

## **Kikigaki II (204 to 343)**

### **204) Go through hardships in youth.**

“What is a retainer supposed not to do?” I asked. My teacher said, “Drinking too much, boasting, and living in luxury should be avoided. It is not in your misfortune but in your fortune that you should be careful of your behavior. Look around yourself. You will never fail to see such persons being carried away in pride and luxury. Do they not look stupid? On the other hand, those who have seen hardships have fortitude. Therefore, you had better go through trials and tribulations when you are young. If you give up hope in misfortune, there will be little possibility of your being useful in the future.”

### **205) Kakuzo’s martial art and the “Smoke Company”**

When I asked about Kakuzo’s martial art, my teacher said, “Around 1620 there was a man named Kakuzo in charge of the footwear of Nabeshima Ki-un, his master. Kakuzo was good at swordsmanship, so Ki-un trained him in the art of hand-to-hand fighting. After mastering it, Kakuzo named it ‘Kakuzo’s art’ and spread it far and wide. His techniques have been handed down to his students today. It is not so popular as the method authorized by the Shogunate. It is just a local martial art. I have also mastered my own type of martial art. Since it is quite as practical as his, I call it my Kakuzo technique.”

My teacher also said, “The other day I met some close friends and said, ‘Love is perfected by keeping it secret from the beloved as long as you live. To affirm your love in interaction with the beloved is not proper. The essence of love is to be attached to a man without letting him notice it till you die. There is a poem. *‘I want you to know how much I have been thinking of you by seeing the smoke rising from my cremation.’* All of us agreed with this idea and organized a group called the Smoke Company.”

\* The poem does not refer to love between man and woman. It is about love between male partners.

### **206) Taku Mimasaka treats his men coldly on purpose.**

In his old age Taku Mimasaka had been hard on his attendants, so one of them implored him to refrain from it. "I have been treating you harshly on purpose," he said. "It is for my son. I would like all of you to be able to sleep in peace after I die."

If a master treated his retainers coldly some time before his death, they would dislike him for that. When his son inherited the household, they would welcome him with the hope that the new master would be warm-hearted and kind to them. Someone said this is not to be made public.

### **207) Greet people according to their personality, and do not discourage anyone from arguing.**

When you meet someone for discussion, you should greet him appropriately after assessing his personality. If you think him argumentative and nagging, you may flatter him to some extent, and not offend him from the start. A chance will come to you without fail, when you can seize on it and use it in your favor. Do not humiliate him even if you win the argument. You should not make him feel a grudge against you. This is the way to talk to others. I was told this by someone who had listened to a priest.

### **208) Soju-an Temple and the five priests**

The priest Ryo-i came back to Saga from Kaga around 1715. Gyo-jaku, the head priest of Kodon-ji Temple, cleaned and swept Soju-an Temple where the senior priest was supposed to stay.

When the priest Setsumon of Ten-yu-ji Temple presented the priest Kai-on, the former head priest, with a new summer costume, he returned it, saying the new one was too good for him. He asked him to give him old one instead.

A new chapel of Soju-an had been built before the priest Suigan came over. Ryo-i of Kodon-ji Temple adorned the walls with graceful painting by himself.

The hermitage to which Ryo-i later retired had been called Choyo-ken. On April 19, 1712, it was renamed Soju-an.

\* Ryo-i was the 11th head priest of Kodon-ji Temple, the family temple of the lords of

Saga Clan.

- \* Kaga is present-day Ishikawa Prefecture in northern Japan.
- \* Setsumon was probably the 12th head priest of Ten-yu-ji Temple.
- \* Suigan was the 16th head priest of Kodon-ji Temple.

### **209) A prophetic dream**

“A dream is sometimes really prophetic,” said my teacher. “By experiencing dreams in which I was cut to death or killed myself by *seppuku*, I think I have increased my courage by degrees. The dream I had on the night of May 27 was like that, too.”

### **210) Dedicate yourself to your master with wisdom, compassion and bravery.**

What is most needed for a retainer is mental readiness to offer your life for your master. Then you should cultivate in yourself wisdom, compassion, and bravery. It may seem quite impossible to possess these together, but it is not. It is rather easy. To obtain wisdom, you have only to consult those around you. Compassion is formed in yourself by working for the good of others. To endure hardships with clenched teeth makes you brave and courageous. Nothing else is needed. Decent appearance, manners and good handwriting are also required for a retainer. You can develop these by daily practice. To look calm and courageous is the state to aim at. Then you should study your own clan like its history. Hobbies and arts are the last to set your hand to, because they are merely for recreation. In a word, it is not hard to become a good retainer. A useful person today is one possessed with these three merits.

### **211) Check the current before crossing a river.**

A priest said, “You cannot reach the other side of the river unless you know its depths and currents. Otherwise, you will only get drowned halfway.” As he said, if you only try to serve the lord without knowing his likes and dislikes as well as the social situation, you cannot make yourself helpful to him, but might rather ruin yourself as a retainer. It is quite stupid to flatter him in order to gain his favor from the beginning. Take time to make a preliminary inspection of his character, and then serve him in such a way that he will grow fond of you.

### **212) A *samurai* should learn to weave a straw sandal.**

My father was so good at weaving straw sandals. When he engaged a retainer, he would say, 'Can you make straw sandals? If not, you will have to walk barefoot a long way.' He also used to make his attendants to carry a bag of rice when they went more than 4 km away. Then they could rush to the front at once. If you are equipped with a bag of rice, you can cope with immediate needs and think of the next step. He always kept a lot of cotton bags for such an event.

When Taiko Hideyoshi came down to Saga in April 1592, by the northern route, he wore a pair of long straw boots, and carried two swords in crimson scabbards in his belt. Naruse Kokichi added a pair of scarlet sandals on the scabbards when Tokugawa Ieyasu showed his attendants to Taiko Hideyoshi. A spare pair of sandals is the most indispensable item in a battle.

If we were ordered to go right now to Nagasaki to guard the port, we would need ten thousand pairs of sandals or more. We would regret it too late unless we were supplied with enough sandals. Everyone must learn to know how to make straw sandals, because they are used in crossing not only plains but mountains and rivers. Longer sandals are more useful, they say.

- \* Taiko Hideyoshi was a well-known leader in the Warring States period. He put all the country under his control in 1590 and invaded Korea in 1592 and 1597. He died in 1598 aged 61.
- \* Tokugawa Ieyasu was another leader in the Warring States period. After Hideyoshi died, the country was divided into two sides and they fought against each other in 1600. Tokugawa Ieyasu's side was victorious. As the first shogun he established the Tokugawa shogunate in Edo, present-day Tokyo. He died in 1616 aged 74.
- \* Naruse Kokichi was an attendant of Tokugawa Ieyasu.

### **213) Interesting tips for an outing**

A couple of bags of cloves will keep you warm on a cold day. Some years ago Nakano Kazuma had to come back to Saga in cold weather, but thanks to the clove bags in his clothes he did not suffer from the acute cold in spite of his old age.

A unique method to stop bleeding after falling from a horse is to drink a decoction of its droppings!

\* Nakano Kazuma, a well-known samurai of Saga Clan, died in 1699 aged 72.

#### **214) Mental strength is desired.**

A person who flatters is apt to be pushed away, because he has no opinion of his own. We should nurture mental strength.

#### **215) 10 years of self training will make you a reliable retainer.**

You should compliment a mediocre and shy lord on his good points so that he may perform his duty faultlessly. He will gain confidence gradually. On the other hand, if he is clever and strong-minded, you had better make yourself look a bit hard to deal with. Then he will ask himself, 'What will he say if I do this?' To make yourself such a person is pure faithfulness for him. If he thinks all his attendants are servile and easy to deal with, he will become arrogant. Then, however faithfully his attendants behave to him, all their efforts will end in vain. It is regrettable that few notice this. Sagara Kyuma and Harada Kichi-uemon were such types of men. Lord Tsunashige would ask for advice from Harada Kichi-uemon even after he retired from his post, to his gratification.

You may think it impossible to reach that stage but it is not. It can be possible if you exert yourself to the utmost for at least 10 years. I have also had similar experiences. Is it not deplorable to refrain from efforts to make yourself indispensable to the clan? Why not aim at becoming a second Nobukata or Takatomo? If you are neglected by the lord, it is impossible to serve him in any way. You should be aware of this point, and make him take more and more interest in you.

\* Harada Kichi-uemon was an important retainer of the first three lords. He died in 1714 aged 75.

\* Nobukata was a brave retainer of another clan. He was killed in a war in 1547.

\* Takatomo was an administrative retainer trusted by Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, the 5th Shogun. He died in 1714 aged 68.

#### **216) Why should we rush to the site of a fire?**

When a fire breaks out, we should rush to the site at once, not only to put it out but to be aware of misguided people like our opponents and rebels, who try to get the better of us by outrages like arson. We must always be prepared for such crimes. So it is a big mistake not to go to the site of a fire. Of course, all the gates should be closed if there is a fire.

On the day of a religious ceremony, someone stays to guard the house. This is for the same reason. Sometimes evildoers will intrude and cause trouble with guests on sacred days. The guard is required to put down such quarrels or fights on the spot. Many of us know of such incidents in the past, but rarely expect them to happen on the actual day. As a result, we may blunder at the crucial moment.

**217) Prevention is better than cure.**

An admonition or opinion bears no fruit, if it is given after your master has done wrong. It will probably lead to more wrongdoing by him. It is like taking medicine after a disease occurs. You will not catch a disease as long as you take care of your health. To do so is much easier, and better for your health. In the same way, you should admonish or advise your master before he falls into evil ways. It is like prevention against a disease.

**218) A faithful retainer is always wanted.**

If you keep wishing to be of some help to the lord, you will probably be chosen as his retainer some day. He is always looking for faithful men. For example, a lord interested in Noh drama usually wants to find someone who is skilled at it, even if he is a farmer or a commoner. He will engage men who can play the flute or drum well. However, men determined to serve are all the more eagerly sought by him.

Just as those skilled in arts appear to please a lord, he ought to be pleased to see faithful attendants come out. Since olden times, those who occupy their position simply on account of their lineage have not been able to serve the lord very well. On the other hand, some of the most faithful and capable attendants were from families which had been obscure for generations.

**219) A retainer should take his master's guilt on himself and never talk ill of him.**

Once a man happened to know that a mortuary tablet had been carried off by the lord. He came to see me and said, "Do I have to raise the matter with him?" "I understand what you mean." I said. "You alone know about it, and I do not think you should mention it, because the lord will have to return it to the temple if you do so. You might be praised for your timely conduct, but the lord would be criticized. On the other hand, if he failed to return it in spite of your protest, he would be derided as a foolish master. As retainers, we should take our lord's guilt on ourselves. The case of the mortuary tablet will go all right, if you keep silent about it. Some day we will have a chance to return it to the temple." As a result, the man said nothing to the lord.

"The master's guilt sometimes appears in this way," I said to him. "If you keep it secret, some day the time will come when we can put it right. Evil news often emerges from the inside. So we had better not talk ill of the lord among ourselves. Sometimes we say to a family member, "Just between us" but it never fails to spread not only to our neighbors but to other clans, and in the end over the whole country. If a patriarch treats his attendants badly and is not capable in government or accounting, his bad reputation will spread far and wide. We should not relax our guard, even against members of our own family."

## **220) Remember, "Now is the time."**

Always think "Now is the time." Life is a series of such moments. If you are aware of this, nothing will hinder you. You do not have to seek anything else. You have only to live with it in mind. Most people, however, make the mistake of thinking that there is something more important and looking for it.

It is true that you need experience to attain such enlightenment, but once you have obtained that, it will never leave you even if you are not conscious of it. The moment you understand that now is the time to act, it will become easy to live your life, and faithfulness will follow.

## **221) Adapt yourself to the times.**

It is impossible to stop time, because it changes as it flows. To our regret, everything seems to turn worse as time goes. The year is not always springtime, and the day is not always high noon. It is impossible to rewind the present time to a hundred years ago. Remember the good old days are gone forever. What we have to do is make things better, adapting ourselves to the present situation. Many people make the mis-

take of longing for the good old days, without doing anything to improve things. They do not understand that it is impossible to overturn the present world. There are also shallow-minded people who dislike the old customs because they are only familiar with the present ones.

**222) Be faithful to the basic rule.**

When you are engaged in training yourself to become a good retainer, you tend to make a serious mistake. It is because you acquire something suitable earlier than your fellow workers and look down at them. Then you have strayed from the main stream, I should say. You have only to think of your lord and love every routine related to it. Go back to the main stream at once.

However, you do not have to be absolutely rigid from the beginning. It is better to find the main route by trial and error.

**223) Spend your days with the basic principles in mind.**

Nothing else is needed if you spend your days with the basic principles in mind. Always remember these are fidelity, courage, and compassion.

**224) Tips for putting a tag**

To fix a place marker to a book, cut in a triangle the corner from a piece of writing paper and paste it by the corner to the back of the page. When you write a memo of condolence or sympathy, fold the paper in from each side. Normal letters are folded over and over from the left.

\* In those days a letter was written on a sheet of paper from right to left.

**225) Resolution is everything.**

Brave men in the past were somehow eccentric. Because of their abnormal character they could be very gallant and brave. When I asked my teacher about this, he said, "Their strong character sometimes makes them seem violent and rough-mannered. In contrast, modern people are not eccentric at all and lack strong character. They are meek and short of energy. They are better-natured than their forebears, but weaker in



character. You are wrong in thinking that modern men cannot become eccentric enough to rush to the front. Strong character is not needed for eccentric behavior. Resolution alone is what is needed.”

#### **226) It is good to do for the good of lower ranks.**

“It seems to me that we need to learn various things to become a good retainer,” I said. “No, you do not need to,” said my teacher. “It is possible to be a good retainer with just your natural prudence. You have only to follow the teachings of Lord Katsushige. It is not difficult at all. When you perform your duty for the benefit of those of lower rank, it will be good for the lord as well. Inexperienced retainers tend to err by planning new things only for the sake of the lord, neglecting men of lower rank. As a result, they will be embarrassed. That should be regarded as unfaithful conduct, because all the rank and file belong to the lord. On the other hand, the lord has only to be compassionate to his men. Then even a sentence of crucifixion will be accepted as an example of his compassion.”

#### **227) Making preparations as an attendant**

When Gon-no-jo, my adopted son, asked me about making preparations before going to Nagasaki, I said. “I am sorry but cannot give you a satisfactory answer. I have been serving the lord as his direct attendant so far. Everyone else joined in preparations, but I made my pillow alone, because I had only to follow the lord. All the weapons, money and food were close by, so I did not worry about these, either. I could also use equipment from the storeroom, with his permission. Other officials made no complaint. That is how my preparations were made. Of course, I made it a rule to write down the necessary directions for workmen and horses on sheets of paper and pasted them on the wall, but I hardly needed to do anything else, because I was working by side of the lord.”

\* To guard the port of Nagasaki began in 1642.

#### **228) Jocho gave little thought to his family budget.**

When I was serving the lord as an attendant, I did not worry about money at all. If I ran short of food, I asked my colleagues or the senior officials for help. So did Ezoe

Hyobu-zaemon. Some years ago I was told to go up to Edo and back to Saga. I said to a senior adviser, "I am going to Edo and will be there for some time. My family might run short of money. I would like you to see what you can do. I do not mention this from any selfish motive, but because I am going to Edo." My appeal was reported to the lord, and I was allotted some money.

Another time I was ill and ran short of medicine. The doctor told me to take ginseng, but it was so expensive that I could not afford to buy it. Moro-oka Hiko-uemon heard about it, and said, "We can get some for you. Please do not hesitate to ask." So I was able to have it. He said to me, "You have been serving the lord very diligently. We can give you as much ginseng as you need." A retainer has only to devote himself to the lord. Then everything will turn good for him.

- \* Ezo-e Hyobu-zaemon was an important retainer of Nabeshima Naoshige, the father of Saga Clan. He died in 1618.

#### **229) Lord Naoshige's tactics**

Uchida Sho-uemon said, "Lord Naoshige would not disclose his tactics till he was about to rush to the front. Only then would he give his orders and tell us that day's plan." When he was at his deathbed someone asked about his strategy, but he did not say anything about it.

- \* Uchida Sho-uemon was an attendant of Nabeshima Katsushige, the first lord. He was one of the three compilers of the lord's book.

#### **230) All Tokugawa Ieyasu's men were found with their heads toward the enemy.**

Once Tokugawa Ieyasu lost a battle, but soon a rumor spread. "Tokugawa Ieyasu was a great general indeed," everyone said. "All his men killed on the battlefield were found with their heads toward the enemy camp." My teacher said a *samurai's* mental attitude is seen even after his death and that we should be careful not to disgrace ourselves in public."

#### **231) Express your opinion when necessary.**

"Someone said, 'We are really happy because we do not have to go to the front.' How

foolish they are! Life is so short. I would like to expose myself to the scene of a battle at least once. To die on a *tatami* mat is unbearable as a *samurai*. Old time people would always complain of a peaceful situation. To be killed on the front must be the best way of death for a *samurai*.”

If that was said by a bigoted old man, you could treat it lightly because of his old age. But if you keep silent in the company of others, they might think that you agreed with that bragger. In such a case you should respond to him in such a way not to hurt his feelings. You should say, “I do not think so. Modern men may appear to lack spirit because of the peaceful times. When an emergency arises, however, we will stand up, just as people did in the old days. It is impossible to say which is better. Let bygones be bygones. Men of the present day are not necessarily inferior to their forebears just because the world is on the decline.” It is important to express your opinion in a critical situation.

### **232) The last phase is most important.**

Yasuda Ukyo, an attendant to an Imperial Court official, said that at a drinking party it is important that everyone puts down his cup well satisfied. That applies to our life, too. It is important that at the end of a pleasant party the guests feel reluctant to leave. Otherwise, all our pleasant talk during the evening would have been spent in vain. Every encounter we have should end in such a way that others regret having to leave. Let us do our best to make guests feel as if they were visiting us for the first time. We can do that if we make the effort.

\* Yasuda Ukyo was famously fond of drinking. He died aged 46 on June 18, 1710.

### **233) Sincerity is the most important quality for a retainer.**

A retainer can accomplish his duties if he is sincere, though his intention may differ slightly, according to who he serves. If you serve the lord close by, you must take care not to be presumptuous. Such an attitude is disliked by him. If the lord thinks of his retainer as a bit unreliable but cannot replace him with another, that retainer should be regarded as an ideal person to carry out duties for the lord.

You should defer to your colleagues, seniors and peers, as often as possible. If the time comes when they are unable to do their job on account of illness, reassignment or transfer, it will be your turn to volunteer in their place. That is a commendable behav-

ior for a retainer.

Just think which will be better in fidelity. Early promotion is not effective at all, as we see from many past examples. I have been serving the lord since my early days but have never addressed him officiously, by deliberation.

#### **234) Things visible come from invisibility.**

Our body comes into the world from a place where nothing is formed at all. Everything that exists in the world has been brought about for some reason, though its substance is vain. Everything in the world is vain, but it exists as it is. These concepts appear inconsistent, but they are not.

#### **235) Be proud of yourself as the best one in Japan.**

A brave warrior or a boy with good looking should be as proud as the best in Japan. However, in training he should correct any error in himself as soon as he notices it. Otherwise he cannot realize his purpose.

#### **236) Essence of secret love**

There is a poem about love. “*You can see how someone loved you by the smoke after his body is cremated, though he has never confessed his love to you.*” As it is written in this poem, love which is spoken is not deep, but love unspoken is limitless in depth. Even if he asks you if you are attracted to him, you must continue to say, “Not at all.” You take your secret love to the grave. That is the ultimate love.

It may be very roundabout way of getting to the point, but when I discussed it with my colleagues, some of them agreed. So we organized a group and named it the “Smoke Company.”

This, I admit, can be applied to any sphere. For instance, your relation with the lord can be best fulfilled in such a frame of mind. There should be no difference between serving the lord behind his back and doing so in his presence. You should not behave basely in your master’s absence. Even when unseen, you should not harbor mean thoughts about him. Otherwise you will end up looking graceless in public. Any mere pretence will be certain to expose your mean intention.

#### **237) Be alert even in hobbies.**

Harada is fond of composing longer poems, while Nakashima is interested in shorter poetry. They are quite different in personality, too. We should aim high by cultivating our own character. As for poetry, I would like to learn comic poetry.

It seems to me that a *samurai* should not admit that he is weak in anything in public.

\* Nakashima, an attendant of Lord Mitsushige and known as a poet, died in 1718 aged 75.

### **238) Making your point**

Uesugi Kenshin said that he had never thought of winning a battle but tried not to miss any chance. I am really impressed by his words. When we serve our master, we should try to talk to him in the appropriate way any time. A word uttered in error may ruin us. It is the same with our greetings and statements. Let us take care to avoid having to repent not expressing ourselves better at the time.

\* Uesugi Kenshin was a well-known leader in the Warring States period. He died in 1578 aged 48.

### **239) Jocho's secret to good health**

It is no good starting to cure a disease only after you have developed it. It is also annoying. Just as there are priests who talk only of superficial things, so there are not a few physicians who do not mention the importance of prevention. I can say so with confidence, because I have managed to keep myself in good health by abstaining from sex and not overeating. Thanks to my abstinence, I have never had to ask for medical treatment.

I was born when my father was 70 years old. The worried doctor said, "He probably will not reach 20, since he has a weak physique." I thought it regrettable not to be able to serve the lord, so I made up my mind to live long enough to realize my dream. I controlled my sensual desires for 7 long years, during which I caught no disease at all. I have lived long, but I have never taken any medicine. Of course I suffered from cold and other minor illnesses, but drove them away with my will power.

Modern people seem to die young, because they get indulged in sexual pleasure even

if they are born weak. How stupid can they be? I would like to say to doctors that if people in poor health control their desires for six months or a couple of years they will surely recover from their diseases. It is really regrettable that young men are so weak in will power that they cannot control themselves enough to overcome poor health.

**240) Be humble in the company of your seniors and elders.**

We should refrain from talking as if we knew everything in the company of elders and high ranking people. It is unpleasant to hear some people talk loudly in public about scholastic topics, morals and old times.

**241) Be attentive to the last routine**

In Edo and Kyoto, people carry portable lunch boxes on picnics. They are used only for one day. They are thrown away after the party is over. No more bother, is that not a splendid idea? In everything, the last stage is the most important.

**242) Be proud in bravery and attentive to how you should behave.**

A *samurai* cannot be too proud in bravery. He should be ready to be killed at any time, anywhere. He has not only to maintain that determination, but also to be careful in his statement and behavior. To become a good retainer, he should consult his fellows and elders about important matters. Remember, your days should be spent for the good of others as long as you live. There is no need to know anything about financial accounts.

**243) When a colleague is promoted earlier than you**

It may happen that a colleague gets promoted earlier than you. Some men will not worry about such a situation, but devote themselves to their duties as usual. Others will think it unbearable, and find some excuse to resign. It is impossible to say which is better. It depends on time and circumstances.

**244) When the tide rises, so do ships.**

There is a proverb that goes: "As the tide rises, so do ships." In the same way, men of

capacity will perk up whenever they are faced with hardships. They will have a strong desire to overcome obstacles. They are quite different from those who feel things are troublesome.

**245) Your hand-written letter may be hung at the receiver's house.**

When the priest Ryozan was training in Edo, he was told by someone that letters which he wrote might be kept by the recipient. We should bear this in mind when we send letters or other writings, because they may be framed and hung on the wall in the recipient's house. Most of us tend to disgrace ourselves by writing carelessly.

**246) Put yourself above your fellows in behavior, speech and writing.**

A retainer can raise himself above his fellows by his behavior, speech and writing. Good behavior is based on elegant manners. Such a person is worthy of praise. Today some men are distinguished simply because they are good at writing and reading, though not at behavior. Many people seem to make light of these basic skills.

**247) Life is really transient.**

As we walked along my teacher said, "What a fine puppet a man is! He can walk around and jump without being manipulated by strings. He can even talk with his mouth, can he not? How splendidly a man is made! Maybe he will visit, however, from the other world next year at the Bon festival. What a temporary world it is, though many are oblivious of it!"

\* In Buddhism, it is believed that the spirit of a man who passes away will return to his home at the Bon festival in mid-August.

**248) How to judge a cow and a horse**

According to Yagyū, it is despicable to show fear when confronted with a horse or a cow. A cow rarely attacks people. When it does, it takes up an attacking stance. So there is no danger in passing by the beast, unless it adopts that posture. A *samurai* should bear this in mind.

In the past I have often seen a horse kicking. Or rather it was merely stamping the ground. If you keep away from it, you are rarely hit by its legs. Nor will you get kicked even if it steps towards you.

**249) A retainer needs to learn from a good model.**

A retainer needs to learn from a model, but nowadays you rarely come across such models. For appearance and manners, Ishi-i Kuro-ueemon is recommended, and for loyalty Mura-oka Gohey is a good model. In research and writing, Harada Kichi-ueemon is second to none. But I cannot think of any other models for young men. A couple of men together would not match a single model of the past, though it was not so easy to find such men in the past, either. Today young people can become good retainers through effort, to some extent. It is a pity that they pay no attention to this.

**250) Now is the time.**

“Now is the time and the time is now,” I said to my adopted son. “You are mistaken unless you accept these two notions as one. Suppose you are told by the lord to speak about something at this moment. You will be at a loss if you think of them as separate. You will probably have no chance to speak to the lord as long as you live, but since you are a retainer of Saga Clan, you have to practice by yourself how to speak not only to the lord and senior advisers, but also to officials of the Shogun. This applies in every situation. Remember that fighting at the front is the same as speaking to high-ranking officials in public. Thinking of these points, you will come to understand how unprepared you are in your daily practice.”

**251) A *samurai* should not behave in a cowardly manner.**

If you make a mistake in speech or manners at the Shogunate office, it will be put down to a careless mistake through inexperience. However, how could those men make excuse for their own misbehavior in the recent incident? My father used to say that a *samurai* has only to be a man of guts. He said this with such a case in mind, I think. They have clearly missed the opportunity to do the right thing.

At least they should have committed suicide, if they thought it shameful to live on, having disgraced and compromised themselves by their conduct, which will be long remembered. But they failed to do the brave thing at the time. They chose to live



because they thought taking their own lives would be meaningless. But they paid a terribly high price. As long as they live, for another five, ten or twenty years, not only themselves but all their families and relatives will be talked about and criticized for their unworthy behavior. They have stained their ancestors' graves with shame, and their descendants will be blamed for their disgraceful conduct. This happened simply because they never thought about how to behave as a *samurai*. They ought to be punished for spending their days so thoughtlessly.

The man who was killed unexpectedly like that was unfortunate, while the man who killed him did so because of the circumstances. He must have killed his opponent with determination, though he might be thought to have been quick-tempered. However, those two persons should not be called cowards. It was those who were at the scene that were to blame. They were cowards, and not *samurai* at all.

All of us have to bear in mind that now is the time, because things happen unexpectedly. People may say that it is really fortunate to live in peace even if they are careless about their daily life. However, the code of *samurai* does not allow such a lazy idea. Every morning we have to give ourselves up for dead, and picture ourselves being killed on the battlefield. It is not easy to sever our attachment to life, but we can do so with effort.

To speak in good time is also part of a *samurai's* attitude. If they could have stopped the fight by talking to the culprit on the spot, they would have been thought to have done a good job. If the other party was too violent to suppress with a word, then they could have killed him. If the man escaped from the scene, they could have shouted to him, "Stop, coward!" Or they could have spoken to him in some other way. It was a man who stood out from the herd for his guts that took decisive action to kill the man at the scene. Splendidly did he show "Now is the time."

If your lord is put in an emergency, you should be ready promptly. This can be possible simply through your repeated training. There are not a few things you should bear in mind as a retainer. Especially in the case of murder at the castle, the culprit should be killed on the spot, otherwise he might flee into the lord's chamber and commit a more serious crime. At later examination of your conduct, you will be asked if you were in the same group, or if you bore a grudge against the man. Then you should answer, "My only thought was to kill the man. I had no time to deliberate about the penalty."

\* It is impossible to know what sort of incident it was.

**252) Your daily training makes things possible.**

You can perform an excellent job in accordance with your daily training. This was proved by the exploit of Mitani Sen-zaemon's team. The god of warships must have blessed them in their action in an emergency..

**253) Do not lose your composure in public.**

"When you are cut with the sword in the Shogun's palace, keep your presence of mind and do not fight him back," said someone. "Go and report to the officials. Probably you will be forgiven even if you were in the wrong."

When I met the priest Genshin, I asked him about this, "What do you think about enduring humiliation for the prospect of a favor later?" Genshin said, "Go and see the superintendent, either with the other man or by yourself. Say to him, 'I was wounded by him but did not fight back because it was in the Shogun's palace. Think how I felt, enduring such an insulting conduct. I am already prepared to give up my life but came here to report this incident.' If the other party is not sentenced at all, you can kill him as a matter of course because you have already given up your life," said the priest.

**254) Training continues until you breathe your last.**

One day I said to my teacher, "My thoughts about service change from time to time. Once I thought I found the perfect way to behave as an attendant, but soon learned that I should have taken a different tack. If I have written such things down since childhood, they must now amount to over hundred instances. I wonder when I will be able to discover the ideal attitude as a retainer."

To my question the teacher said, "As long as you are so concerned about your behavior, you are on the right road. If you think you have found the secret, you will have made a mistake. Do not forget that your training lasts till you die."

**255) You can work even if you lose your head.**

You can accomplish something even if your head has been cut off. Think of the dying moments of General Nitta Yoshisada. When he was hit in the forehead by an arrow, he cut his head off by himself. He fell down because he was not spirited. On the other

hand, Ono Doken showed splendid service just before his last breath. If only you believe that you can do something, then you can, even in your death. If you decide to take vengeance on your enemy even after your death, you will not die even after your head is cut off!

**256) Instructive words come from the mouth of a man of eminence.**

A man said he noticed that instructive words are uttered by men of eminence. Baser people are greedy and are usually thinking of mean things, while men of high birth are pure at heart so they can compose attractive poems, too. Lower-class folk are not clean in heart, which is why they cannot think of good ideas when writing poetry.

**257) Of a strange dream**

On the night of August 3, 1713, I had a strange dream, in which I was in a hectic situation.

\* "I" refers to Tashiro Tsuramoto, who compiled this book.

**258) None of us can escape death.**

Every person is destined to die some day, whether he is rich or poor, old or young, enlightened or not. It is not that they are unaware of it, but interestingly they think they will be the last to die. They little expect it to happen to them right now. Is that not a pity? When you face it, no means will work. Our life in reality is like a temporary game in a dream. Therefore do not be idle, but prepare yourself for the end. It may come up to you very soon. The sooner you make preparations, the better you will be able to deal with it.

**259) Console your friend in misfortune.**

When someone fell into misfortune unexpectedly, you might console him saying, "I am very sorry for your plight." But this may drive him into a more melancholic mood, contrary to your expectation. In such a case you could say with a look of innocence, "Was it not fortunate that you did not have a worse experience?" Then he may think of his situation from a different angle and find a good way to think about it. There is no

telling what will happen in the world. Let us not hang on to our pleasure or sorrow too long.

#### **260) Be careful of wicked people.**

Wicked people collect scandalous pieces of information about others and take pleasure in spreading them far and wide. They also spread groundless rumors that a certain person was examined for such and such crime and is now confined to his own house. They never fail to make it known to the person himself. If he happens to be sick in bed, these evil men will do even more wrong and say, "Look! He has fallen ill for his crime. He will probably be put to more detailed examination." They will render the poor victim immobile by transmitting the bad news to high ranking officials. They will sneer at the man when he is down, and treat the allegation against him as an accomplished fact. On the other hand, they will try to get promotion for themselves through their trickery. We have often seen such cases in the past. For instance, when I brought back an image of Buddha from Kyoto in 1697, I was accused of committing a serious crime. In 1706 Ishi-i Den-uemon had a drinking party with his friends, and they were criticized in a groundless accusation. It was the same with the two monks who refused appointment as head. Our clan is made up of lots of people, among whom there are sometimes really wicked men. We have to be careful of them.

#### **261) Throughout your life, it is possible to suppress yawning.**

During a meeting in my company, one of the young *samurai* yawned. I said, "Such behavior is really unpleasant to look at. Yawning and sneezing can be controlled at will for as long as you live. They appear when your mind is elsewhere. If you feel like yawning, cover your mouth with your hand. Sneezing can be stopped by pressing your forehead. Many people hold drinking parties, but few do so correctly. A drinking party is a kind of public meeting, to which you should pay attention. To behave well at drinking parties is an important point of etiquette for a retainer, so you should learn it when you are young."

I made a list of about one hundred instances which illustrate how to behave as a retainer. Some more should be added to them.

#### **262) Fastening your belt**

The lord of the Ogi branch clan said, “Our way of fastening the belt is the best in our country.” It was he who actually devised it. None of the other clans fasten it like that.

\* The Ogi branch clan was established in 1617.

### 263) A conspicuous retainer is not a good one.

“A conspicuous retainer is no good,” said Yamasaki Kurando. He is quite correct. The right retainer in the right place is one who is really fond of his post.

It may seem plausible for a man to put forward incomprehensible arguments about everything, to grieve over the uncertainty of life, to prefer living as a hermit, to renounce the world for its dirt and the noise of big cities, or to enjoy literary interests. However, all these things are caused by selfish desire. They long only for a world of serenity and comfort. That may be allowed for monks and hermits. A retainer is not a hermit. If he is inclined to such a world, he might well be called a coward.

To train himself in martial arts requires repeated hard practice for a lengthy period, so he escapes to life of comfort. A retainer devoted to his service will live a splendid life even without scholarship. So will the man who is keenly interested in bringing up his family. On the other hand, if a retainer is strongly interested in meditation in a temple, composing poetry, and living in elegance, he is apt to ruin himself, because he will be torn by the double dealing which they entail. He is not a monk or a retainer, not a court noble or a hermit. He is just ugly looking, is he not?

Some people say that a person should be allowed to take an interest in such pastime as long as it does not interfere with his family affairs. That may be true to some extent, but no one can find time for leisure if he devotes his life to his family. If he has some time to spare for other things, he is not fully engaged in family matters.

Yamasaki Kurando said that a conspicuous retainer is no good. His words carry great weight. When he was working for the clan as a senior adviser, the short form of poetry known as *haiku* was popular among the retainers, but he did not join them. “Enjoy *haiku* after your service is over,” he said to his colleagues, and returned alone. After he retired from his post, however, he immersed himself in composing another short type of poetry called *renga*.

\* Haiku is a 17-syllable poem, which consists 5-7-5 syllables. Matsuo Basho (1664-94) brought it to maturity.

\* Renga is a linked verse, which is composed jointly by more than two persons.

#### **264) Serve your lord with sincerity.**

A retainer can accomplish his duty only with loyalty to the lord. If he is interested in reasoning and artistic hobbies, it never fails to distract his attention from performing his duty. To serve the lord with some artistic technique is not praiseworthy, either. A retainer has only to do his duty with a sincere heart.

Say to yourself, "Without prudence and talent, I am just a country boy, and I know I will be of no use to the lord, and yet I am a servant of his. I do not care whether he treats me generously or cruelly. I do not care whether he remembers me or not. But I know how deeply I am indebted to him for his consideration, so I am ready to serve him with tears of delight." Such a way of thinking is not difficult to keep in mind. Almost anyone is capable of making such a resolution.

But few people share that feeling in our clan. To have such a feeling is very important. A retainer with such frame of mind can be called a retainer of top quality. He can be compared to a man in love. However coldly he is treated, he will think of the other. If he happens to see him, he will be surely determined to give up his life for him willingly. There is no better example than a man's secret love for another. Deepest love lies in the heart of a man who will not reveal it as long as he lives.

He may be moved to tears of joy even when cruelly treated by him. Even after noticing that the other has been false, his longing will not be distinguished, but will go on burning. The relation between the lord and a retainer is similar to this. It is totally different from notions of right and wrong.

The same idea is written in a book by Sogi, a poet in later 15th century.

#### **265) The attitude required for a retainer**

To serve the lord close by requires an attitude both of reserve and of continuous diligent service. In this way, a man will have made himself useful to the lord before he notices it. This is the ideal way to serve, because he is like a family member. But an attendant engaged in administrative affairs is required to do his best, and at the same time to attract admiration of the senior officials.

#### **266) A retainer is impressed by the lord's words.**

I was a lowly retainer of no merit, and could not make myself very useful to the lord

or perform any feat on the battlefields. But since childhood, I had conceived a deep feeling for the lord. I told myself that I was the only retainer of the lord and the only courageous one. As a result, I have never been despised by senior officials or men of fame in the clan. They were very kind to me. I appreciate this, and think it is because I had been so deeply attached to the lord and determined to die for him at any time. As the proverb goes, faith moves mountains. I am so glad, and feel honored to have been publicly acknowledged as retainer of my lord. I also feel really grateful towards the lord's children and senior retainers.

Whether we serve the lord closely or not, all men of the clan ought to think highly of our lords, because we have been serving them generation after generation. In our daily serving, we have to pay particular attention. It is true that promotion and more pay make us happy, but what really moves us is the lord's words. When we are spoken to kindly by the lord, we feel very happy and resolve to give our lives for him at any time.

When I was in Edo, there was a fire and a meeting was held to divide us attendants into sections. The senior advisers recommended me to be in charge of records. Seeing the list, Lord Mitsushige said, "Since he is so young, let him be appointed as one of my attendants." When I was told what the lord had said, I was so moved that I determined to sacrifice my life for him.

When I was in Osaka, I was presented with a quilt and nightwear used by the lord. "I would like to pay you more, but cannot do that now, so let me give you these," he said. "You do not have to say anything to the senior advisers." Then I said to myself, "If this had happened years ago, I would probably have followed my lord to his grave with this quilt." It was so kind and considerate of him to give it to me.

\* In 1661 Lord Mitsushige prohibited his men from committing suicide to follow him to the grave.

## **267) Our lords are the rocks we depend on.**

For a retainer who is allowed to return to his old post after a long absence, it is better that he looks a bit dull. He should also look calm and stable. Saga Clan has been very considerate toward its retainers. We cannot be too thankful to our lords. Thinking of this, there is nothing to worry about being sent away as a *ronin*. A *ronin* in our clan is simply a *samurai* who is required to stay at home. We do not have to leave the domain at all. This relation of ours to our lords is a really considerate system. Even gods and guardians like Buddha, Confucius, and the goddess Amaterasu could not

change our system an inch. We do not mind falling into hell or being punished by the gods, as long as we can serve our lords. We may be blamed for making a serious mistake by neglecting these gods and guardians. However, even Buddha and the gods will not think us in the wrong as long as we are faithful to our lords.

- \* *Ronin* is a measure by which a *samurai* is driven out of the clan. It literally means “wanderer.” In Saga Clan it just meant remaining at one’s home until summoned back.
- \* Amaterasu or the Sun Goddess is the supreme deity of Shintoism.

### **268) Driven out by the host**

One day I accompanied my teacher to see his friend. After some time with him we were going to leave, when the host said, “I would like you to stay till night, but this evening I have an appointment with another guest.” So we left the place hastily. My teacher said it is as if we were driven out after such an excuse.

### **269) Using face powder**

You should carry a packet of face powder with you. You usually look a bit pale after sobering up or waking in the morning, and you should use it then.

### **270) Sagara Kyuma’s clever talk**

A person as great as Sagara Kyuma will seldom appear in the clan hereafter. He looked really wise, and the better you knew him the more you discovered of his wisdom. Since Prince Mitsushige was too dedicated to poetry, he was admonished by his grandfather. He dismissed the prince’s two advisers, who were told to confine themselves to their own homes.

When all the direct attendants of Prince Mitsushige were severely scolded by his grandfather Lord Katsushige, Sagara Kyuma was in the company. He was a young boy and a playmate of the prince’s. He said, “I am quite familiar with Prince Mitsushige’s violent temper. I think his keen interest in poetry helps soften it. He is very smart, but also very short-tempered. So his inclination for poetry will help the longevity of the clan.” He held this opinion as long as he served.

Later Lord Katsushige said, “When I admonished my grandson’s attendants, nobody



said anything. Was that not foolish of them? However, one boy seated at the end of the line looked dauntless and competent.”

**271) News that does not reach the lord can cause discord among subordinates.**

Even if something new is good in itself, we had better refrain from it once in a while. A man who used to belong to Nakano Matabey's team said, “Our master succeeded in organizing us 25 men into a group of expert archers. However, we were told to dissolve it. The 10 best archers were chosen, and integrated into Sawano Shin-ueemon's team, where they impressed Sawano and his old attendants with their high technique. I thought we could repay some of our master's kindness with this. But the rest were reorganized into a troop of gunners, to our dismay. We broke our bows and said in despair, ‘We are not going to touch a gun!’ One of us was supposed to be transferred to another group as a supervisor but everybody refused to be transferred. So I said, ‘I am second to none in archery but am too old. We should not refuse the lord's command, so let me go to the team as a supervisor.’ My offer was accepted, and I no longer wield a bow.”

The man was shedding tears as he told his story. Such news rarely reaches the lord and causes discord among the ordinary *samurai*, though such discord will dissolve in the end because our retainers have always been grateful to the lords.

Lord Naoshige always emphasized solidarity among the retainers. To decide who had performed the most splendid work at the Battle of Arima in 1582, he proposed a ballot. I heard that there was an inspector at each voting station because most retainers were not trusted in such a matter. How on earth could we recognize who had performed superb exploits in the midst of the fighting? All the inspectors had to be men of eminence. Otherwise, who would accept the results of such a poll? There must have been confusion among the *samurai*, too.

When Ishi-i Yashichi-zaemon began talking about the Battle of Arima at the entrance of the Edo residence, Monda Ichiro-zaemon happened to be present. “Tell me who arrived at the enemy camp first,” he said. “Did anyone make it before me?” Ishi-i Yashichi-zaemon said to him, “But you made it by a different route.” In this way, many exploits were not acknowledged, to their great regret.

\* Nakano Matabey was Jocho's uncle, and a superb spearman. He died in 1695

aged 82.

- \* Sawano Shin-uemon was Matabey's fellow retainer.
- \* Ishi-i Yashichi-zaemon was the first *samurai* to arrive at the enemy's camp in the Battle of Arima in 1582. He died in 1660.

#### **272) Check before you visit.**

A man visited someone's house, where he kept on complaining of his lost item attached to his sword. His colleague calmed him down and took him away, because they worried the host might hear of it. Later it turned out that it had been stolen. The criminal was arrested and sentenced.

If you mention such a delicate thing to the host without checking beforehand, and it is not found there, that is really rude toward the host. So you should always know the parts of your swords, and where you keep them, and besides what you would do in case you lost them, before you pay a visit to someone's house.

#### **273) Make polite conversation by judging the atmosphere.**

When you are in a triumphant mood you are likely to talk endlessly. You are so high that you feel as if you were in the sky. Seen from outside, you will look complacent indeed. In such a case you should make up for it with realistic talk later. Then you will feel settled down. When you make your greetings, you should do so by judging the air of the company. Be careful not to hurt anyone's feelings.

If someone runs down your swordsmanship or the clan's government, confront him and refute his argument. You should train yourself in asserting power to deal with such a case.

#### **274) Consult a third person first.**

When you have a decision to make, you should consult a trustworthy person first. Then you can discuss it with others. Otherwise, they will bring a complaint against you. When the matter is important, you had better show it to those with whom you are not very familiar with or who have renounced the world. Their judgment will be fair and not biased, because they have nothing to do with the matter at hand. Do not consult a man in the same team with you, because he will look at the subject with his own interest in mind, and you will have consulted him in vain.

### **275) Of a broad-minded master**

A master of art is likely to be conscious of antagonism towards other masters. A couple of years ago, however, Sachu, a teacher of *renga* poetry, handed over his position to Sho-chin, his rival. For that, he deserves praise.

- \* Sachu was a Shinto priest of Yoga Shrine and was a master poet. He died in 1687 aged 83.
- \* Sho-chin was also a well-known local poet.

### **276) A wind chime is hung to tell the direction of the wind.**

The priest Tan-nen said, “We hang a wind chime not to enjoy its pleasant sound but to see the direction of the wind. You can guard against a fire by it.” He said what he cared most about was fire, as the head priest of a big temple. On windy nights he would walk round the precinct. As long as he lived, he kept a live charcoal in the brazier and placed a lantern and a bundle of fire-kindling at his bedside. “In an emergency everyone is too bewildered to build a fire,” he said.

- \* Tan-nen was the 11th head priest of Koden-ji Temple. He died in 1678. He was very famous for his impressive character.

### **277) Always be ready to be called up.**

You are wrong to think that your home cannot be associated with the battlefield. For then you will not be in time for any unexpected call-up. These often occur in fact. You should be prepared for it at any time. Do not forget that you are a *samurai* even in your own house. Otherwise you cannot be depended upon at the front, either.

### **278) A brave man and a coward**

Usually you cannot tell a brave man from a coward. In an emergency he is recognized.

### **279) Always feel deeply attached to the lord.**

If you are not noticed by the lord, you cannot do good work for him. You will never fail to attract his attention, though, if you keep deeply attached to him. When Lord Mitsushige scolded his men, a stream of curses would fall from his mouth, but I was never abused by him as long as I had been serving him close by.

Prince Tsunashige would often say to me, 'You will abandon me up some day.' I thought he might be right in that judgment. But when Lord Mitsushige breathed his last, the prince would listen to whatever I told him, without any doubt.

### **280) My teacher could not but be moved to tears when he talked of Saga Clan.**

"I am living in the mountains, but if something happens at the castle, I am ready to rush there sooner than anybody," said Jocho. "Whenever I think like this I cannot help shedding tears. I have now given up everything to live here as a hermit, and I feel as if I were a dead man. But I have had the idea of constant readiness, since I started my service at the castle. However hard I try, I cannot get rid of it. If not me, who? I am the only retainer in the clan to think of the lord as deeply as a man can. Even the senior advisers and retainers do not think of him as deeply as I do."

His trembling tearful voice returned again and again. "Whenever I think of my long-cherished concept, I cannot stop weeping. Day or night, it is the same. It is the same whether I am alone or with others. It cannot be helped."

I have sometimes seen the tears in my teacher's eyes when talking about this.

### **281) "Let me shoulder Saga Clan by myself."**

One day I said to Ishida Ittei, "I do not think that our clan will decline at all in the future, because I will be reborn again and again to support it by myself." Ishida said to me, smiling, "How bold you are!" I was about 25 years old then. Later Ishida met the priest Takuhon of Ryu-un-ji Temple and said, "I met quite a character, whom the clan could rely upon absolutely." I was told that by a certain priest.

\* Yamamoto Jocho was 25 years old in 1683.

\* Ryu-un-ji Temple was Jocho's family temple.

### **282) The priest Tan-nen's teaching**

The priest Tan-nen said, "Always be familiar with the local shrine. The god will bless you with good fortune. He is like your parents."

**283) All of us should worship Nippo, the late Lord Naoshige.**

My father used to say, "If anybody born in Saga does not worship Nippo, he ought to be thought deficient in loyalty. Even when he was alive, lots of people prayed to him for their dreams to come true. All their wishes were indeed met."

**284) Jocho prays to the gods for good luck.**

It is said that all the gods dislike things which are impure. As for me, however, I kept worshipping the gods, because I wanted to be blessed with good luck in combat. I prayed to the gods to guide me as I pushed my way through bodies fallen in blood. If there is a god who dislikes prayers made in bloody clothes, I do not have to rely on him. I make my wishes to gods who do not mind blood-soaked prayers.

**285) A word in good time works.**

It is very important to speak out in good time, in a disaster or misfortune. It is the same when you greet a person. In each case you have to make a suitable statement to the other party. Words fit for the situation will never fail to impress him. I have had such experiences. You should keep yourself ready to speak well in any situation, though that is not easy to explain briefly. It is a matter of the heart. I am afraid a man of little sentiment will not understand it.

**286) Jocho goes to the trouble of greeting a priest.**

One day I visited a house with my teacher. When we were talking with the family members, a priest happened to come in. My teacher sitting at the innermost seat rose up and stepped down to the far end to greet the priest, before returning to his seat. This was according to the old custom he was used to.

**287) A group leader should treat his men with care.**

Yamamoto Gon-no-jo, my adopted son, was appointed temporary head of the guards in

charge of Nagasaki Port. So I handed him a list of things to do as leader, such as making necessary preparations as soon as possible and showing his lodging to the laborers. I also wrote that he should entertain his men and treat them with care, because a single word uttered carelessly could make them look down at him. And I added that if he was very earnest in loyalty, he would be appointed permanent leader some day.

**288) Spend your life in enjoyment to your heart's content.**

Life is really short. It is like a dream. Spend your life in enjoyment to your heart's content. How foolish it is to live by doing what you are not interested in! Do not waste it by only suffering. Be careful not to misunderstand what I preach. I have never said this to young people, because it is quite misleading to them. I am fond of taking a nap. Taking advantage of my present situation, I spend my days pleasantly napping here at my hermitage.

**289) Of a prophetic dream**

On the night of December 28, 1713, I had a dream. Talking of dreams, their content seemed to change as I strengthened my resolve. What you bear in your mind appears in your dreams, it seems. Guided by your dreams, you can probably make a fresh start in the world.

**290) Repentance is like spilling water back into a vessel.**

To repent of one's failure is like spilling water back into a vessel. The moment you do it, your sin disappears instantly. I felt sorry when I was told of a man who confessed to stealing someone's item attached to his sword, too late. If he had repented in time, his sin would have vanished right away.

**291) To know yourself is not easy.**

The priest Kai-on said, "If you are clever to some degree, you will probably know the limit of your capacity. You will also believe that you are aware of your faults. As a result you feel confident, but it is quite difficult to know one's own merits and demerits."

**292) A man's capacity is seen in his appearance.**

A man's capacity is seen in his appearance. If you are reserved, it is recognized in your face. Dignity exists in serenity and in taciturnity. It also exists in politeness and courtesy. A man of dignity has glaring eyes and looks imposing with tightly sealed lips. All these features appear in your face. Therefore you must not be absent-minded at any time.

**293) Bad behavior is caused by greed, anger or stupidity.**

Greed, anger and stupidity are reasonably referred to as causes of bad behavior. When something wrong is disclosed, it never fails to be linked to one of those vices. In contrast, good behavior is always associated with wisdom, compassion or bravery.

**294) Basic principles of a retainer**

Yamamoto Goro-zaemon, my teacher's nephew, said, "The basic principles of a retainer cannot change at all, but as time passes they may change slightly. Lords Naoshige and Katsushige had been familiar with everything, so we had only to follow their orders. If we had some questions, we could get answers right away by asking them. They were masters we could get along with. On the other hand, when we have a lord who has little knowledge, we must try to make it as easy as possible for him to govern the clan. That is quite an onerous task, though."

**295) Those who have clawed their way up are worth respecting.**

Nakano Kazuma said, "Some people say that at a tea ceremony we should as far as possible use clean, new items. To use old ones is not fitting. Some maintain that old vessels should be used for their modest appearance. They are all wrong, though. Old utensils are usually used by poor people, but some have been used by great tea masters for their quality and fine shape. They have their own good qualities. It is the same with retainers. Some retainers have risen to their present posts on merit. If you think that ordinary men will not be promoted to high rank, you are quite mistaken. And if you assert that you dislike working with such an upstart, or refuse to accept him as your superior, you are totally wrong. Such a person is to be highly respected for his good qualities or his morality."

**296) Jocho goes for an errand for his father**

When I was an infant, my father would often take me downtown so that I could get used to the atmosphere. At 5 years old I was told to visit his acquaintances on his behalf. At 7 I was made to walk in straw sandals to the family temple about 10 km west of Saga.

**297) Do not be a hanger-on.**

A retainer cannot expect to perform good service unless he is kept at arm's length by the lord, the senior advisers and other important retainers. Remember nothing can be done by a hanger-on.

**298) Too much knowledge can be an obstacle to your service.**

Unless you are familiar with the clan's customs and history, you cannot do good service. However, it sometimes happens that too much knowledge hinders your service. This applies to daily life, too. Be careful.

**299) Dynamic force works on the spot.**

According to the priest Shungaku, it is written in some book that when you shout at someone to stop, if you are absolutely determined, he will stop, cowed by your resolution. Such power can be seen to work even on two men. I think this is an interesting observation. If you cannot change something on the spot, you probably cannot change it ever. If you can exercise authority over two men at an instant, you can make it. If you think that you will solve something some later day, you end up not being able to.

"You can break through an iron wall with your left foot with a yell," said someone. That is also interesting. Toyotomi Hideyoshi seems to have been the only man endowed with such drive in the history of our country.

**300) An honest and sincere retainer is best.**

I know a man who is brazen-faced, clever, and capable. He is a good retainer, too. The other day I said to him, "You do not look graceful, because you have demonstrated



all your cleverness. Why do you not hold back 30 or 40 % of it?" He said, "That is impossible." He would be able to perform his duty well enough, if you flattered him. But you cannot entrust him with work for the lord or the Shogunate, because that requires modesty and courtesy. He is like another of my acquaintances. Both think anything is possible by being quick-witted, but there is no uglier concept. An impertinent person is not easy for his neighbors to like. Nobody will open their mind to such a person. The other person I know was born inept, but is quite helpful as a retainer, due to his honesty.

**301) A retainer who has no favor with high-ranking officials finds it easy to do his work.**

He is not a good retainer who gets on the right side of his superiors by calling on them often. If you are related to a superior official or are given undue favor by him, you will find it quite difficult to express your opinion freely. Even if you accomplish something great by your own efforts, it will be rumored that you achieved it for your relationship or personal contacts. A retainer without any connection is better.

**302) Over-persistence**

If someone is over-persistent about a trifling matter, there must be something he is keeping hidden. He must have some sort of dirty trick. To hear his long-winded excuse, you will become suspicious about him.

**303) Listen to any statement critically.**

When you are at an argument, listen to what the other party says critically, not accepting it without questions. Otherwise you cannot gain the upper hand. When your opponent says something is black, you should think it must be white, and reason it out. Then you can have the advantage over him, because you can see the issue objectively. If you can meet his argument on the spot, you should do so without hurting his feelings. If that is not possible, smooth things over meantime, until you grasp the essence of the matter. Such is the merit of calm judgment. It is different from stop-gaps like mere conjecture and suspicion.

**304) Do not mind starving to death for the lord.**

Once I said to a man, "You are living a moral life and are prudent in every way. I am sure you are superior to most men of the present day in these points. I wish you would endeavor to raise yourself another step upward. It is regrettable for you to remain as you are. You seem to be interested in the arts, but that is regarded as beneath a *samurai*. When you master an art, you will be able to serve the lord with it. However, that means that you serve as master of an art, not as a *samurai*. As you know, it has been said in our clan that art will destroy your life as a *samurai*. That would be a good thing if you are merely a simple foot soldier.

"What I mean by another step upward is becoming a retainer, recognized and selected as a trustworthy *samurai* by senior advisers and retainers. Even if you are a man with a past, you will be forgiven and will be selected by them, unless a more capable retainer is available. Then you can make them listen to your ideas about government of the clan. Even if you are not selected, your sincere concept will never fail to prevail, and you will probably be consulted secretly in an emergency. Then you can teach them a lesson. Is that not more faithful as a *samurai*? It is such a peaceful time now. If someone gets upgraded a little, he will certainly be depended upon. So I would like you to aim at rising one more step."

"Is it possible to achieve that by training?" he said.

"Yes, of course," I said. "It is not hard to surpass your fellows through effort, without bending your backbone. You have only to gain the upper hand of your comrades. Let me teach you a special method of making yourself known for your capability all over the country, within 10 days or so! You are familiar with the priest So and So, are you not? He is feared by everyone for his eloquence, because he is good at taking advantage of others by unexpected reasoning. He also seems to know the knack of impressing his neighbors. Go and see him tomorrow and defeat him in some argument. You can do that by throwing him off balance with your logic. Then everyone will talk of you in astonishment. Unless you beat a prominent enemy, you will not gain a reputation."

"But he is such a clever priest," he said. So I said to him again, "If you are so afraid of him, you cannot perform any great feat. You are a loser from beginning. Is he not a human being like you? You cannot make any progress, unless you are determined to prevent an opponent from advancing. 'Bravery,' 'cleverness,' and 'compassion' as mentioned by Minamoto Yoshitune are worth attention. If you are under 40 years old you have to be brave, clever, and compassionate to perform something great. Those who are over 40 and not recognized by the lord also have to possess those qualities. Otherwise nobody will talk of them at all. Remember that the priest became so popular for his bravery, cleverness and compassion.

“On the other hand, as for the lord and important retainers, you ought not to criticize them in public, even when you find faults with them. Even if they say unreasonable things, you have to accept them as reasonable and praise them in public so that everyone will think highly of them. If you make the people doubtful toward them, you should be criticized as unfaithful. People’s moods are very changeable. If you talk highly of someone, most people will feel attached to him. If you talk ill of another, they will be inclined to think badly of him.

“A few years ago a retainer was told to go and serve in another clan. At such a time he should snap at his superior that he resents him for handing him such a transfer. If he makes excuses not to break his good relationship with the superior, he will only cast doubt on his own sincerity. In the end he will be disappointed by his comrades. Remember that you are a retainer of Saga Clan, even if you have to starve to death. To give up on the lord is the last thing a Saga *samurai* should do. Even if urged by the gods and Buddha, you must not accept such a sweet invitation but had better perish.”

### **305) Be careful of what you say.**

You should be careful not to say anything offensive to others. When the world is in confusion due to some incident, everybody talks about it, with little knowledge. That is no use. It may get you into trouble for what you say. In the worst case, you may be resented for it. In such a situation, it is best to remain at home and enjoy composing poems or something.

### **306) Do not criticize others.**

It is not a good idea to discuss the affairs of others’. To speak well of them is not always good, either. Refrain from your idle talk and mind your own business.

### **307) A man of substance and a man of little consequence**

A man of substance has a dignified bearing. He does not get nervous or excited easily. In contrast, a man of little consequence is fidgety and constantly picking quarrels with his neighbors.

### **308) Life is like a dream.**

It is well said that the world is like a dream. When we have a bad dream, we want it to stop soon, and feel thankful it was only a dream. It is the same with the present world.

**309) Be sincere in performing your work.**

A clever man depends on his cleverness in dealing with his business, whether it is good or bad. He believes that he can solve everything with reasoning, but without sincerity you cannot achieve a good solution.

**310) A good loser and a mean winner**

At a trial there is sometimes a good loser like at a *sumo* bout. A mean victory is not at all a fine thing. A mean winner is worse than a good loser.

**311) Embrace others in compassion.**

A haughty person discriminates against other people, dislikes and treats them with a sense of superiority over them. He lacks compassion. If he treats them with compassion, he will not have to stand in confrontation with them.

**312) A little learning is a dangerous thing.**

A man of superficial knowledge acts as if he knew everything. A really learned man seldom behaves like that. He is reserved in his behavior.

**313) A retainer is possessed by the lord.**

“Modern men look effeminate,” I said to my adopted son. “Everybody talks highly of those who are sociable, amiable, and meek. All are too reserved to venture into a dangerous situation. They seem to be shrunken because they are interested only in defending their domestic property. If you think you must preserve our estate whatever it is, because you are an adopted son, you are tainted with the bad habits of the times. I think quite differently. When I served the clan, I little thought of keeping my property. We retainers belong to our lord. There is no need at all to think of keeping or giving up our possessions. I would feel satisfied even if I was dismissed or ordered to perform

*seppuku*, for nothing is more honorable for a retainer. However, I would not like you to ruin the house in a mean way. We should not be mean, idle, greedy or annoying to others. Otherwise, I do not mind even if you lost our assets any time. Then you could work as a retainer with vigor as if you were armed with a spear.”

**314) Abandon your pride and know your defects.**

If you are not inclined to serve the lord, you are probably too proud, and think of yourself as man of some standing. How deplorable that is! Prudence, art, riches, capacity, and enterprising spirit may be worthy of pride. Since you think you can get ahead in the world because of one of these qualities, you will not ask others for anything, and spend your days idly as long as you live. Men really seem to be destined to grow conceited. Once there was a foolishly proud person in our clan. He said, “I have been able to live a peaceful life because I was an idiot!”

What are you expected to do as an attendant? You have only to think how you can serve the lord with your capacity. Abandon your own pride, know your demerits, and continue to seek how to serve him well. You will not be able to achieve your goal till you breathe your last. That is nothing but the way of living as an attendant.

**315) Do not visit people without making an appointment.**

When you visit someone, it is better to tell him in advance. Otherwise he may be in some difficulty when you call. To visit him in such a situation is not congenial, either. And you should not go to see him, unless you are wanted or invited. There are few bosom friends easy to get along with. Even if you are invited by such friends, you have to be careful of your behavior. If you visit him frequently, you will not be welcome. It is pleasant to do so only once in a while.

Parties to have fun tend to bring about confusion.

When you have a visitor, you should treat him whole-heartedly even if you are busy.

**316) Do not ruin the whole trying to correct a small fault.**

Maeno Suke-zaemon, an administrative retainer of Ikoma Iki-no-kami, the lord of

Sanuki Clan, committed a crime, for which Ikoma Shogen, another retainer, brought a case against him. As a result Suke-zaemon was sentenced to death, while the lord had his feu confiscated and his grant decreased to 10,000 *koku*.

Reading the report I thought that Shogen, the retainer, had been really faithful but had made a big mistake, because his lord's domain was confiscated. If he had not brought such a case, probably the clan would have lasted a couple of years. During that time they might have been able to take steps to cope with the problem. They could have killed Suke-zaemon, after explaining the matter to all the other retainers. Killing him would not have disgraced the clan, either. It would be like killing an ox by trying to train its horn to stand upright, as the proverb goes.

When I met the priest Kai-on, he said, "A few years ago I asked Nabeshima Fushu why he did not join the deliberative council." Fushu said, "There is a way to admonish the lord. If all of us do so by meeting directly, it will be known to many people and they will make gossip that the lord must have committed something wrong. Most lords to some degree lack common decency, because they have been allowed to behave selfishly. However, their defects are not so serious as to diminish the clan. If all the retainers fuss to correct the lord's habits, it will become known to the public eventually, and lead to confiscation. After the discussion ended, nothing has happened to the clan, has it?"

In many cases an admonition is made by an ambitious retainer to perform some feat or by someone controlled by another. But it should be done secretly through a man really trusted by the lord. Unless it is accepted by the lord, you have to keep the lord's error hidden and at the same time raise his popularity among the people of the clan. Regrettably, however, when their opinion is ignored, those who admonish feel disappointed and tend to turn their back on the lord. Some of them even talk ill of the lord in public. What unfaithful retainers they are! Saga Clan has been blessed with some mysterious fortune, because everything that looks bad in the beginning turns out for the best before they notice it. Ours is a wonderful clan indeed.

- \* Ikoma Iki-no-kami was the lord of Sanuki Clan, in present-day northeastern Shikoku. He died in 1659 aged 49.
- \* Nabeshima Fushu was an important retainer known for his bravery. He died in 1696 aged 70.

**317) Too much is as bad as too little.**

Nothing is good when it is overdone. It is the same with conversation, preaching, and instruction. Remember, these can be harmful.

**318) It is difficult to spot a sly retainer.**

When an ambitious person appears among those who flatter the lord, he will try to achieve his desire by deceiving the lord with sneaky tricks. It is not easy to read the true intentions of a sly retainer who has learned how to be the lord's favorite. Oga Yashiro, a notorious treacherous servant of Tokugawa Ieyasu, remained long unexposed due to his cleverness. Such disloyal retainers are often seen among those who are newly employed, while there are few among the native high-ranking retainers.

- \* Oga Yashiro was enlisted as a spy by Takeda Katsuyori, a lord of central Japan. When his deed was found out, Oga was sentenced to death in 1574.

**319) A daughter will disgrace her family name.**

My father used to say, "You should not bring up daughters. They will disgrace their family name after they are married. You had better keep the eldest daughter and send all the others away."

**320) The *samurai* code can be applied to trainee monks.**

One day the priest Eho said, "Nabeshima Aki said that only eccentric *samurai* can achieve great exploits. I quite agree with him, so I have been trying to make myself eccentric."

- \* Eho was the 15th head priest of the Koden-ji Temple. He died in 1705.

**321) The object of the tea ceremony**

Nakano Masatoshi, the administrative retainer, said, "The object of the tea ceremony is to purify your senses by disposing of human desire. The scroll and the flower vase in the room are to be enjoyed with the eyes. The pot of incense is burnt and enjoyed with the nose. The bowl of powdered green tea is enjoyed with the tongue. When you sit

serenely on the *tatami* floor, you feel peaceful and refreshed in mind. I am always conscious of the spirit of the tea ceremony. It is not relaxation for me. I might add that utensils for the tea ceremony are fitting when they are in accordance with your status in society.”

He also said, “A correction was made in the poem about the Japanese plum. ‘*The village in front is covered with deep snow, but blossoms are already seen on several plum trees.*’ However, ‘several plum trees’ was amended to ‘a plum tree’ because the plural was thought to make the scene appear luxurious. A lone plum tree makes it much more impressive.”

\* Nakano Masatoshi was an administrative retainer trusted by Katsushige, the first lord. He died in 1664 aged 62.

### **322) A man’s evil feeling will melt with warm-hearted encouragement.**

Give confidential advice to those who have done wrong, if they have been kind to you or dear to you. You should speak well of them in public, and reject malicious rumors about them. By and by they will become respectable as they mend their ways. Men’s feeling improves if you praise them, and they stop conceiving wicked thoughts. It is important to embrace them with compassion.

### **323) A man’s willpower is like a treasured sword.**

Some maintain that there are two phases to a man’s willpower. One is inside and is not visible. The other is seen in his expression. It will not do, if either one is missing. It is like your treasured sword. You sharpen it and usually put it in the scabbard. Once in a while you should take it out and cut your eyebrow with the blade, before you put it in again. If you draw and brandish it too often, nobody will come near to shake hands with you. On the other hand if you never draw it out, it will become rusty and dull. Thus you are despised by people unless you show your backbone or willpower.

### **324) Smartness alone is not effective enough.**

Smartness alone is not enough to move your work forward. To achieve your task you have to fasten on it with an eagle eye. Do not judge right or wrong, but be quick in action. Discard anything bad, and rush in as quickly as possible. Otherwise you



cannot be called a *samurai*.

### **325) Ishida talks in tears.**

When I was young, Ishida Ittei said to me, "You are a promising young man. I really want you to attend to the affairs of the clan in the future. Bear our clan on your shoulders, though it may be a very heavy burden." His eyes were wet with tears as he talked.

His words went home to my heart. I still cannot forget them, because I had never heard such a thing before. Few would talk like that today. Most elders will tell young men just to behave well and serve the lord diligently, or something like that. Their preaching is stereotyped and quite different from what Ishida Ittei told me. I doubt that anyone would address a young man as he did to me. More's the pity!

### **326) There are several ways to deal with a problem.**

Some men take others to court for a grudge, but in many cases they can solve the dispute without such extravagant means. One day a man came across another on a bridge. Neither would step aside for the other to pass by, as they shouted he would kill his opponent with his sword. A radish peddler happened to pass and made himself an instant mediator for them. What do you think he did? He put one man in one bamboo basket hanging from his yoke and the other in the other basket. Then he turned round and dropped each of them off, so they could walk away without brandishing their swords. So there are several ways to deal with a problem. This incident is a good example of service to the lord. All retainers are precious to the clan, so we should not let them be killed easily or fall into discord.

Some years ago in Kyoto a man named Genzo, while under the influence of rice wine, complained to Ejima Shobey. He would always turn quarrelsome when he drank. The next morning Shobey went to Genzo's house to get revenge on him. Hearing of this, Motomura Bu-uemon came to calm him down, and took him back home.

He then came to my house to consult on the matter. While we were discussing it, Genzo came to see me. "Is Shobey not here?" he said. "He came to my house but my attendant did not tell me anything about it. So I came here to make sure." He said he was going to Shobey's house. I calmed him down and said, "Do not storm into his house to make a fight, Genzo. Let me have a talk with him and tell you what he thinks about you. Leave it to me."

I called Shobey to my house and asked him about the incident. "He criticized me in public for my behavior," he said. "It did not sound as if he was just giving me advice. I am sure he did it on purpose to humiliate me, because he dislikes me. So I rushed to his house to get it from the horse's mouth. I wanted to know the reason why he hates me."

"Now I understand what you mean," I said. "But I do not think he feels any grudge against you. He has a bad habit of complaining about everyone when he gets drunk. Nagayama Rokuro's bad habit is to draw his sword too easily. Everybody has some bad habit. It is not very reasonable to take seriously what others say under the influence of alcohol, is it? What a waste it would be, if we lost two faithful retainers as a result of such a trivial quarrel! How could you say you were faithful if the lord lost two retainers at the same time? You are among the lord's faithful retainers. Do you not have a duty to repay his kindness? I will not make you lose face, Shobey. Wait till I see Genzo. Then I will tell you what he thinks about you."

After Shobey returned home, I told Genzo what Shobey said. "I do not remember anything about last night," he said. "And of course I have no grudge against him." "Then I will tell him about your behavior last night," I said. "I will tell him it was rude to pick a quarrel with you, his superior, but he is young. Let me tell him strictly to repent his behavior and not to repeat it." Then I told him to go home, while I explained to Shobey about what we discussed, to which he consented.

Soon, however, Shobey told me that he wished to resign as an official in the accounting section. I entreated him not to, but he asked Kitajima Jin-zaemon to arrange for him to be transferred to some other post in Saga. Kitajima asked Kimura Bu-uemon about it, and he came to see me again. I told him to contact Kitajima Jin-zaemon and ask him not to take any steps about Shobey's request. At the same time, I called Shobey again and asked why he wanted to go back to Saga. "I do not think I can get along with him at all, so please let me go back to Saga," he said.

"I can assure you that you can be good friends with him again," I said. "Think well. If you return to Saga, everyone will say that you were transferred on account of your trouble with Genzo while he was under the influence of alcohol. They know that you also like wine, so you may find it hard to work in Saga. It will be the same with Genzo, too. Why not wait for a while before you make your decision?" He agreed reluctantly. From then, I told him again and again to make up with Genzo. "But what does he think about making up with me? I do not think his heart will soften," he said.

"Let me tell you how to solve it," I said. "Say to yourself that you have been in the wrong. Admit that it was so rude to use abusive language to your superior, and make

up your mind to do your best for him while you serve him. Then it will get through to him, and you will be reconciled all right. You also turn nasty when you drink. Repent it, and stop drinking.” Shobey stopped drinking and soon had a talk with Genzo, who said, “I am quite impressed with your determination. I am ashamed of my behavior last time. I will not send you away as long as I work here.” Since then their relationship greatly improved. When Genzo was transferred, he recommended Shobey for promotion to another post.

Thus it is possible to find a way to make full use of a man’s talent by putting the right man in the right place. If a man says anything irritating to you at a drinking party or a meeting, you should respond to him in a proper way. It is foolish to get too excited to say anything in return. Do not say in irritation that you will kill the other person or something like that. You will never save face that way. When someone calls you a fool, return your unyielding blow of ‘stupid.’

Shobey would not have felt so offended and humiliated, if he had said to Genzo, “I appreciate your opinion but would like to postpone this topic to some other day. Your words make me feel humiliated in public. If you criticize me like this, I must say that you are also to blame to some extent. What we say under the influence of alcohol can cause trouble later. So let me listen to you when you are not drunk. Now accept a cup of wine from me.” If Genzo had then responded to Shobey with more abusive answer, he could have responded to him with a proper retort. Remember that a drunkard will rarely try to pick a quarrel with a usually serious person.

A few years ago it happened one night at the castle, when a man said to his colleague jokingly, “You are like a hanging tree!” The colleague was really offended with his remark and was about to kill him with his sword. Yamamoto Goro-zaemon and Naridomi Kurando, who happened on duty that night, rushed to the scene and intervened between them. They made the troublemaker apologize on the spot. The man should have said in retort, “It is you who are the stake!” Then nothing would have happened. If you cannot respond to a man who uses abusive language, you deserve to be called a coward. Remember, at any time, make a proper response on the spot.

- \* Ejima Shobey was a *samurai* of Saga Clan but nothing is known about him.
- \* Genzo was a Sagas *samurai*, who died in 1715 aged 72.
- \* Motomura Bu-uemon was a superior of Ejima Shobey.
- \* Nagayama Rokuro was a Saga *samurai*, who died in 1685 aged 54.
- \* Kitajima Jin-zaemon was a Saga *samurai*, who died in 1717.
- \* Naridomi Kurando was a Sagas *samurai*, who died in 1696 aged 56.

### **327) Smooth words make smooth ways.**

When I heard that Ushijima Genzo was to be investigated for something, I secretly went to see a man and asked him to clear his room of people. “What will he be accused of?” I asked. “Fortunately I am back in Saga now. I cannot go up to Kyoto without hearing something about him. I know it is impolite, but I cannot help asking about his case. Would you please tell me about it?” I asked him in such a way that he could not refuse to tell me about it.

“He has been using some things for his own purposes, though they belong to the residence,” he said. “And he sometimes went out for pleasure with his maidservants and drank rice wine with them. His conduct was reported by the superintendent.”

“I am relieved to hear that,” I said. “It is nothing to worry about. He cannot have used the things for his own purposes, because he has acquired all he needs during his stay in Kyoto for several years. You probably saw that with your own eyes, when you went up to Kyoto. We sometimes have to borrow things when we are short of them for a party with thirty to forty guests. That is not for a private use but for a public gathering. At the Kyoto residence we sometimes have to go out for business with Shogunate officials or with Imperial family members. When we have a business meeting with creditors or with members of other clans, we cannot accomplish anything unless we visit a tea house or a theater. Regarding the maidservants, I think you already know that the officials at the Kyoto residence employ not only male servants and messengers but also maidservants. It is true that Genzo is fond of alcohol, but he liked it long before he went up to Kyoto, and he behaves well at drinking parties. Considering these facts, I do not think you have to regard his behavior as serious enough for investigation. Probably the superintendent made his report because he was a newly appointed official, and he thought Genzo’s conduct was against the regulations of the clan. That is quite understandable, but the officials at the Kyoto residence cannot perform their duties unless they behave with some flexibility.” As a result, the complaint against Genzo went no further.

### **328) People often know little of what is under their noses.**

When a priest was sentenced to exile from his temple, I said to him, “Hide yourself somewhere till you are summoned back. Then you will see a new situation. As long as you remain in Saga, everybody will blame you. If you are told to leave by the lord,

everything will be wiped away.”

However, the priest remained at Koden-ji Temple, which was reported to the lord, so I was told to speak to him on behalf of the lord. “The lord ordered that you should never come back to Saga,” I said to him. “Reflect on what you are doing.”

Then I left him. The priest seemed not to know himself at all, though he had been preaching at us.

### **329) A *samurai* should respond to any situation properly.**

Several young attendants of the lord were sailing one night, when their boat collided with another. Some of the other crew jumped onto their boat and demanded the anchor, according to custom. The lord’s attendants were offended by their extraordinary request and shouted in an angry voice, “That might apply to you sailors, but we are *samurai*. It does not apply to us, for certain. If you do not stop your request, we will throw all of you into the sea!” Terrified by their threatening attitude, all the sailors ran for their lives.

In such a situation a *samurai* should respond in the proper way. If the other side is not too threatening, you only need to shout at them. To adopt extraordinary means in a trivial situation will only make you late for your business and ruin everything.

### **330) There is a way to control bad news.**

A man met his team leader for a statement of accounts and said, “We cannot make the account balance, but we should not make the man in charge commit suicide for this. If you do not mind, would you make up the imbalance instead?” He agreed with the proposal and paid the balance for the man, thus solving the problem. There is a way to keep bad news secret from others.

### **331) Always try to spread the good name of the lord in the domain.**

When you utter the word “admonish,” you have already put your personal feeling into it, according to Nakano Shogen. He used to say that admonishing was impossible. He had never admonished the lord with reasoned argument, though he made every effort to get the lord to understand what he reported.

Nakano Kazuma Masatoshi never went to see the lord with the intention of giving his opinion, either. Whenever he got the chance, he reported to the lord in secret what he

thought necessary, so the lord could understand it each time. As a result, none of the lord's mistakes got about.

Talking to the lord face to face with logic is mostly done to satisfy one's own desire. The man may appear faithful, but the lord will lose face, if such conduct leaks out. So it is not faithful at all. If the lord does not accept the man's advice, his bad news will become known to the public and it will damage the name of the lord. That will be worse than not saying anything to the lord, while in the common view the man will be thought faithful.

If your opinion was not accepted by the lord even when given in secret, you should think that you were not equal to the task. Then you must work hard so that the lord's error may not be known outside the castle. At the same time you had better keep trying to talk to the lord in confidence. Some day he will listen to your counsel. If he does not accept your proposal and his misbehavior does not stop, you have to stand by him and spread his good name among the people, instead.

### **332) Even the most evil person could be reformed by your resolution.**

As a retainer you must vow to make every effort for the whole clan to live in obedience, not to commit any crime in serving the lord, and live in security. Like I-in, the great leader of ancient China, you must become as faithful and compassionate as possible.

It is far more difficult to get rid of the bad habits of others than to remove your own defects. First, you should make yourself loved and trusted not only by everyone around you but those who are not familiar with you. It is easier to accept advices from congenial friends, as I have experienced myself.

When you give some suggestion or opinion to a friend, there are good ways to do so. Talk to him as befits his personality, or begin by discussing his interests. He will not listen to you, if you merely point out his defects. Who will feel delighted when you criticize him? Say to him, "I cannot cure my bad habit, so I made a wish to the gods. You are a man I trust. Please give me your advice." He will probably say, "It is the same with me." "Really? Then why not join me in reforming ourselves?" you can say. Then your heart will touch his and his bad habit will be reformed in time.

The moment you resolve, all your sins will vanish. Make up your mind to reform even the worst sinners by your own endeavor. The more wicked they are, the more

sympathetic you will feel toward them. Everyone will be reformed by your approach. If you cannot achieve this, it is probably because you are mistaken in your method or you have not made enough effort.

I was asked by the grandfather of a boy to train him because he was not popular among his friends and had a perverse nature. Since then I have been praying for him, not giving up on him as an idiot. A man's true mind is heard by the gods, they say. I hope my prayers will be heard by them in future. This is my lifelong wish.

So far I have been especially kind to those who are not popular in the clan. Several people I know are notorious, but I have not given them up. Whenever I see my neighbors, I say, "They are actually very attached to the lord, though they are a bit sly." I hope people around them will come to think well of them in the time to come. Everyone has his good points. You should try to encourage them by neglecting their weaknesses. I hope they will reflect on their deeds and make themselves useful to the clan.

I made an agreement with some of my close friends. "Our lord will pass away before long," I said. "I am determined then to renounce the world by shaving my head, as we are not allowed to follow him to the grave. By so doing, I would like to give a lesson to the fifty or sixty attendants who are senior to me. Since I have always been scolded by them, that may seem unreasonable, but is it not suitable behavior as a faithful attendant? I am sure it will help men of minor rank to surpass all other retainers, and at the same time raise the name of the lord. Let us serve the lord with such determination." "I would kill a newly employed retainer, if he behaved intrusively!" said someone. "You are wrong," I said to him. "They are only the lord's slaves. They will be disposed of sooner or later. Do you not understand? We are supposed to act for the good of the lord in a couple of years. What good lies in picking a fight with such fellows?" I was able to keep them in check, and we agreed that we should get along with one another and do our best so that others would be promoted.

To my great delight, they all agreed, and I managed to recruit scores of trustworthy men from foot soldiers to retainers. At my voice they would give up their lives for the lord at any time and help me when needed.

If a man's behavior shows any improvement, you should nurture it by praising and encouraging him. He will then try even harder by overcoming his deficiencies.

**333) You can certainly surpass your peers.**

You cannot achieve great work if you lose your temper easily. If you are determined to continue with your work however long it takes, you can probably complete it quite quickly. Time is on your side. Think fifteen years ahead. Everything will have changed by then, though according to a book called "Our Future," it will not have much changed from the present. Most of the faithful men now alive will have passed over in fifteen years. Only half of those who are now young men will still be alive. As time passes, the value of men will also go down, just as gold will be replaced by silver. When silver runs out, copper will be highly valued. So with effort your dreams can be fulfilled in fifteen years or so. It seems long, but it will pass quickly. If you keep good health, you will certainly succeed. It may be really hard to outdo colleagues now because many are capable, but in fifteen years you will have few rivals, so it will be easy to surpass them.

**334) You can always reform others.**

It is possible to cure someone's bad habit if you tackle it squarely. When you adopt a son, you can bring him up to follow your example. You can do so by earnestly preaching at him to follow you.

**335) You should not abhor the evil deeds of others'.**

When wicked retainers appear or the lord governs inefficiently, most people become lazy, just yawning, and hardly working for the clan. They gossip about this and that as if they are enjoying themselves. What you should do in such a time is hold your tongue. You should consider how the lord would behave under such a situation. All the retainers are required to work for the clan earnestly at such a time, are they not?

Clans with a long history will not collapse within ten years or so, even if wicked retainers appear. But if such turbulence continues more than twenty years, they will perish. So you should draw up plans to rebuild the government of the clan within ten years or so. If the clan's misgovernment is left as it is, nobody will do anything for the lord. Then bad rumors about the lord will spread all over the clan and neighboring clans, like water leaking from a bamboo basket. Within ten years or so the clan will fall into great difficulty. Bad rumors will usually leak from inside the clan, destroying it in the end.



It is good not to abhor the sins of others. If you do so, you will be surrounded by harmful enemies. Make wicked people come to trust you, and you can gradually reform their bad points.

**336) Your heart is your best judge.**

If you have sheer force of will, your speech and action will not violate the *samurai* code. Those around will praise you for that. However, when you ask yourself about your attitude, you might not get the correct answer. “*What will you answer if asked by your own heart?*” The latter half of the well-known poem is a really good example to reflect upon.

\* The poem appears in the anthology “Gosen-wakashu” compiled in the 10th century.

**337) Listen to what the elderly say with care.**

When an elderly person talks to you, you should listen to him respectfully, even if you already know what he will say. After listening to the same story lots of times, it may suddenly make sense. Then you will be deeply impressed by it. It is not the idle talk of the elderly which works, but the pieces of wisdom uttered by them.

**338) There is a time to disobey your lord’s command.**

Depending on circumstances, you have to disobey the lord’s command or forgo the goodwill of others, in order to carry out your duty as a retainer. You cannot go astray, as long as you are armed with the resolve to be faithful to the lord.

An attendant of the lord’s wife did not shave his head when the lady died, because he had been told not to do so by the lord. But all the men who had been sent to accompany the lady by her father, the lord of another clan, did shave their heads. As a result, the attendant was obliged to shave his head. In such a circumstance you should neglect the master’s command, even if the lord or high ranking officials know nothing about your behavior.

Years ago when Lady Denko-in passed away, six attendants followed her to the grave. In 1582 Yatsunami Musashi made up his mind to take his own life in case the bride of his master’s should pass away.

Since it involved the lord's honor, the attendant should have declared that he would disobey the command from his master.

- \* Lady Denko-in was the eldest daughter of the first lord of Saga Clan. She died in 1635 at 29 years old.
- \* Yatsunami Musashi was a *samurai* sent by his own lord to meet his bride.

### **339) There is no clan as good as ours.**

Once in a while someone pays a visit to this hamlet in the mountains. When I ask them about the town, everybody says that all are enjoying good government and our clan is getting along with the Shogunate. What a blessing it is! There is no clan as good as ours. Even if something bad happens in the future, it will never fail to withstand it. This is probably because the clan government has been carried out with the blessing of our ancestors.

### **340) Saga *samurai* are not allowed to leave the domain.**

One day a man dismissed from his post said to me, "A *ronin* of Saga is not allowed to go outside the domain. Nor is he given any salary. If we were allowed to go to other domains, we could find a way to live on at least. We would have to think of committing some offence."

"You should thank the lord for your situation," I said. "The lord dismissed you from your post, but you should accept it as his intention. He thinks highly of you, so he will not let you go to other domains. You cannot expect such generous treatment elsewhere. He has given you a penalty, but soon you will be forgiven and be called back to serve. You mentioned committing some offence. Do that after several years, if you want to. You probably thought up that idea on account of a grudge against him. If you feel like that, you will undergo more punishment in the future."

"Nowadays most of the *samurai* of Saga are corrupt, rising late in the morning and often absenting themselves with feigned sickness," said the man.

"That is the merit of our clan," I said. "In other clans, hard-working and clever men assume that they will be promoted to higher ranks. If they are not rewarded with a higher salary, they will think of committing some wrong. However, all of us have been born and brought up here in Saga and do not think of doing bad things. Since we know we will die in Saga, we think this is our homeland for ever. So we can enjoy sleeping

late in the morning. Where else can we find such a reliable clan in this country?"

"Here in Saga we talk of our clan as well-known for bravery but is that not our biased view?" said the man again. "Is Saga known about in other clans or written of in a book?"

"Our bravery is recorded in books," I said. "For instance, in the Battle of Shimabara in 1637 more than 400 men were killed. That is many more casualties than in the Battle of Kamakura in 1333. The number shows clearly that we are a domain of bravery. Our bravery is also known to Taiko Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu, too. We have been awarded prizes by them. Is that not a most reliable proof?"

It seems that a man who has been dismissed for a long time will feel bored and hold a grudge against the lord, and be apt to speak ill of him. So such a person will find it more and more difficult to return to his old post.

### **341) A *ronin* rich in experiences could be helpful.**

A *ronin* who has not seen hardships cannot make himself useful to the lord. He will not be of use just for his good health and diligence.

### **342) A *samurai* has to devote himself to the lord anywhere, anytime.**

As I wrote in the Guken-shu, a retainer's duty is completed in being appointed as an administrative retainer, getting involved in government of the clan, and giving his opinions to the lord. Anything else is of little or no importance. However, there is hardly anyone who understands this. It is true that lots of people flattering the lord and high ranking retainers with selfish ambition are promoted. But none are so ambitious to be appointed as an administrative retainer. Some men of spirit are not interested in service, but are absorbed in reading books of essays and poetry. They do not think it good to be greedy for power. Such writers as Kenko and Saigyō are cowards who are afraid to serve in public. Since they gave up being *samurai*, they produced such books to entertain readers. Those who have renounced the world, or retired seniors, will be allowed to read their books, but a *samurai* has to devote himself to the service to the lord, not only in the midst of struggles for honor and desires but even in hell.

- \* The Guken-shu was written by Jocho in 1708 and was given to his adopted son.
- \* Kenko was a 14th century hermit known for his book of essays.
- \* Saigyō was a 12th century poet.

### 343) Why my teacher made up his mind to become an administrative retainer

I was born as the last son of my father, when he was 70 year old. He even told Taku Zusho, his group leader, that he was thinking of sending me to a salt seller as an apprentice. Then he said, "Lord Katsushige always says that you are serving him very faithfully. Your sincerity will never fail to appear in your children. I am sure your youngest son will make himself useful to the lord." Thanks to his advice, I did not have to be sent to a salt peddler. I was named Matsukame and had Edayoshi Rizaemon congratulate me on my birthday with a set of clothes. When I was nine years old, I was employed as an attendant to Lord Mitsushige with the name of Fukei. I was also loved by Prince Tsunashige, his son. I would often hump over the stove and jump on his back. I was an uncontrollable naughty boy.

When I was 13 years old I was told by Lord Mitsushige to grow my forelock. After training at home for a year, on May 1 the following year, I went up to the castle to serve the lord as a boy attendant with the name of Ichi-ju.

At 20 years old I celebrated my coming of age with Kuranaga Rihey as my guardian. He was then an official in charge of poetry-copying. I was appointed as a document writer's assistant. Kuranaga Rihey favored me greatly with his patronage. Once he said, "He is good at composing poems and sometimes is summoned by Prince Tsunashige." I was then dismissed from my duty for some time. Later I was told that Kuranaga had intended for me to succeed to his post.

Being dismissed from my post I could not accompany Lord Mitsushige on his way to Edo and back, which made me feel uneasy. At that time the priest Tan-nen was living in Matsuse Village. My father was a good friend of his and asked him to teach me, so I visited him as often as possible. I even thought of renouncing the world as he did.

Yamamoto Goro-zaemon, my relative, was concerned about my situation. I was told that he consulted Nakano Kazuma secretly so that I could be granted some of the land possessed by my father. Little did I think I would accept such a thing. Then I was summoned to the castle and was granted an allotment of rice, together with two subordinates.

In this way I was employed as a minor *samurai*, but I thought it regrettable to be looked down on as a minor. I had been thinking how I could serve the lord, and almost every evening I visited Goro-zaemon to consult him. One day he said, "According to a senior official, a man who seeks honor or power is not a true retainer, but if he is not interested in those at all, he will not be called a true retainer, either." He said that I

should think about that.

As I considered the matter, I happened to think of one thing. A retainer's dream is realized in supporting the lord in his government of the clan. If you are loitering in a low rank, you cannot realize this dream. So you must become an administrative retainer. I do not desire honor or authority for myself, but those are needed for an administrative retainer. So I decided to become one. Early promotion is not good for a retainer, so I made up my mind to become one by the time when I was about fifty. I made every effort to realize my dream. I did not shed tears of blood, but was certainly overcome with grief once in a while. Anyway, I did go through trials and tribulations.

In the meantime Lord Mitsushige passed away. All of his important retainers were cowards and behaved in such a way as to harm the fame of the clan. So I shaved my head, instead of following him to the grave by taking my life. In reality I could not commit *seppuku* because my lord had strictly forbidden it, but I think I could do the equivalent. I do not regret my conduct at all. You can realize your dream by making a resolution. When a retainer is too proud he is punished by Heaven, as I have written in my book "Guken-shu."

I may sound impudent, telling the story of my life like this, but I have spoken frankly because I am retired now.

The following day my teacher and I composed these short poems.

*"Please entertain yourself with a bowl of porridge I have made."* Kisui ( myself )

*"Dry morning glory ivy is burning in the furnace."* Komaru ( my teacher )

- \* In the feudal period there was a custom to change one's names.
- \* A boy attendant was supposed to grow his forelock.
- \* Edayoshi Rizaemon was an important retainer, who died in 1680.
- \* Kuranaga Rihey was a retainer employed by Mitsushige, the second lord.