsuke, of the Northern Guard, "This man has the look of one who will fall from a horse. He should be very careful." This did not seem very likely, but Shingan fell from his horse and died. People thought that a single word from a master of his art was like a god's. Someone asked him, "What was the sign?" He said, "His seat was extremely round, like a peach, and he liked spirited, unruly horses, so I gave him that sign. When have I ever been wrong?"[13]

146. THE ABBOT AND THE PHYSIOGNOMIST

Asking about danger is itself the sign of danger.

146 The Abbot Myōun met a physiognomist and asked, "Am I perhaps in danger from weapons?" "Indeed, you have that sign," said the man. "What sign is it?" asked the abbot. "You are someone who should have no reason to fear injury, and yet you have thought to ask such a thing, even in passing. That itself is already a sign of the danger," he replied. Sure enough, the abbot was struck by an arrow and died.[14]

12 The holy man is Myōe (1173–1232). In esoteric Buddhism the letter A stands for what is "originally unborn" (honpushō), and fushō, a minor official's title, sounds like "unborn".

13 The Northern Guard protected the retired emperor's palace. A round, "peach-shaped" seat was thought unstable in the saddle.

14 Myōun (1115–1183), head abbot of the Tendai monastery on Mount Hiei, was killed in Kiso no Yoshinaka's attack on the retired emperor's palace.

147. MOXIBUSTION AND PURITY

A recent superstition about moxa.

147 The idea that someone who has had moxibustion in many places is impure for the rites of the gods is something people have started saying only recently. It does not appear in the codes and regulations.

148. THE SANRI POINT

Moxa advice for people over forty.

148 People over forty who have moxibustion but do not burn the sanri point will suffer from rushes of blood to the head. One should always apply moxa there.[15]

149. DEER ANTLER

Do not sniff deer antler.

149 Do not hold deer antler to your nose and sniff it. They say it has tiny insects that crawl in through the nose and eat the brain.

150. LEARNING A SKILL

Practice openly among experts rather than in private.

150 People setting out to acquire a skill often say, "While I can't do it well, I'd rather not let anyone know. Better to learn it properly in private and then come forward; that would be truly admirable." But people who say this never master a single art. Take someone who, while still utterly unformed, mixes with the experts, is not ashamed to be criticized and laughed at, and goes on unperturbed, working hard. Even without natural talent, if such a person does not stall on the way or take it lightly, and keeps at it for years, they will in the end reach the rank of master ahead of a gifted person who does not work at it. Their skill

15 Sanri is a point on the leg just below the knee.

will mature, others will acknowledge them, and they will win an unrivaled name. Even the greatest masters in the land were at first said to be clumsy and had shocking faults. But they kept strictly to the rules of their art, valued them, and did not do as they pleased, and so they became the authorities of their age and teachers to all. This is the same in every art.

151. GIVING UP AT FIFTY

Abandon arts not mastered by fifty and live at leisure.

151 Someone said: "An art in which you have not become skilled by the age of fifty should be given up. There is no future left in which to work hard and learn it. People cannot bring themselves to laugh at an old person, and for the old to mingle with the crowd is pointless and unsightly. On the whole, it is fitting and desirable to stop all one's activities and have leisure. Whoever spends a lifetime caught up in worldly affairs is the lowest kind of fool. Things you would like to know you may study and ask about, but once you have grasped their gist, you should stop as soon as you are no longer in the dark. Best of all is never to have wanted anything in the first place."

152. THE OLD DOG

Suketomo mocks reverence for an old monk.

152 Saint Jōnen of Saidaiji, bent at the waist and white of eyebrow, looking every inch a man of great virtue, came to the palace. Lord Saionji, the Inner Minister, said, "How venerable he looks!" and showed every sign of reverence. Lord Suketomo saw this and said, "It is only that he is old." Some days later, Suketomo had a shaggy dog led over, wretchedly old and wasted, its fur coming out in patches. He sent it to the Inner Minister with the message: "This one looks venerable." So they say.[16]

16 Hino Suketomo (1290–1332), a courtier known for his sharp tongue, later executed for plotting against the Kamakura shogunate.

153. AN ENVIABLE ARREST

Suketomo envies a poet led off under arrest.

153 When the lay monk Tamekane, the Major Counselor, was arrested and led off to Rokuhara surrounded by warriors, Lord Suketomo saw this near Ichijō and said, "How enviable! If one is to live in this world, that is the kind of memory to have."[17]

154. THE POTTED TREES

Suketomo throws away his twisted potted trees.

154 This same man was once sheltering from the rain at the gate of Tōji, where people with disabilities had gathered. Seeing that their hands and feet were twisted and bent back, every part of them unusual and strange, he thought each of them a curiosity without equal, well worth cherishing, and gazed at them. Before long his interest ran out; they seemed ugly and distasteful to him, and he thought that nothing beats what is plain and ordinary. After he went home, it struck him that his recent fondness for potted trees, for which he had sought out strangely bent and twisted ones to delight his eyes, was no different from cherishing the misshapen. He lost all pleasure in them and had every tree planted in a pot dug up and thrown away. That was just as it should be.

155. DEATH COMES FROM BEHIND

The right moment matters for most things, but not for death, which is already behind us.

155 Whoever means to go along with the world must first know the right moment. Things done at the wrong moment grate on people's ears and go against their feelings, and nothing comes of them. One must be alert to such moments. Only falling ill, giv-

17 Kyōgoku Tamekane (1254–1332), a leading poet, arrested in 1315 and exiled. Rokuhara was the shogunate's headquarters in the capital.

ing birth and dying take no account of the moment. They do not hold off because the timing is bad. The true great matter—the passage through arising, abiding, changing and perishing—is like a raging river in full flood. It does not pause for an instant; it goes straight on.[18] So, in religious and worldly matters alike, whatever you are determined to see through to the end, you must not talk about the right moment. Do not fuss over this preparation or that; do not stop in your tracks. It is not that summer comes once spring has ended, or that autumn comes once summer is over. Spring already calls forth the air of summer; autumn is already moving within summer; autumn soon turns cold, yet the tenth month brings the weather of "little spring," when the grass turns green and the plum trees bud. When leaves fall from the trees, too, it is not that they fall first and then the buds sprout: the buds stirring beneath push up, and the leaves, unable to resist, fall. Because what will receive them is already prepared below, the order in which one gives way to the next is very swift. The passage of birth, aging, sickness and death comes swifter still. The four seasons at least keep a fixed order. The hour of death does not wait its turn. Death does not come from in front; it is already behind us, pressing close. Everyone knows that death exists, yet while we wait for it, and not with any urgency, it comes upon us unawares—just as, though the tidal flats stretch far out to sea, the tide rises from the shore.

156. A MINISTER'S BANQUET

Where ministers hold their banquets.

156 For a minister's grand banquet, it is the usual practice to ask permission to use a suitable residence. The Minister of the Left of Uji held his at the Higashi-Sanjō mansion. It was then serving as the imperial palace, but because he asked for it, His Majesty moved elsewhere. Even without any special connection, it is

18 Arising, abiding, changing and perishing: in Buddhism, the four marks of everything that comes into being.

established precedent to borrow the residence of an imperial lady or the like, so they say.[19]

157. CONTACT WITH THINGS

Holding a rosary or sitting to meditate draws the mind toward good.

157 When we take up a brush, we feel we must write something; when we take up an instrument, we want to make it sound. When we take up a cup, we think of wine; when we take up dice, we think of throwing them. The mind is always stirred by contact with things. One should never, even in jest, toy with what is not good. If we glance at a single line of the sacred teachings, somehow we see the passages before and after it as well. All at once we may correct the faults of many years. Had we not happened to open that text just then, would we ever have known this? This is the benefit of contact. Even if no faith at all stirs in the heart, if one sits before the Buddha and takes up the rosary and takes up the sutra, good karma is cultivated of itself, even in one's negligence; and if one sits on the meditation seat, even with a scattered mind, one will enter meditative absorption without knowing it. Phenomenon and principle are from the beginning not two. If the outward form is not at odds with it, the inner realization will surely ripen. One must not insist on calling this a lack of faith. One should look up to it and revere it.[20]

158. EMPTYING THE CUP

The meaning of throwing out the dregs.

158 A certain personage once asked me, "How do you understand the practice of throwing out what is left at the bottom of the cup?" I answered, "It is called *gyōtō*, so I suppose it means throwing out what has congealed at the bottom." "Not so," came the

19 The Minister of the Left of Uji: Fujiwara no Yorinaga (1120–1156).

20 Phenomenon and principle (事理): in Buddhist thought, concrete things and the truth underlying them.

reply. "It is *gyodō*, 'the fishes' path.' You leave a little to flow and rinse the place your lips touched."[21]

159. MINAMUSUBI

The name of a knot.

159 "The knot called *minamusubi* gets its name because the threads, tied over one another, look like the shellfish called *mina*," a certain eminent person told me. To say *nina* is a mistake.[22]

160. CORRECT WORDS

Which verbs are proper for plaques, stands and rites.

160 Is it wrong to say that one "strikes" (*utsu*) a plaque when hanging it over a gate? The lay monk of the Second Rank of Kadenokōji said "hang" (*kakuru*) a plaque. Is it also wrong to say one "strikes" viewing stands for a spectacle? To "strike" an awning is ordinary usage, but for stands one should say "set up" (*kamauru*). To say one "burns" a *goma* is also bad; one says "perform" a *goma*, or "do" a *goma*. "In *gyōbō*, too, it is wrong to pronounce the character for 'dharma' unvoiced, as *hō*; it is said voiced, as *bō*," said the Sōjō of Seikanji. Everyday speech is full of such things.[23]

161. WHEN CHERRIES BLOOM

Counting the days to full bloom.

161 Some say the cherry blossoms are at their height one hundred and fifty days after the winter solstice, others seven days after the equinox, but seventy-five days after the first day of spring is seldom wrong.[24]

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21 A pun: 凝當 *gyōtō* "congealed dregs" versus 魚道 *gyodō* "fish path."
22 *Mina*: a river snail.
23 *Goma*: the esoteric Buddhist fire rite.
24 The first day of spring (立春) in the old calendar falls around the fourth of February.

162. THE GOOSE KILLER

A temple servant traps and kills geese and is jailed.

162 A lay servant-monk at Henjōji had for some time been feeding the birds of the pond, scattering grain right inside the hall. He would open a single door, and when countless birds had gone in, he went in after them, shut them in, and caught and killed them one by one. The commotion sounded so dreadful that a boy cutting grass heard it and told people. The village men rose up and went in to look: among the great wild geese flapping in panic was the monk, striking them down and wringing their necks. They seized him, and the village handed him over to the Office of the Imperial Police. He was made to wear the birds he had killed around his neck and was thrown into prison. This was when the Major Counselor Mototoshi was Superintendent of the Police.

163. A DOT ON A CHARACTER

A dispute about how to write a character.

163 The masters of yin and yang once disputed whether the character 太 in *taishō* should be written with its dot or without. The lay monk Morichika said, "Lord Konoe, the Regent, has an imperial diary written on the back of an old document in Yoshihira's own hand. In it the character is written with the dot."[25]

164. IDLE TALK

Most conversation is useless.

164 When people meet, they never fall silent for a moment; there is always talk. Listen to it, and most of it is useless chatter: idle rumors about the world, the rights and wrongs of others—for

25 *Taishō* (太衝), a yin-yang name for the ninth month. Abe no Yoshihira (954–1026) was a noted master of yin and yang.

oneself and for others alike, much is lost and little gained. Yet while they talk, neither side realizes that it is useless.

165. OUT OF PLACE

People living outside their own sphere look unseemly.

165 A man from the eastern provinces mixing among people of the capital; a man of the capital going east to make his way; monks of the exoteric and esoteric schools who have left their home temple and mountain—whenever people mix with others who are not of their own kind, it is unsightly.

166. THE SNOW BUDDHA

Our busy plans are like adorning a snow Buddha in spring.

166 When I look at what people are busy with, it is like making a snow Buddha on a spring day, then busily preparing ornaments of gold, silver and jewels for it, and setting out to build a hall and a pagoda. Can one wait for the building to be finished and enshrine it properly? Even while a life seems to last, it is melting from below like the snow, and still we keep busy, waiting on so very many things.

167. NOT COMPETING IN ONE'S FIELD

Do not boast of one's art; pride invites disaster.

167 It is common for someone engaged in one art, attending a gathering of another, to say, "Ah, if only this were my own field, I would not be looking on from outside like this," and to think so in their heart; but this seems to me very bad indeed. If you envy an art you do not know, just say, "How enviable! Why did I never learn it?" To bring out one's own knowledge and compete with others is like a horned beast lowering its horns, or a fanged beast baring its fangs. For human beings, virtue lies in not boasting of one's merits and not contending with others. To have something in which one surpasses others is a great fault. Whether in loftiness of rank, excellence of learning and talent,

or the renown of one's ancestors, whoever thinks they surpass others harbors many faults within, even if they never put it into words. One should take care to forget all this. What makes one look foolish, gets one disparaged by others, and invites disaster is this pride and nothing else. Those truly accomplished in any field see their own shortcomings clearly, so their aspirations are never satisfied, and in the end they boast of nothing.

168. OLD AGE AND LEARNING

An old expert should not air all he knows.

168 When an old person has an outstanding talent in some one thing, and people say, "After this person is gone, whom shall we ask?", then they are a champion of old age, and their living on is not in vain. Even so, if that talent has no rusty spots at all, it looks graceless, as if they had spent their whole life on this one thing. Better to say, "I have forgotten it now." Even if one knows a great deal, to air it carelessly makes people wonder whether one's learning is really so great, and mistakes are bound to slip in. Saying "I do not know it for certain" makes one seem all the more a true master of the art. Worse still is when someone one cannot very well contradict holds forth, with a knowing air, about what they do not know, and one has to sit there listening, thinking "That is not so"—that is truly miserable.

169. THE WORD SHIKI

A disputed piece of usage.

169 Someone told me, "The expression 'the ways (*shiki*) of such-and-such' was not used until the reign of Go-Saga; it is a word that has come in only recently." Yet the Ukyō no Daibu of Kenreimon'in, describing how she returned to serve at the palace after Go-Toba ascended the throne, wrote: "Though nothing has changed in the ways of the world..."[26]

26 Kenreimon'in Ukyō no Daibu, a lady-in-waiting and poet of the late twelfth century, author of a poetic memoir.

170. VISITS

Do not stay long without a reason; good friends excepted.

170 It is not good to go visiting someone without any particular reason. Even if you go on business, you should leave quickly once it is done. Staying a long time is very tiresome. When people sit facing each other, words multiply, the body tires, and the mind is not at rest. Everything else is held up while time slips away; it does neither side any good. But it is also bad to speak as though you were annoyed. When you are not in the mood, it is better simply to say why. When someone of like mind, whom one would gladly sit with, has nothing to do and says, "Stay a little longer—let us take our ease today," that surely falls outside this rule. Ruan Ji's green eyes are something everyone ought to have. It is very pleasant when someone comes for no particular reason, chats at leisure and goes home. And it is a great joy to receive a letter that says no more than, "It has been so long since I last wrote."[27]

171. SHELL MATCHING AND GO

Attend to what is close at hand.

171 In the shell-matching game, a player who leaves the shells in front of them and looks around elsewhere, casting an eye into the shadow of others' sleeves and under their knees, finds that meanwhile someone else has covered the shells right in front of them. A good player does not seem to strain after shells far off, and appears to cover only those nearby, yet covers a great many.[28] When you stand a go stone at the corner of the board and flick at it, you will miss if you flick with your eyes on the stone opposite. Look carefully at your own hand and flick

27 Ruan Ji (210–263), one of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, met those he liked with "green" (dark) eyes and those he disliked with the whites of his eyes.
28 Shell-matching (貝おほひ): a game in which players find the matching halves of painted clam shells.

straight along the line of points right here, and you will always hit the standing stone. In all things, do not look outward for what you seek. Simply set right what is here at hand. Lord Qingxian said, "Do good, and do not ask what lies ahead." Is the way to keep the realm in order not the same? If one is not careful within, but frivolous, self-indulgent and disorderly, then when the distant provinces inevitably rebel, only then does one start looking for a plan.[29] It is as a medical book says: "Those who expose themselves to wind and sleep in the damp, then pray to the gods about their illness, are fools." Such people do not know that if one eases the troubles of those before one's eyes, bestows kindness and sets the Way right, its influence will flow far. When Yu marched out to subdue the Sanmiao, it was not as good as turning his army back and spreading virtue.[30]

172. YOUTH AND AGE

The passions of youth and the calm of age.

172 In youth, blood and spirit overflow within, the heart is moved by things, and the passions are many. One puts oneself in danger and breaks easily, like a jewel sent rolling. Loving finery, one squanders one's wealth; then one throws it all away and shrinks into the moss-colored sleeves of a monk. The bold spirit runs high and quarrels with others; the heart is full of shame and envy; what one likes changes from day to day. One gives oneself up to love and dotes on feeling, acts with reckless dash and ruins a body that could have lasted a hundred years, and envies the examples of those who lost their lives, never thinking of keeping oneself whole and long-lived. To be drawn after one's passions and wreck oneself, becoming a tale told for ages—that is what youth does. In the old, the spirit has waned; they are mild and indifferent, and nothing stirs or moves them. Since

29 Lord Qingxian: Zhao Bian (1008–1084), an upright minister of the Song dynasty.
30 Yu: the legendary sage-king of ancient China; the Sanmiao, a rebellious southern people, submitted only when he withdrew his troops and cultivated virtue (*Book of Documents*).

their minds are naturally calm, they do nothing useless; they look after their bodies and are free of worry, and they think of not being a burden to others. Old age surpasses youth in wisdom just as youth surpasses old age in looks.

173. ONO NO KOMACHI

Doubts about the facts of Komachi's life.

173 Very little is certain about Ono no Komachi. Her decline appears in a work called *Tamatsukuri*. There is a theory that Kiyoyuki wrote it, but it is included in the catalog of the writings of the Great Master of Kōya, and the Great Master passed away early in the Jōwa era (in 835). Was Komachi in her prime after that? It is still unclear.[31]

174. THE GREAT OVER THE SMALL

Once one has heard the Way, other pursuits fall away.

174 They say that a dog good for hunting with small hawks, once used with large hawks, becomes useless with small ones. Taking up the great and discarding the small—this is truly how it is. Among the many human pursuits, none has a deeper savor than delighting in the Way. This is the truly great matter. Once someone has heard the Way and set their heart on it, what pursuit would they not let go? What else would they busy themselves with? However foolish a person may be, are they to fall short of the mind of a clever dog?

175. AGAINST FORCED DRINKING

The miseries of drink, and the occasions when wine is welcome.

175 There are many things in this world I do not understand. On every occasion, people begin by pressing wine on others and making them drink by force, and they think this fun—why, I

31 Ono no Komachi, a ninth-century poet legendary for her beauty. The Great Master of Kōya is Kūkai; Kiyoyuki is the scholar Miyoshi no Kiyoyuki (847–918).

cannot understand. The drinker grimaces as if it were unbearable, frowns, tries to pour it away when no one is looking, tries to slip off; and they catch hold of the drinker, hold them back and make them drink for no good reason. Then even a dignified person suddenly turns into someone out of their mind and makes a fool of themselves, and even a healthy person becomes, before your eyes, gravely ill and collapses, insensible. On a day meant for celebration, it must be appalling. Until the next day the head aches; one lies groaning, unable to eat, as if a whole lifetime lay in between, remembering nothing of yesterday, neglecting important public and private business and coming to grief. To make someone suffer like this is without compassion and contrary to courtesy. Would anyone who had met with such a bitter experience not feel resentful and aggrieved? If we heard that such a custom existed in some other country, as something unknown among us, we would surely find it strange and incredible. Even seeing it happen to others is distressing. Someone I had taken for thoughtful and admirably refined now laughs and shouts without a care, talks on and on, cap askew, cords undone, shins hitched up high, utterly heedless—not at all their everyday self. Women push the hair back from their foreheads, quite unabashed, tilt up their faces and laugh, and clutch at the hand holding the cup; the ill-bred pick up the snacks and push them at others' mouths, and eat them themselves too—an ugly sight. Each sings and dances at the top of their voice; an old monk is called forward, bares his dark, dirty body to the shoulders and wriggles about so that one cannot bear to look—and even those who watch it with amusement are repellent and hateful. Some go on, embarrassingly, about their own splendid deeds; some weep drunkenly; the lower sort trade insults and brawl, which is shocking and frightening. There is nothing but shame and misery, and in the end they grab things they were not given, fall off verandas, fall from horses and carriages and hurt themselves. Those of a class that rides nothing stagger along the avenues and, facing earthen walls and gateways, do unspeakable things; and an old monk in his robe, leaning on a little boy's

shoulder, staggering along and babbling nonsense, is a pitiful sight. If doing such things brought some benefit in this world or the next, there would be nothing to say. But in this world it brings many faults, loss of wealth and illness. It is called the chief of the hundred medicines, yet every illness arises from wine. It is said to make one forget sorrow, yet drunken people seem rather to recall their past sorrows and weep. As for the next life, it destroys human wisdom, burns up the roots of goodness like fire, adds to evil, and breaks every precept, so that one is bound to fall into hell. The Buddha taught, they say, that whoever takes wine and makes others drink will be born without hands for five hundred lifetimes. Yet repugnant as I find it, there are bound to be times when it is hard to give up. On a moonlit night, on a snowy morning, beneath the blossoms, to talk at ease and bring out the cups adds to every pleasure. On a day with nothing to do, when a friend drops in unexpectedly and drinks are served, it is a comfort too. It is very nice when, from behind the blinds of a household one does not know well, fruit and wine are passed out with a gracious air. In winter, in a cramped room, roasting something over the fire and drinking a good deal face to face with close friends is delightful. At a makeshift lodging on a journey, or out in the fields and hills, drinking on the grass while asking "What shall we have with it?" is delightful too. And it is very nice when someone who protests strongly is pressed and drinks a little. It is a pleasure, too, when a person of good breeding singles one out and says, "One more—you have had so little." And it is a joy when someone one has wanted to get to know turns out to be a good drinker, and one becomes close in no time. All the same, drinkers are amusing people, and their faults are forgiven. When the host throws open the door on someone sleeping late in the morning, worn out from drinking, the sleeper is flustered: face still bleary, thin topknot sticking out, not even time to dress, they clutch their clothes to them and flee, dragging them along—the view from behind, robe hitched up, the skinny, hairy shins—it is comic, and just right for the occasion.

176. THE BLACK DOOR

An emperor who kept cooking in the palace.

176 The Kurodo, the "Black Door" room, is where the Komatsu Emperor, after he came to the throne, regularly went on doing the humble cooking he had done for amusement when he was still a mere subject, for he had not forgotten it. It is called the Black Door, they say, because it was blackened by the smoke of the imperial firewood.[32]

177. SAWDUST ON THE COURT

Sawdust is praised, but dry sand was the correct precedent.

177 There was once to be a game of kickball at the residence of the Prince of Central Affairs in Kamakura. It had rained, and the garden was not yet dry, and they were discussing what to do. Then Sasaki, the Lay Monk of Oki, presented a great quantity of sawdust that he had loaded onto carts. It was spread over the whole garden, and the mud gave no further trouble. "What rare foresight, to have collected it all!" everyone said in admiration. When someone told this story, Middle Counselor Yoshida remarked, "Was there no provision of dry sand?" and I felt ashamed. The sawdust that had been thought so splendid was a vulgar and irregular expedient. It is established precedent, they say, that the person in charge of the garden arrangements should have dry sand ready.[33]

178. THE SACRED SWORD

A court lady corrects retainers about the regalia.

178 Some retainers of a certain household, having watched the sacred kagura dances at the Naishidokoro, were telling people

32 The Komatsu Emperor is Emperor Kōkō (r. 884–887). The Kurodo was a narrow room in the Seiryōden, the emperor's residential hall.

about it: "So-and-so was carrying the Sacred Sword." Hearing this, one of the ladies inside said quietly, "When His Majesty goes to another hall, it is the sword from the Daytime Chamber that is carried." That was admirable. She was, I am told, a long-serving Assistant Handmaid of the palace.[34]

179. NĀLANDĀ

A monk questions a scholar's claim about an Indian temple.

179 The holy man Dōgen, a monk who had been to Song China, brought back a complete set of the scriptures and installed it at a place called Yakeno, near Rokuhara. He lectured especially on the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, and he named the temple Nālandā. This holy man said: "It has been handed down, as the view of the Gō Governor-General, that the main gate of Nālandā faces north. But this does not appear in the *Record of the Western Regions* or in the *Record of Faxian*; there is no evidence for it anywhere. I wonder on what learning the Governor-General based it. It is doubtful. That the Ximing Temple in China faces north is, of course, beyond question."[35]

180. SAGICHŌ

The New Year burning of mallets.

180 Sagichō is the burning of the mallets used in the ball games of the first month, which are brought out from the Shingon-in to the Shinsen'en and burned. When people chant in their merry-

33 Prince Munetaka, son of Emperor Go-Saga, was shogun in Kamakura (1252–1266) and held the office of Minister of Central Affairs. Kickball (kemari) was a courtly game of keeping a deerskin ball in the air.

34 The Naishidokoro was the palace hall housing the sacred mirror, one of the imperial regalia; the lady's point is that the regalia sword is not the one carried on such occasions.

35 Not the Zen master Dōgen of Eiheiji. The "Gō Governor-General" is the scholar Ōe no Masafusa (1041–1111); Nālandā was the great monastic university of India.

making "at the pond where the dharma is fulfilled," it is the pond of the Shinsen'en they mean.[36]

181. LITTLE SNOW

The words of a children's snow song.

181 "In 'Fure fure koyuki, Tanba no koyuki'—'Fall, fall, little snow, little snow of Tanba'—the snow is called koyuki, 'powder snow,' because it looks like rice that has been pounded and sifted. It ought to be 'tamare koyuki,' 'pile up, little snow,' but people mistakenly say 'of Tanba.' After that one should sing 'on the fences and in the forks of the trees,'" a learned man told me. I wonder whether it has been sung that way since long ago. The diary of the Sanuki no Suke records that Retired Emperor Toba, when he was a small child, said these words while snow was falling.[37]

182. DRIED SALMON

A counselor defends serving dried salmon.

182 Takachika, the Shijō Major Counselor, had dried salmon served at His Majesty's table. Someone said, "Surely such a lowly thing is not to be served to His Majesty." Hearing this, the Major Counselor replied, "If salmon were a fish never served to the emperor, that would be one thing. But what could be wrong with salmon dried plain? Is dried sweetfish not served?"

183. DANGEROUS ANIMALS

Marking animals that gore or bite.

183 An ox that gores people has its horns cut, and a horse that bites people has its ears cut, as a mark. If the owner does not mark them and lets them injure someone, the fault is his. A dog

36 The Shingon-in was the palace hall for esoteric Buddhist rites; the Shinsen'en was an imperial garden whose pond was famous for Kūkai's rain-making rite.
37 The *Sanuki no Suke Diary* was written by a lady-in-waiting at the court of Emperor Horikawa, Toba's father, in the early twelfth century.

that bites people must not be kept. All these are offenses. This is a prohibition of the legal code.

184. THE NUN'S PATCHED SCREENS

Tokiyori's mother repairs screens herself to teach frugality.

184 The mother of Tokiyori, Governor of Sagami, was called the Zen Nun Matsushita. Once, when she was to receive the Governor at her home, the nun was cutting out and repapering, with her own hands and a small knife, only the torn places in the sooty paper sliding screens. Her brother Yoshikage, Vice-Governor of Akita Castle, who was seeing to the preparations that day, said, "Let me take that and have one of my men do the papering.[38] He is a man who knows about such things." "That man will hardly do better work than this old nun," she said, and went on papering one section at a time. Yoshikage spoke again: "It would be far easier to repaper the whole thing. And won't it look unsightly, all patched like that?" "I too intend to repaper them neatly later on. But just for today I mean to leave them like this on purpose. It is so that the young may see and learn that one mends only the torn places and goes on using a thing—so that they will take it to heart." This was truly remarkable. The way of governing the world has frugality as its foundation. She was a woman, yet her heart was in accord with the sages. To have had as her son a man who held the realm, she was indeed, they say, no ordinary person.

185. A CAUTIOUS HORSEMAN

Yasumori refuses horses that move badly.

185 Yasumori of the Jō family, Governor of Mutsu, was a horseman without equal. When a horse was led out for him, if he saw it clear the threshold in one easy leap with its feet together, he would say, "This is a high-spirited horse," and have the saddle

38 Hōjō Tokiyori (1227–1263), regent of the Kamakura shogunate, later the Lay Monk of Saimyōji. Adachi Yoshikage was his maternal uncle.

moved to another. And if it stretched out its legs and struck the threshold, he would say, "This one is dull and will cause an accident," and would not ride it. Would someone who did not know the art be so cautious?[39]

186. RESPECTING HORSES

A horseman's precautions.

186 A horseman named Yoshida said to me: "Every horse is a formidable creature. You must understand that human strength cannot contend with it. Before you ride a horse, first look it over well and learn its strong points and weak points. Next, check whether there is anything unsafe in the bit or the saddle, and if anything troubles you, do not gallop that horse. The one who never forgets these precautions is what we call a horseman. This is a secret of the art."

187. PROFESSIONAL AND AMATEUR

Care and discipline beat talent and self-indulgence.

187 In every art, a professional, even an unskilled one, will always surpass a skilled amateur when the two are set side by side. The difference is that the one is unremitting in his care and never takes things lightly, while the other simply does as he pleases; they are not alike. This holds not only for the arts and their practice: in conduct and attentiveness generally, to be clumsy but careful is the root of gain, and to be clever but self-indulgent is the root of loss.

188. THE MONK WHO NEVER PREACHED

Choose the one thing that matters and give up the rest.

188 A certain man made his son a monk, telling him, "Study, learn the principle of cause and effect, and make preaching your means of earning a living." Following his father's instructions,

39 Adachi Yasumori (1231–1285), son of Yoshikage of section 184.

the son, in order to become a preacher, first learned to ride a horse. He had no palanquin or carriage of his own, and he thought that when he was invited to officiate at a service and they sent a horse to fetch him, it would be mortifying to fall off for want of a firm seat. Next, thinking that if he were offered sake after a service, a monk with no accomplishments at all would leave his patron cold, he learned to sing what are called *sōka*.[40] As he gradually grew proficient in both skills, he wanted all the more to do them well and gave himself to them, and so, with no time left to learn preaching, he grew old. It is not only this monk: people in the world generally are like this. While young, they keep in mind all sorts of plans stretching far into the future—to make their way in everything, to achieve some great calling, to master an art, to pursue learning. Yet they think of life as long and leisurely and keep putting things off, absorbed only in whatever lies immediately before their eyes. So the months and days go by, nothing at all is accomplished, and they grow old. In the end they become masters of nothing, nor do they make of themselves what they had hoped. Age cannot be turned back, and they decline like a wheel rolling down a slope. Therefore, among the things one most wishes to achieve in one's life, one should weigh carefully which matters most, decide on the first, give up all the rest, and devote oneself to that one thing. Even within a single day, a single hour, when many things come up, one should attend to whichever brings even a little more benefit, set the rest aside, and hurry to the important matter. If you cling to everything, resolved to give up nothing, not one thing will be accomplished. It is like a go player who wastes not a single move, gets ahead of his opponent, gives up the small and takes the large. Here, giving up three stones to take ten is easy. Giving up ten to take eleven is hard. One ought to go for the side that is better, even by a single stone; but once it comes to ten, they seem too precious, and it is hard to trade them for stones not many more. A mind that would keep this

40 Sōka, "quick songs," were a popular form of song in the Kamakura period, often performed at banquets.

and take that as well is on the road to failing to get that and losing this too. Suppose someone living in the capital has urgent business in the Eastern Hills and has already arrived there. If it occurs to him that going to the Western Hills would be of greater benefit, he should turn back at the gate and go to the Western Hills. "Since I have come this far, I may as well first speak about this matter. No day has been fixed for it, so I will make up my mind about the Western Hills after I get home"—because one thinks this way, a moment's negligence becomes a lifetime's negligence. This is what one must fear. If you are resolved to accomplish one thing without fail, you must not grieve when other things fall apart, nor be ashamed of people's ridicule. Unless you trade everything else for it, the one great matter will not be accomplished. Once, among a large gathering, someone said, "There are the expressions *masuho no susuki* and *masoho no susuki*. The holy man of Watanabe has received the tradition about them." The monk Tōren, who was present, heard this, and though it was raining, he said, "Do you have a straw raincoat and hat? Lend them to me. I will go to the holy man of Watanabe and learn about that susuki." "That is far too hasty.[41] Wait until the rain stops," people said. "What a foolish thing to say!" he replied. "Does a human life wait for a break in the rain? If I should die, or the holy man pass away, could I go and ask him then?" And he ran out, went off, and learned it—so the story has been handed down, and I find it splendid and rare. "Be quick, and you will achieve results"—so it says, I am told, in the book called the *Analects*. Just as Tōren longed to resolve his doubt about that word, so ought we to think on the one great cause.[42]

41 Susuki is pampas grass, a common subject of poetry; the meaning of the two epithets was a secret poetic tradition. Tōren was a twelfth-century poet-monk.
42 "The one great cause" is the Lotus Sutra's phrase for the purpose for which buddhas appear in the world: liberation from birth and death.

189. NOTHING GOES AS PLANNED

Days, years and lives never go as we expect; only uncertainty is certain.

189 Today you mean to get that thing done, but some other urgent business comes up first and takes up the whole day. The person you are waiting for is held up, and the one you never expected arrives. What you counted on falls through, and only what you never thought of comes off. What looked troublesome passes without trouble, and what should have been easy proves very hard. The way the days go by is nothing like what you had imagined. So it is with the affairs of a year; and so it is, too, over the span of a year. Just when you think your plans all go awry, some things turn out as expected after all, which makes everything all the harder to predict. Only the understanding that nothing is certain is true and never fails.[43]

190. AGAINST MARRIAGE

A man is better without a wife; occasional visits are best.

190 A wife is something a man should not have. I find it admirable to hear, "He has always lived alone." When I hear that someone has become so-and-so's son-in-law, or has taken some woman into his house and is living with her, I think very much less of him. One cannot help guessing, meanly, that he has decided some ordinary woman is wonderful and settled down with her; or, if she is a fine woman, that she must dote on him and watch over him as her own precious Buddha. In short, one is bound to think, "So that is all he amounts to." Worse still is a woman who manages the household—a sad thing. When children come along and are fussed over and doted on, it is dismal. After the husband dies, the sight of her becoming a nun and growing old is unseemly, even after he is gone. Whatever the woman may be

43 The 1903 printing reads "a year" twice; modern editions have "a lifetime" in the second sentence.

like, if you were together morning and night, she would surely become tiresome and hateful. For the woman too it would be an unsettled, in-between state. To live apart and visit from time to time—that might make a relationship that lasts unbroken through the months and years. To drop in casually and stay awhile would surely always feel fresh.

191. NIGHT

Things look finest at night.

[191] People who say that things lose their luster after nightfall are a disappointment. The brilliance, the ornament and the colors of all things are splendid only at night. By day one may well wear plain and sober attire. At night, glittering, showy dress is best. With people's looks too, lamplight makes the handsome more handsome; and a voice heard speaking in the dark, if it is a thoughtful one, is most appealing. Scents too, and the sound of instruments—it is at night that they are most splendid. On a night with nothing special about it, someone who comes to court late in the evening looking neat and fresh is very pleasing. Young people who take notice of one another and watch each other pay no attention to the hour, so it is above all at times when one might be inclined to relax that one wants to be well groomed, making no difference between everyday and formal. It is charming when a fine man washes his hair after dark, or when a woman too, as the night deepens, slips away, takes up a mirror, touches up her face, and comes back out.

192. QUIET VISITS

Visit shrines and temples when no one else does.

[192] It is good to visit the gods and the buddhas on days when no one else goes, and at night.

193. JUDGING OTHERS

People cannot judge what lies outside their own sphere.

193 When an ignorant person sizes up others and thinks he knows the extent of their intelligence, he will never be right. A clumsy fellow who is sharp and skilled only at go sees a wise man who is poor at the game and decides that he falls short of his own intelligence; a master of some craft sees that others do not know his craft and thinks himself superior. This is a great mistake. The monk of scriptural learning and the Zen master of silent realization each measure the other and think the other inferior; both are wrong. What lies outside one's own sphere one should not dispute, nor pronounce upon as right or wrong.

194. HOW PEOPLE TAKE A LIE

The many ways people respond to a lie, all plain to the wise.

194 The eye with which a master sees people cannot err in the slightest. Suppose, for example, someone concocts a lie and deceives people with it. Some, guileless, take it as true and are fooled exactly as they are told. Some believe it too deeply and go on to embellish the lie with elaborate understandings of their own. Some think nothing of it and pay no attention. Some feel a little doubtful and sit pondering, neither believing nor disbelieving. Some, though it does not seem true to them, let it go, thinking, "Since people say so, it may well be so." Some make a show of having worked out all sorts of things, nodding knowingly and smiling, yet understand nothing at all. Some reason it out and think, "Ah, so that is how it is," yet still have their doubts, in case they are mistaken. Some clap their hands and laugh: "There was nothing to it after all." And some have seen through it but do not say they know; in no doubt at all, they pass it by without remark, just like those who know nothing. And some grasp the purpose of the lie from the very start, are not taken in at all, and, of one mind with the person who concocted

it, lend him a hand. Even with a jest among fools, before someone who knows, each of these various understandings will be plain to see, whether in words or in faces. All the more, when an enlightened person looks at us deluded folk, it is like looking at something in the palm of the hand. But one should not extend such guesswork to the buddha-dharma as well.

195. WASHING JIZŌ

A minister, not himself, washes a statue of Jizō in a rice field.

195 Someone was passing along the Koga causeway when he saw a man in a *kosode* and wide *ōkuchi* trousers pushing a wooden statue of Jizō down into the water of a rice paddy and carefully washing it. As he watched, unable to make sense of it, two or three men in hunting robes came up, said, "So here he is," and led the man away. It was the Koga Inner Minister. In ordinary times he was a person of great dignity and distinction.[44]

196. CLEARING THE WAY

The same minister defends a warning cry at a shrine.

196 When the sacred palanquin of Tōdaiji was returning to its seat from the Wakamiya shrine at Tōji, the senior nobles of the Minamoto attended it. This lord, as Commander of the Guards, was clearing the way ahead. The Chancellor of Tsuchimikado asked, "Would it be proper to call out the warning cry before a shrine?" He answered only, "The conduct of the escorts is a matter known to the house that bears arms." Afterwards he said, "This Chancellor has read the *Hokuzanshō*, but he seems not to know the view of the *Saikyūki*. The god has a retinue of evil demons and evil spirits, and because they are to be feared, there is good reason to clear the way all the more at a shrine."[45]

44 The *kosode* and *ōkuchi* are garments normally worn beneath formal court dress. The Koga Inner Minister is usually identified as Minamoto (Koga) Michimoto.
45 "This lord" is the Koga Inner Minister of the preceding section. The *Hokuzanshō* (by Fujiwara no Kintō) and the *Saikyūki* (by Minamoto no Takaakira) are manuals of court ceremony.

197. FIXED QUOTAS

A term for officials of fixed number.

197 The term "fixed-quota" is not used only of monks at the various temples: "fixed-quota palace maids" appear in the *Engishiki*. It is a general term for public servants whose numbers are fixed.[46]

198. NOMINAL OFFICES

Another honorary title.

198 Besides the "nominal assistant governor," there is also such a thing as a "nominal secretary." It is in the *Seiji yōryaku*.[47]

199. RYO AND RITSU

China's modes and Japan's.

199 Gyōsen, Hōin of Yokawa, once told me: "China is a country of *ryo*; it has no *ritsu* tones. Japan is a country of *ritsu* alone; it has no *ryo* tones."[48]

200. TWO BAMBOOS

Which bamboo grows where in the palace.

200 Wu bamboo has narrow leaves; river bamboo has broad ones. The clump near the palace channel is river bamboo; the one planted toward the Jijūden hall is Wu bamboo.[49]

46 The *Engishiki* (927) is a compendium of court regulations. "Fixed-quota" (*jōgaku*) was usually said of monks at officially recognized temples.
47 The "nominal assistant governor" (*yōmei no suke*), an honorary title carrying no duties, is a puzzle familiar from *The Tale of Genji*. The *Seiji yōryaku* is an early-eleventh-century compendium of government practice.
48 *Ryo* and *ritsu* are the two modal systems of court music.
49 Two clumps of bamboo stood in the courtyard of the Seiryōden, the emperor's residential hall.

201. STUPAS OF THE BUDDHA'S ROAD

The order of two markers.

201 Of the stupas called "Ordinary Folk Withdraw" and "Leave Your Carriage," the outer one is "Leave Your Carriage" and the inner one is "Ordinary Folk Withdraw."[50]

202. THE GODLESS MONTH

The tenth month and the gods.

202 Nothing in writing says that because the tenth month is called *kaminazuki*, the month without gods, rites for the gods should be avoided in it. No authoritative text says so either. Still, perhaps it has the name because the various shrines hold no festivals in that month. There is a view that in this month all the gods gather at the Great Shrine of Ise, but there is no authority for that either. If it were so, Ise would surely make it a special festival month, yet there is no such precedent. There are many precedents for imperial visits to shrines in the tenth month. Most of them, however, are inauspicious precedents.

203. HANGING A QUIVER

A lost practice of imperial censure.

203 The practice of hanging a quiver at a place under imperial censure has died out, and no one now knows it. When His Majesty is ill, or generally when the world is in turmoil, a quiver is hung at the Gojō Tenjin shrine. The god Yuki Myōjin at Kurama is also one at whose shrine a quiver was hung. When the quiver carried by a constable of the Imperial Police was hung at someone's house, no one went in or out. After the practice died out, it became the custom in our day to put a seal on the house instead.

50 Markers said to have been set up by King Bimbisāra on the road to Vulture Peak, where the Buddha preached.

204. THE FLOGGING FRAME

A forgotten instrument of punishment.

204 When a criminal is beaten with a rod, he is brought to the flogging frame and tied to it. They say that no one now knows what the frame looks like or how one is brought to it.

205. WRITTEN OATHS

Written oaths have no basis in law.

205 The written oath invoking the Great Master on Mount Hiei was first written by the Sōjō Jie. Written oaths have no standing in law. In the holy reigns of old, no act of government whatever was carried out on the basis of written oaths; it is in recent times that the practice has spread. Also, according to the codes, water and fire are not regarded as subject to pollution, but the vessels that hold them may be.[51]

206. THE OX ON THE DAIS

A minister ignores an omen, and no harm follows.

206 When the Tokudaiji Minister of the Right was Superintendent of the Imperial Police, a council of the Police Office was being held at the middle gate when the ox of the official Akikane broke loose, climbed onto the wooden dais of the Superintendent's seat, and lay there chewing its cud. Everyone said it was a grave portent and that the ox should be sent to a yin-yang diviner. The minister's father, the Chancellor, heard of this and said, "An ox has no judgment. It has legs; where would it not climb? There is no reason to take from a poor, feeble official the wretched ox he happened to come to work with." He had the ox returned to its owner and the mat it had lain on replaced. No misfortune of any

51 The Great Master is Saichō, founder of the Tendai school on Mount Hiei; Jie is the abbot Ryōgen (912–985).

kind followed, so they say. It is said: "If you see a strange thing and do not treat it as strange, the strangeness undoes itself."[52]

207. THE SNAKE MOUND

The same minister has a mound of snakes dug up.

207 When the ground was being leveled to build the Kameyama Palace, a mound was found where countless large snakes lay coiled together. People said they were the gods of the place and reported the matter, and an imperial inquiry came: "What should be done?" Everyone said, "If they have occupied this ground since long ago, they cannot lightly be dug up and thrown away." This minister alone said, "What curse could creatures living on the sovereign's land bring upon the building of an imperial residence? Spirits and gods are not perverse; they will not take offense. Simply dig them all up and throw them away." So the mound was broken up and the snakes were thrown into the Ōi River. No curse whatever followed.[53]

208. TYING A SCROLL

The old way of tying a cord.

208 In tying the cord of a sutra scroll and the like, it is the usual practice to cross it diagonally from above and below and draw the head of the loop out sideways from between the two strands. The Sōjō Kōshun of Kegon'in untied one done that way and had it retied. "This is the fashion of recent days. Quite distasteful," he said. "Done properly, it is simply wound round and round, and the end of the loop is tucked in from top to bottom." He was a man of the old school, one who knew things of this kind.

52 The minister is Tokudaiji Kintaka; his father is the Chancellor Tokudaiji Saneatsu.

53 "This minister" is Tokudaiji Saneatsu of the preceding section. The printing has 皇后 "empress," evidently for 皇居 "imperial residence."

209. REAPING THE WRONG FIELDS

Men sent to do wrong reap every field they pass.

209 A man was disputing someone else's rice field. He lost the suit, and out of spite he sent men off, saying, "Go and reap that field and take the crop." On the way they began by reaping every field they passed. Someone said, "This isn't the field in dispute. Why are you doing this?" The reapers answered, "We have no right to reap that one either, but since we're on our way to do wrong anyway, why not reap wherever we like?" Their reasoning was very amusing.

210. THE CALLING BIRD

What bird the yobukodori is.

210 Of the *yobukodori*, the "calling bird," people say only that it belongs to spring, and nothing records clearly what kind of bird it is. In a certain Shingon text there is a procedure for performing the rite of summoning the soul when the calling bird cries. This bird is the *nue*. In a long poem of the *Man'yōshū* the words run on: "the long spring day when the haze rises..." The *nue* bird, too, seems from this to resemble the calling bird.[54]

211. RELY ON NOTHING

Nothing can be relied on; breadth of mind keeps us whole.

211 Nothing at all is to be relied on. Foolish people rely deeply on things, and so they come to resentment and anger. Do not rely on power: the strong are the first to fall. Do not rely on wealth: it is easily lost in a moment. Do not rely on learning: even Confucius did not meet with his time. Do not rely on virtue: Yan Hui, too, was unfortunate. Do not rely even on your lord's favor: punishment comes swiftly. Do not rely on your servants because

54 The *nue* is probably White's thrush, known for its mournful night call. The *Man'yōshū* poem that begins with spring haze goes on to mention the *nue*.

they obey you: they may turn against you and run off. Do not rely on another person's goodwill: it is sure to change. Do not rely on promises: few are kept in good faith. If we rely neither on ourselves nor on others, we rejoice when things go well and bear no grudge when they go badly. When there is ample room to left and right, nothing obstructs us; when there is distance before and behind, nothing hems us in. When things are cramped, they are crushed and broken. When we use our minds narrowly and rigidly, we clash with things, quarrel and are broken. When we are easy and supple, not a single hair is harmed. Human beings are the spirit of heaven and earth. Heaven and earth have no limits. How should human nature be any different? When it is broad and generous and not confined, joy and anger do not obstruct it, and one is not troubled by things.[55]

212. THE AUTUMN MOON

The autumn moon is beyond compare.

212 The autumn moon is lovely beyond all measure. Anyone who thinks the moon is always like this and cannot tell the difference must be sadly lacking in feeling.

213. TONGS AT THE BRAZIER

When tongs may be used.

213 When putting fire into the brazier in His Majesty's presence, one does not pick it up with tongs. It should be transferred directly from the earthenware vessel. One must therefore take care to stack the charcoal so that it does not roll off. On an imperial visit to Yawata, an attendant in white ritual robes was arranging the charcoal by hand, and a man versed in court precedent said, "On a day when one is dressed in white, there is no harm in using tongs."

55 "The spirit of heaven and earth" echoes the Chinese *Book of Documents*: "Man is the spirit of the ten thousand things."

214. SŌFUREN

The true origins of two musical titles.

214 The piece of music called *Sōfuren* is not named for a woman's longing for a man. It was originally *Sōfuren* in other characters, "the lotus of the minister's residence"; the characters merely sound alike. It is the music from the time when Wang Jian of Jin, as minister, planted lotuses at his house and loved them; from this a minister's residence came to be called the "lotus residence." *Kaikotsu*, likewise, is really *Huihu*. There was a fierce foreign people, the land of the Huihu, the Uighurs. After this people submitted to the Han, they came and performed the music of their own country.[56]

215. A DISH OF MISO

Nobutoki recalls drinking with Tokiyori over a scrap of miso.

215 Taira no Nobutoki, in his old age, told this story of former days: "One evening the Lay Monk of Saimyōji sent for me. I said I would come at once, but I had no proper robe, and while I was fussing about, another messenger arrived: 'Can it be that you have no robe? It is night, so never mind how you look; come quickly.' So I went in a limp old robe, just as I was at home. He came out carrying a sake flask with some earthenware cups and said, 'Drinking this sake alone felt lonely, so I sent for you. But there is nothing to go with it. The household will all be asleep by now. Search everywhere for anything that might do.' So I lit a torch and searched every corner, and on a shelf in the kitchen I found a little earthenware dish with a bit of miso stuck to it. 'This is what I have managed to find,' I said, and he said, 'That will do nicely.' In fine spirits we went through several rounds,

56 As usually written, *Sōfuren* means "longing for one's husband."

and he was thoroughly enjoying himself.[57] That is how things were in those days," he said.

216. A FRUGAL FEAST

Tokiyori visits Ashikaga Yoshiuji.

216 The Lay Monk of Saimyōji, on the occasion of a visit to the Tsurugaoka shrine, first sent a messenger to the Lay Monk Ashikaga, Master of the Left Stables, and then called on him. The entertainment provided was this: with the first round, dried abalone; with the second, shrimp; with the third, rice cakes; and that was all. Present were the host and his wife, and the Sōjō Ryūben, who sat as one of the host's party. "Now, the Ashikaga dyed cloth you give me every year: I have been looking forward to it," said the guest. "It is ready," said the host, and had thirty pieces of variously dyed cloth made up into robes by the women of the house right there before him, and sent them on after him. Someone who saw it at the time was alive until recently, and he told me about it.[58]

217. THE RICH MAN'S RULES

A rich man's rules for wealth, which come down to having no desires.

217 A certain very rich man said: "One should set everything else aside and devote oneself single-mindedly to acquiring wealth. If you are poor, there is no point in living. Only the rich count as people. If you mean to acquire wealth, you must first of all train yourself in the right frame of mind. That frame of mind is nothing other than this: dwell in the thought that human life lasts forever, and never for a moment contemplate impermanence. This is the first precaution. Next, do not satisfy every need. As long as one lives in this world, one's wishes, for oneself and for

57 Nobutoki is Hōjō Nobutoki (1238–1323); the Lay Monk of Saimyōji is Hōjō Tokiyori (1227–1263), regent of the shogunate.
58 The host is Ashikaga Yoshiuji (1189–1255); Ashikaga was famous for its dyed cloth.

others, are without number. If you follow your desires and try to fulfill your wishes, then even with a million coins, they will not stay with you for a moment. Wishes never cease. Wealth comes to an end, and with limited wealth one cannot follow limitless wishes. If a wish stirs in your heart, guard against it firmly and fear it as an evil thought that has come to destroy you, and do not spend even on small needs. Next, if you regard money as a servant to be used, you will never escape poverty. Fear it and revere it as you would a lord or a god, and never put it to use as your servant. Next, even when you meet with humiliation, do not be angry or resentful. Next, be honest and keep your promises firmly. For anyone who holds to these principles and seeks profit, wealth will come as surely as fire goes to what is dry and water flows downhill. When your money piles up and never runs out, then even though you do not indulge in feasting and drinking, music and women, do not adorn your dwelling, and do not fulfill your wishes, your heart will be forever at ease and content." So he said. Now, people seek wealth in order to fulfill their wishes. Money is counted as wealth because it grants wishes. To have wishes and not grant them, to have money and not use it, is exactly the same as being poor. What pleasure is there in that? His rule, it seems, comes down simply to cutting off human desires and not grieving over poverty. Rather than take pleasure in satisfying desires, better to have no wealth at all. For someone suffering from boils, rather than take pleasure in washing them with water, better not to have them. At this point there is no difference between poor and rich. The ultimate stage is the same as the first. Great desire resembles no desire.[59]

218. FOXES BITE

Two incidents of foxes biting people.

218 Foxes do bite people. At the Horikawa mansion, an attendant had his foot bitten by a fox while he slept. At Ninnaji, a lowly

monk was passing in front of the main temple at night when three foxes leaped on him and bit him. He drew his sword to fend them off and stabbed two of the foxes. One he stabbed to death; two got away. The monk was bitten in many places, but came to no harm.

219. THE FIFTH HOLE OF THE FLUTE

Musicians debate a flaw in the flute.

219 The Shijō Middle Counselor once told me: "Tatsuaki is a man of distinction in his art. The other day he came and said, 'It is the height of rashness and most presumptuous of me, but I have privately thought that there is something slightly doubtful about the fifth hole of the transverse flute. The reason is this. The *kan* hole is *hyōjō*, and the *go* hole is *shimomu*; between them *shōzetsu* is left out. The *jō* hole is *sōjō*; next, *fushō* is set aside, and the *shaku* hole is *ōshiki*; after that, *rankei* is set aside, and the *chū* hole is *banshiki*; between the *chū* and the *roku* there is *shinsen*. In this way, between each pair of holes one tone is stolen. Only the *go* hole has no mode between it and the *jō* hole, and yet the holes are spaced equally, so its sound is unpleasant. So when one blows this hole one must always draw the lips back, and if one fails to, it does not match the other instruments. Few people can play it well.'[60] His insight is truly interesting. This is what is meant by 'the elder holds the young in awe.'"[61] Another day, Kagemochi told me: "The *shō* is tuned completely beforehand and held ready, so one simply blows it. The flute is something one goes on tuning as one plays, within the breath itself, so with every hole one adds one's own natural gift to the oral teachings and puts one's whole heart into it; this is not true of the fifth hole alone. Nor can one simply lay down that one must always draw

59 In Tendai doctrine the "first stage" (*risoku*) is that of all beings, who possess buddha-nature only in principle; the "ultimate stage" (*kukyōsoku*) is full buddhahood.

60 *Kan*, *go*, *jō* and so on are the names of the flute's finger holes; *hyōjō*, *ōshiki* and the rest are names of the twelve pitches of court music.

61 From the *Analects*: "The young are to be held in awe."

back. Blown badly, no hole sounds pleasing. A master makes every one of them blend. When the *ryo* and *ritsu* fail to accord with the other instruments, the fault is the player's, not a flaw in the instrument."[62]

220. THE TENNŌJI BELL

A bell that sets the pitch, and the tone of impermanence.

220 When I said, "In everything the provinces are coarse and boorish, but the dance music of Tennōji alone need not feel ashamed beside the capital," a musician of Tennōji told me: "The reason the music of this temple is so well tuned to its standard, and the instruments sound so finely in harmony, better than anywhere else, is that we take as our standard the pitch from the Prince's time, which still exists today. It is the bell in front of the Rokujidō. Its sound is right at the center of *ōshiki*.[63] Since its pitch must rise and fall with cold and heat, we take as our guide the period between the Nirvana Assembly in the second month and the Prince's Memorial Assembly. This is a closely guarded secret. With this one tone we tune every other sound." So he said. In general, the sound of a bell ought to be *ōshiki*. This is the tone of impermanence, the sound of the Hall of Impermanence at the Jetavana monastery. The bell of Saionji was meant to be cast in *ōshiki*, and it was recast many times, but it never came right, until one was sought out from a distant province. The sound of the bell at Hōkongōin is also *ōshiki*.[64]

62 The *shō* is the mouth organ of court music.

63 The Prince is Prince Shōtoku (574–622), founder of Shitennōji (Tennōji) in Naniwa, present-day Osaka.

64 The Nirvana Assembly falls on the fifteenth day of the second month, the memorial for Prince Shōtoku on the twenty-second. At the Jetavana, where the Buddha often stayed, a monk was said to be taken to the Hall of Impermanence to die, and its bells rang at his death.

221. FESTIVAL COSTUMES

Police underlings' costumes have grown extravagant.

221 "In the Kenji and Kōan eras (1275–1288), on festival day the hōmen wore as ornaments horses made from four or five lengths of curious dark-blue cloth, with manes and tails of lamp-wick rush, fixed to hunting robes with spiderwebs drawn on them, and they paraded along telling the meaning of some poem. We saw it all the time, and it seemed to us done with real wit," the old police clerks still say today. Nowadays the ornaments grow more lavish with every passing year, extravagant beyond all measure. They load themselves with all sorts of heavy things and have others hold up their left and right sleeves. They do not even carry their own halberds, and they pant for breath—a truly ugly spectacle.[65]

222. MEMORIAL MERIT

A Pure Land monk's honest answer to an empress.

222 Jōganbō of Takedani once called on Her Majesty Higashi-Nijō-in, and she asked him, "For memorial services for the dead, what brings the greatest merit?" He answered, "The Mantra of Light and the Hōkyōin Dhāraṇī." His disciples said, "Why did you answer that way? Why didn't you say that nothing surpasses the nembutsu?" He replied, "It is our own school, so I very much wished to say so. But I have never come across a sutra passage that clearly teaches that invoking the Name as a memorial offering brings great benefit. If she had asked me further where it says so, what could I have answered? So I relied on what is firmly grounded in scripture and named this mantra and dhāraṇī."[66]

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65 The hōmen were pardoned convicts employed as underlings by the Police Office (kebiishi); at the Kamo Festival they paraded in showy costume. The police clerks (dōshi) were legal officers of the same office.

66 Higashi-Nijō-in: Saionji Kishi (1232–1304), consort of Emperor Go-Fukakusa. Jōganbō was a monk of the Pure Land school.

223. TAZU

The source of a minister's name.

223 The minister known as Tazu no Ōidono had the childhood name Tazu-gimi. It is a mistake to say that this was because he kept cranes.[67]

224. A GARDEN OF FIELDS

A diviner urges Kenkō to turn his garden into fields.

224 The yin-yang master Arimune, a lay monk, came up from Kamakura and paid me a visit. The moment he stepped in, he admonished me: "It is shameful and quite improper that this garden is so uselessly large. One who knows the Way devotes himself to planting. Leave a single narrow path and turn all the rest into fields." Truly, leaving even a little land idle serves no purpose. One should plant things to eat, and medicinal herbs.

225. ORIGINS OF SHIRABYŌSHI

How a women's dance in male dress began.

225 Ō no Hisasuke said: The lay monk Michinori chose the most interesting figures among the dances and taught them to a woman called Iso no Zenji, and had her dance them. She wore a white hunting robe, carried a short sword at her waist, and pulled a court cap down over her hair, so the dance was called "the man's dance." Zenji's daughter, called Shizuka, carried on this art. This is the origin of the shirabyōshi. They sang the founding legends of buddhas and gods. Later Minamoto no Mitsuyuki composed many pieces. There are also some composed

67 Tazu is a poetic word for "crane." The minister is usually identified as Kujō Motoie (1203–1280).

by Retired Emperor Go-Toba, who had them taught to Kamegiku, so they say.[68]

226. THE TALE OF THE HEIKE

How Yukinaga composed the Heike and taught it to a blind reciter.

226 In the time of Retired Emperor Go-Toba, Yukinaga, former governor of Shinano, had a reputation for learning. Summoned to take his turn in a debate before the emperor on the New Yuefu, he forgot two of the virtues in "The Dance of Seven Virtues," and was nicknamed "the Five-Virtue Youth." He took this so bitterly that he gave up scholarship and left the world. The Archbishop Jichin made a practice of keeping by him anyone with a skill, even among the lowest servants, and treating them with kindness; so he took this lay monk of Shinano under his care.[69] This lay monk Yukinaga composed *The Tale of the Heike* and taught it to a blind man named Shōbutsu to recite. He wrote about Mount Hiei with particular grandeur. He knew a great deal about Kurō the Police Lieutenant and wrote about him in detail. About the Kaba Youth he seems not to have known much, and left out many things. As for warriors' affairs and the arts of bow and horse, Shōbutsu, who came from the eastern provinces, asked warriors about them and had Yukinaga write them down. The biwa monks of today imitate the natural voice of that Shōbutsu.[70]

227. HYMNS FOR THE SIX HOURS

The origin of a Pure Land chant.

227 The Hymns for the Six Hours were compiled from sutra passages by a monk named Anraku, a disciple of Saint Hōnen, who

68 Michinori is Fujiwara no Michinori (Shinzei, d. 1159). Shirabyōshi were female dancers in male dress; Shizuka was the lover of Minamoto no Yoshitsune, Kamegiku a favorite of Go-Toba.

69 "The Dance of Seven Virtues" is the first of Bai Juyi's New Yuefu ballads. Jichin is Jien (1155–1225), head of the Tendai school, poet and historian.

used them for his devotions. Later a monk of Uzumasa named Zenkanbō fixed the melodic notation and made them into chant. This was the beginning of the nembutsu of the single thought. It started in the reign of Retired Emperor Go-Saga. The Hymns for the Dharma Service were likewise begun by Zenkanbō.[71]

228. THE SENBON NEMBUTSU

When a rite began.

228 The Śākyamuni nembutsu at Senbon was begun by Saint Nyorin in the Bun'ei era (1264–1275).

229. A DULL BLADE

Good craftsmen use slightly dull tools.

229 A good craftsman, they say, uses a slightly dull blade. Myōkan's knife did not cut very well.[72]

230. THE FOX IN THE PALACE

A fox botches its disguise.

230 There was a goblin in the Gojō palace. The Fujiwara Major Counselor told me: "Some courtiers were playing go in the Black Door chamber when someone lifted the blind and looked in. They turned to see who it was, and there was a fox, crouched like a person, peering in. 'Look, a fox!' they shouted, and it fled in confusion. An unpracticed fox must have botched its transformation."

70 Kurō the Police Lieutenant is Minamoto no Yoshitsune; the Kaba Youth is his half-brother Minamoto no Noriyori.
71 The "single thought" (ichinen) teaching held that a single invocation of Amida suffices for rebirth in the Pure Land.
72 Myōkan was a celebrated sculptor-monk of the eighth century.

231. THE HUNDRED DAYS OF CARP

Contrived graciousness is worse than plain kindness.

231 "The Sono no Bettō, a lay monk, was a carver without equal. At someone's house a splendid carp was brought out, and everyone wished to see the Bettō's carving, but they hesitated, thinking it would be awkward to ask outright. The Bettō, being a man of tact, said, 'Lately I have been carving carp for a hundred days, and I cannot let today lapse. Please, I insist on having this one,' and carved it. People thought this very fitting and charming. When someone told the story to the Lay Chancellor of Kitayama, he said, 'That sort of thing strikes me as extremely tiresome. Had he said, "If there is no one else to carve it, give it to me—I will carve it," that would have been better still. What is all this about a hundred days of carp?' I found that delightful," someone told me—and I find it most delightful.[73] On the whole, plain ease without any cleverness is better than cleverness put on for show. In entertaining guests, too, it is fine to arrange things so that some occasion makes a charming pretext; but simply bringing out the food for no particular reason is best. When giving someone a present, too, to say "I would like you to have this," with no occasion at all, shows true goodwill. To feign reluctance in the hope of being begged for it, or to pass it off as a forfeit in some contest, is tiresome.

232. SHOWING OFF

Young men who display learning or skill lose more than they gain.

232 In all things, one ought to be without learning and without skill. The son of a certain man, not bad-looking, was talking with someone in front of his father and quoted from the histor-

73 The Sono no Bettō is Fujiwara no Motouji (1211–1282), founder of a school of ceremonial cookery; the Lay Chancellor of Kitayama is Saionji Sanekane (1249–1322).

ies. It sounded clever, but I felt that in the presence of his elder he need not have done so.

Again, at someone's house, wanting to hear a biwa monk recite a tale, they sent for a biwa, and one of its frets had come off. "Make one and fit it," someone said, and one of the men there, who seemed presentable enough, asked, "Is there an old ladle handle?" Looking at him, I saw that he had grown his nails long. Long nails are for playing the biwa, perhaps; but for a blind monk's biwa that was hardly called for. Was he trying to show that he understood the art? It made me wince. "A ladle handle is made of what they call himono wood, I believe, and it is no good for that," someone remarked. In the young, even small things make them look good or look bad.

233. SINCERITY

Sincerity, courtesy and few words avoid all faults.

[233] If you wish to be free of all faults, nothing is better than to be sincere in everything, courteous to everyone without distinction, and sparing of words. Men or women, old or young, such people are good; but above all, when someone young and good-looking speaks with propriety, it is unforgettable, and one is drawn to them. All faults come from acting the expert out of familiarity, putting on the air of being at home, and treating others with disdain.

234. ANSWERING PLAINLY

Answer questions plainly and give news clearly.

[234] When someone asks you something, it may be that they are not wholly ignorant of it. But to answer in a way that bewilders them, as though answering plainly would make you look foolish, is not good. Even about what they know, they may be asking because they want to be sure. And why should there not also be people who really do not know? To tell them plainly would sound mature. When someone has not yet heard of a thing, and

you, going by what you know, send them nothing but "What a shocking business about that person!" so that they must write back asking what on earth has happened—that is disagreeable. Even something long common knowledge one may happen to miss; what harm could there be in telling it so clearly that nothing is left in doubt? This sort of thing is what inexperienced people do.

235. THE EMPTY HOUSE

Things fill an empty house or an empty mind.

[235] A house with an owner is not entered at will by idle strangers. Where there is no master, passersby wander in freely, and creatures such as foxes and owls, not kept off by any sign of people, move in as though the place were theirs, and strange shapes such as tree spirits appear. Again, because a mirror has no color or form of its own, every image comes and is reflected in it. If a mirror had color and form, nothing would be reflected. Empty space readily takes things in. That thoughts come floating into our minds one after another just as they please—is it perhaps because there is no such thing as a mind? If the mind had a master, all those many things would not come into our breast.

236. THE BACKWARD LIONS

A holy man weeps at lion statues turned around by children.

[236] In Tanba there is a place called Izumo. The great shrine has been transferred there and splendidly built. The land is held by a certain Shida, I believe, and one autumn he invited Saint Shōkai and many others, saying, "Come along, let us go and worship at Izumo—I'll treat you to rice cakes," and took them there. Each of them worshipped and was deeply moved to faith. The lion and guardian dog in front of the shrine stood turned away from each other, facing backward, and the holy man was deeply impressed. "How wonderful! The way these lions stand is most

unusual. There must be some deep reason," he said, his eyes filling with tears. "Well, gentlemen, don't you notice this remarkable thing? How dull of you." At this they all marveled: "Truly, it is unlike anywhere else. We shall tell of it as a souvenir in the capital," they said. The holy man, eager to know still more, called over a shrine priest who looked mature and well informed and said, "The way the lions of this shrine are placed—surely it follows some tradition. I would very much like to hear about it." "About that, sir—some naughty children did it. It is outrageous," said the priest, and he went up to them, set them back the right way round, and left. So the holy man's tears of admiration went for nothing.

237. PLACING THINGS ON A TRAY

Lengthwise or crosswise.

237 Should things set on a willow-slat tray be placed lengthwise or crosswise? Perhaps it depends on the thing. "Scrolls and the like are placed lengthwise, and a twist of paper is passed between the slats to tie them on. An inkstone too is best placed lengthwise, so that the brush does not roll off," said Lord Sanjō, the Minister of the Right. But the fine calligraphers of the Kadenokōji house never placed anything lengthwise, even casually; they always set things crosswise.[74]

238. SEVEN BOASTS

Kenkō lists seven small things he can boast of.

238 The imperial escort Chikatomo wrote down seven items under the title of things he could boast of. All concerned horsemanship and none was of much account. With that example in mind, I too have seven things to boast of.

Item: I was going about viewing blossoms with a number of people, and near Saishōkōin we saw a man galloping a horse. "If

74 The Kadenokōji house was the line of court calligraphers descended from Fujiwara no Yukinari.

he gallops that horse once more, it will fall and he will be thrown. Watch for a moment," I said, and we stopped. He galloped the horse again. At the point where he reined in, he pulled the horse down, and the rider tumbled into the mud. Everyone was impressed that my words had proved right.

Item: When the present emperor was still crown prince and the Madenokōji residence was his palace, I went on some business to the room where the Horikawa Major Counselor was in attendance. He had the fourth, fifth and sixth scrolls of the *Analects* spread open, and said, "Just now in the palace His Highness wished to see the passage that says, 'I hate purple for usurping vermilion,' and looked through the book but could not find it.[75] He has ordered me to look through it more carefully, and so I am searching." When he said this, I told him, "It is around such-and-such a place in the ninth scroll." "How marvelous!" he said, and took it in to His Highness. Such a thing is commonplace even for children, but people of old would boast grandly of the slightest thing. When Retired Emperor Go-Toba asked Lord Teika whether it would be bad to have both *sode* and *tamoto*, "sleeve" and "sleeve," in one of his poems, Teika replied, "There is the poem, 'Is the flowering plume grass the sleeve of the grasses of the autumn fields, that, putting forth its plumes, it seems a sleeve beckoning?' So what objection could there be?" And of this too he wrote, "To recall the source poem at the right moment is a blessing from the gods of the Way of poetry.[76] It is great good fortune," and so on—he recorded it with much ceremony. In his petition for office, too, Lord Koremichi, the Kujō Chancellor, listed items of no special merit and praised himself.

Item: The inscription for the temple bell of Jōzaikōin was drafted by Lord Arikane. Lord Yukifusa made the fair copy, and it was about to be transferred to the mold when the lay monk in charge took out the draft and showed it to me. It had the line,

75 The present emperor is Go-Daigo, crown prince 1308–1318. The passage is *Analects* 17.18.

76 The poem is in the *Kokinshū* (no. 243), by Ariwara no Muneyana; *tamoto* and *sode* both mean "sleeve."

"Seeing off the evening beyond the blossoms, its voice is heard a hundred li away. The rhymes seem to be of the yang–tang class, so isn't 'a hundred li' a mistake?" I said. "How fortunate that I showed it to you! It will be to my credit," he said, and sent word to the author, who replied, "It was a mistake. Please correct it to 'several lines.'" But what could "several lines" mean either? Perhaps he meant "several paces." I have my doubts.

Item: I went with a number of people on a pilgrimage to the Three Pagodas, and inside the Jōgyōdō at Yokawa there was an old tablet inscribed "Ryūgein."[77] "It has been handed down that there is doubt whether it is by Sukemasa or Yukinari, and the matter has never been settled," the monk of the hall told us with great solemnity. I said, "If it is Yukinari's, there should be an inscription on the back. If it is Sukemasa's, there will be none." The back was thick with dust and insects' nests and unpleasant to look at, but we swept and wiped it clean and all looked, and there, clearly visible, were Yukinari's rank and office, his name and the era date. Everyone was delighted.

Item: When the holy man Dōgen was lecturing at Nālandā, he forgot the Eight Calamities and asked, "Does anyone remember them?" None of his students did; then I spoke up from a curtained alcove, "Are they such-and-such?" and they were greatly impressed.[78] Item: I accompanied the Sōjō Kenjo to watch the consecration of the holy water. Before the rite had ended the Sōjō left, but even outside the guard gate his Sōzu was nowhere to be seen. He sent monks back to look for him, but they said, "There are so many clergy all dressed alike that we could not find him," and they came out only after a long while. "Oh, how vexing! You go and find him," the Sōjō said to me, and I went back in and promptly brought him out.[79] Item: On the fifteenth night of the second month, when the moon was bright, late in

77 In Chinese verse li does not fit the yang–tang rhyme, while xing ("lines") does. The Three Pagodas are the three precincts of Mount Hiei.

78 Fujiwara no Sukemasa and Fujiwara no Yukinari were two of the three great calligraphers of the Heian period.

79 The consecration of holy water (kaji kōzui) was part of the esoteric rites held in the palace at the New Year.

the night I went to the temple at Senbon, entered from the back, and sat listening by myself, my face well hidden. A graceful woman, whose figure and fragrance set her apart from others, made her way in and sat down leaning against my knee, so close that her scent might have passed onto me. Thinking this awkward, I edged away; but she moved close again in the same way, so I got up and left. Later an elderly lady-in-waiting from a certain palace, in the course of some idle chatter, said, "There was a time when we looked down on you as a man utterly without feeling.[80] And there is someone who resents you as heartless." I answered, "I have no idea what you mean," and there the matter ended. What I heard later was this. On that night of the sermon someone in one of the curtained boxes recognized me, dressed up one of the ladies in her service and sent her out, saying, "If the chance is right, he may well say something to you. Come back and tell us how he behaves—it will be fun." It was a scheme to test me, so they say.

239. MOON-VIEWING NIGHTS

Why two nights are best for the moon.

239 The fifteenth night of the eighth month and the thirteenth night of the ninth fall in the lunar lodge Lou. Because this lodge is clear and bright, these are counted fine nights for enjoying the moon.[81]

240. LOVE AND MATCHMAKING

Secret love is moving; arranged matches are dreary.

240 When the seaweed the fisherfolk gather at the Bay of Shinobu is hard to come by, and on Mount Kurabu the watchers are many, the heart that goes to her against all reason—that is what leaves so many moments of feeling, not shallow but moving,

80 The fifteenth of the second month is the anniversary of the Buddha's nirvana, observed with sermons at the Senbon Shakadō.
81 Lou is one of the twenty-eight lunar lodges of Chinese astronomy.

that are hard to forget. If parents and siblings give their consent and he simply brings her home and installs her, it must be quite embarrassing. Or a woman who finds it hard to get by in the world says, "If a stream would invite me," and takes up with wealth, even if it be an unsuitable old monk or some uncouth man from the eastern provinces; the go-between makes each side sound attractive to the other, and brings home a person who does not know her and whom she does not know—how dreary![82] What will they find to say to each other? Only if they can talk together of the bitterness of the months and years, and of the leafy hills they pushed their way through to meet—only then would there be no end of words between them. In general, a match arranged by others is bound to bring much that is unpleasant and disagreeable. Even if she is a fine woman, a man of low rank, ugly and getting on in years, will think, "Would she waste her precious self on such a wretched creature as me?" and will think the less of her; and sitting across from her, he will be ashamed even of his own shadow. That would be dreary indeed. A man who cannot fondly recall, as part of his own life, standing under a hazy moon on a night fragrant with plum blossoms, or making his way through the dew of the palace grounds beneath the dawn sky—such a man had best not take up love at all.

241. THE FULL MOON WANES

Do not put off the Way until one's plans are done.

241 The roundness of the full moon does not stay even for a moment; it soon begins to wane. Someone who pays no attention may not see it change so much in a single night. An illness, too, grows worse without a moment's pause, and the hour of death is already near. Yet while the illness is not yet urgent and one is not yet heading toward death, one is used to thinking that

82 The place names pun: Shinobu suggests secret love, mirume (seaweed) a chance to meet, Kurabu darkness, moru hito the guards. "If a stream would invite me" echoes Ono no Komachi's poem of a floating weed ready to drift wherever the water leads.

things are constant and ordinary, and one thinks, "When I have accomplished many things in this life, then I will practice the Way in peace." Then one falls ill and stands at the gate of death, having accomplished not a single thing one wished for. Helpless, one regrets the idleness of all those months and years, and perhaps vows, "If I recover this time and keep my life, I will work night and day and accomplish this and that without slacking." But soon the illness grows worse, and one ends in confusion, no longer oneself. Such is the way of nearly everyone. Above all, everyone should take this to heart at once. If you mean to turn to the Way only when you have leisure after accomplishing your wishes, your wishes will never come to an end. In a life that is like an illusion, what is there to accomplish? All our wishes are deluded thoughts. When a wish comes to mind, know that the deluded mind is in confusion, and do not do a single thing about it. When one at once casts off all things and turns to the Way, there is no hindrance and nothing to be done, and body and mind are at peace for good.

242. PAIN AND PLEASURE

Fame, desire and taste drive us; better not to seek them.

242 That we are forever driven about by what goes against us and what goes our way is wholly for the sake of pain and pleasure. Pleasure means what we like and love. The pursuit of it never ceases. Of the pleasures we desire, the first is fame. Fame is of two kinds: renown for conduct and renown for talent. The second is sensual desire, the third is taste. Of all wishes, none surpasses these three. They arise from an inverted view of things and bring countless troubles. Better not to seek them.

243. THE FIRST BUDDHA

As a boy, Kenkō asks his father how the first Buddha became a Buddha.

243 When I was eight years old, I asked my father, "What sort of thing is a Buddha?" My father said, "A Buddha is what a person

has become." I asked again, "How does a person become a Buddha?" My father answered, "By following the teaching of a Buddha." I asked again, "Then who taught the Buddha who taught him?" He answered again, "He too became a Buddha by following the teaching of the Buddha before him." I asked again, "And the first Buddha, who began the teaching—how did he become a Buddha?" At that my father laughed and said, "Maybe he fell from the sky, maybe he sprang up out of the earth." "He cornered me with his questions until I could not answer," he told everyone, and was much amused.