

THE DREAM OF AKINOSUKE

In the district called Toichi of Yamato Province, (1) there used to live a goshi named Miyata Akinosuke... [Here I must tell you that in Japanese feudal times there was a privileged class of soldier-farmers,-- free-holders,-- corresponding to the class of yeomen in England; and these were called goshi.]

In Akinosuke's garden there was a great and ancient cedar-tree, under which he was wont to rest on sultry days. One very warm afternoon he was sitting under this tree with two of his friends, fellow-goshi, chatting and drinking wine, when he felt all of a sudden very drowsy,-- so drowsy that he begged his friends to excuse him for taking a nap in their presence. Then he lay down at the foot of the tree, and dreamed this dream:--

He thought that as he was lying there in his garden, he saw a procession, like the train of some great daimyo descending a hill near by, and that he got up to look at it. A very grand procession it proved to be,-- more imposing than anything of the kind which he had ever seen before; and it was advancing toward his dwelling. He observed in the van of it a number of young men richly appareled, who were drawing a great lacquered palace-carriage, or goshoguruma, hung with bright blue silk. When the procession arrived within a short distance of the house it halted; and a richly dressed man -- evidently a person of rank -- advanced from it, approached Akinosuke, bowed to him profoundly, and then said:--

"Honored Sir, you see before you a kerai [vassal] of the Kokuo of Tokoyo. [1] My master, the King, commands me to greet you in his august name, and to place myself wholly at your disposal. He also bids me inform you that he augustly desires your presence at the palace. Be therefore pleased immediately to enter this honorable carriage, which he has sent for your conveyance."

Upon hearing these words Akinosuke wanted to make some fitting reply; but he was too much astonished and embarrassed for speech;-- and in the same moment his will seemed to melt away from him, so that he could only do as the kerai bade him. He entered the carriage; the kerai took a place beside him, and made a signal; the drawers, seizing the silken ropes, turned the great vehicle southward;-- and the journey began.

In a very short time, to Akinosuke's amazement, the carriage stopped in front of a huge two-storied gateway (romon), of a Chinese style, which he had never before seen. Here the kerai dismounted, saying, "I go to announce the honorable arrival,"-- and he disappeared. After some little waiting, Akinosuke saw two noble-looking men, wearing robes of purple silk and high caps of the form indicating lofty rank, come from the gateway. These, after having respectfully saluted him, helped him to descend from the carriage, and led him through the great gate and across a vast garden, to the entrance of a palace whose front appeared to extend, west and east, to a distance of miles. Akinosuke was then shown into a reception-room of wonderful size and splendor. His guides conducted him to the place of honor, and respectfully seated themselves apart; while serving-maids, in costume of ceremony, brought refreshments. When Akinosuke had

