IV. PRINCIPAL KABUKI PLAYS

1. The Eighteen Best Plays

As already mentioned, the eighteen masterpieces selected from the plays of Kabuki origin staged since the birth of the Kabuki about two centuries and a half ago are collectively styled "Kabuki Jūhachiban." These eighteen were the repertoire of the nine generations of the illustrious Ichikawas from the first Danjūrō of the Genroku period (1688–1703) to the ninth in the Meiji era. The plays have been the monopoly of the Ichikawas, and even now the rights of printing and staging them are in the hands of the present representive of the family. About ten out of the eighteen are now staged, the rest having died a natural death. The following seven are considered by general consent to be of greatest merit:—"Sukeroku" (The Love of Sukeroku, an Edo Beau), "Kanjinchō" (A Faithful Retainer), "Shibaraku" (Stop a Minute!), "Yanone" (The Arrow-head), "Kenuki" (Hair Tweezers), "Narukami" (Thunder), and "Kamahige" (Shaving with a Large Sickle).

Of these seven, "Sukeroku" and "Kanjinchō" are the most distinguished, being the best of the plays of Kabuki origin. All the plays of the "Kabuki Jūhachiban" are characterized by the spirit of hero-worship, and are labelled Aragoto, or plays of masculine character, and are theatrical products peculiar to Edo.

2. Classical Plays

Jidaimono is the general name for Kabuki plays with historical backgrounds. Most of these plays are those of puppet-play origin. A Jidaimono is usually only part of a play—one act taken from a longer story. To the most distinguished, being the best of the plays of name representative Kabuki plays of the Jidaimono type there are "Sugawara Denju Tenaraikagami" (The Sugawara School of Penmanship), "Kanadehon Chuūshingura" (Treasury of the Loyal League) by Izumo Takeda (1691–1756) and "Shin Usuyuki Monogatari" (Tales of Princess Usuyuki) by Koizumo Takeda (d. 1753?), son and pupil of Izumo. These were originally written for the puppet stage about two hundred years ago. Plays of true Kabuki origin include such masterpieces as "Sukeroku" and "Kanjinchō" but these are only one-act plays while those of classical Jōruri origin usually contain more than five acts.

"Kanadehon Chūshingura," famous for its artistry in technique and plot, is an eleven-act play. Because of its length, the play is usually performed in abridged form —only the first seven acts of the eleven being given. The present tendency is towards longer performances, and in the autumn of 1947 the first nine acts of this play were performed in Tokyo.

It will be remembered that John Masefield produced an English version of this play under the title of "The Faithful." The Act from "Sugawara Denju Tenaraikagami" called the "Terakoya" has been made into a play and staged in America and Germany. This is proof

"Chūshingura" (upper) and "Sugawara Denju Tenaraikagami," both typical plays of the Jidaimono (classical) type.

"Koibikyaku Yamato Orai," revised version of "Meido no Hikyaku"
(An Attempt to Elope to the Other World)

that among the historical Kabuki plays are to be found dramas of universal appeal. The reader is reminded that the *chobo*, or classical music, plays an important part in the effective presentation of these dramas.

3. "Sewamono"

In contrast with the historical plays, there are genre plays dealing with love and other affairs of every-day life, and though they seem classic they are very realistic. These plays may be also regarded as adaptations from puppet plays. As briefly referred to in a preceding passage, the dramatic genius, Monzaemon Chikamatsu wrote a number of genre plays of extraordinary merit for the puppet stage, expressing in them scenes from contemporary life. He lived in Ōsaka in the Genroku period, the last quarter of the 17th century, when people in that commercial capital were enjoying luxurious living.

There are "Shinjū Ten-no-Amijima" (A Double Suicide at Amijima) and "Meido no Hikyaku" (An Attempt to Elope to the Other World), to mention only a few. These were made into Kabuki plays with more or less modification. Genre plays were created and developed in Ōsaka, and even in present-day Ōsaka, actors are noted for their special skill in performing them.

4. "Kizewamono"

These plays were first produced in Edo about 130 years ago, and so were called Kizewamono in order to distinguish them from Sewamono, most of which were products of Ōsaka. Kizewamono means later genre plays and they are more realistic than similar Ōsaka

plays. All of the Kizewamono are of Kabuki origin, and belonging as they do to later times, they have no connection with the puppet play. The pioneer writer of this type of play was the fourth Namboku Tsuruya (1755–1829), who flourished in the Bunka and Bunsei eras, or, to be more exact the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Shortly before the Restoration of Meiji, another famous playwright appeared. His name was Mokuami Kawatake (1816–1893), who might be called a pupil of Namboku. By the time of his death in the middle of the Meiji era, he had given to the world a number of plays, the majority of which were Sewamono. Contemporaneous with him were such great luminaries of the stage as the fourth Kodanji Ichikawa and the fifth Kikugorō Onoe (father of the sixth Kikugorō, d. 1949). Mokuami wrote plays with a view to providing these actors with fitting parts. As a writer of plays of Kabuki origin, he was one of the greatest, if not the greatest Japan has ever known. All his plays portray contemporary life and culture in Edo and they are made much of even in these days. Edo being their birthplace, these plays are seen at their best when acted by Tokyo actors. Mokuami was very skilful in combining his plays with appropriate music. Especially is he noteworthy for his mastering of stage technique. He is almost without a peer in this respect. His representative plays are "Murai Chōan" (Murai Chōan, a Fiendish Quack-Doctor), "Sannin Kichisa" (Three Robbers), "Kamiyui Shinza" (A Villain Barber Shinza) and "Kōchiyama to Naozamurai" (Two Rogues in Conspiracy).

"Sannin Kichisa," one of the Kizewamono Plays.

"Shinjū-Ten-no-Amijima," one of the Sewamono plays.

A *dammari* play (a type of pantomime)

V. TECHNIQUE PECULIAR TO THE KABUKI

1. "Dammari"

Dammari corresponds to the pantomimes of European drama, the performance being conducted without speech. It was originally conceived as a means of personal appearance for star actors when a new troupe was organized. So a *dammari* play is necessarily very short, lasting only about ten minutes. The actors, colorfully costumed, give their performance in dance fashion. Sometimes a *dammari* contains as many as 50 actors organized so as to form a picturesque ensemble. Though

nonsensical, a *dammari* is of great artistic merit. These dumb shows may roughly be grouped in two kinds—historical and modern. The former aim at being grotesque and colorful; the latter at being realistic and refined. Music accompanies both kinds of *dammari*. In the presentation of a historical *dammari*, the stage device of *seriage*, or raising of an actor from below the floor, is usually made use of. Another feature worthy of note is *roppō*. This is a posture made at the foot of the *hanamichi* by the leading actor of a *dammari*, who is usually of grotesque appearance. It is highly characteristic of the Kabuki and much appreciated by the connoisseur.

2. "Koroshi"

Kabuki plays of the Sewamono variety often contain a murder scene. This act, or *koroshi* in the language of the Kabuki stage, presents a sight less cruel than in reality, as care is taken to make it unreal and more or less artistic. Accompanied by dancing and music, a *koroshi* even impresses the audience as a spectacle different from that of murder. The Kizewamono plays by Mokuami, already mentioned, have many scenes of *koroshi*, which are the outcome of jealousy originating in amorous rivalry. An example of the artistic treatment of a *koroshi* is to be seen in "Kashi Koroshi" (the murder scene on the river-bank) in "Edo Sodachi Omatsuri Sashichi" (Sashichi, a True-Born Edoite) composed by Shinshichi Kawatake III (1747–1795), a pupil of Mokuami.

3. "Michiyuki"

"Michiyuki" means "travel" or "on the way to." This is a favorite feature in a puppet play. It usually introduces the billing and cooing of a pair of lovers and the charms of the form and motion of a dance are woven into such a performance—in fact, it is more in the character of a dance than a part of a play. When a *michiyuki* intervenes in a multiple-act play, it gives a feeling of enjoyable relief. Take the "Chūshingura" for instance. The third act contains a *michiyuki* by Okaru and Kampei, two sweet souls filled with passionate love. In the eighth act there is a rare example of a *michiyuki* by a mother and her young daughter. A *michiyuki* is usually enlivened by Gidayū music, and this makes it seem more like an oasis for the audience in their travel through many acts.

4. "Tachimawari"

Humanism is a quality that characterizes the Kabuki play and its characters advocate social justice, which they go to great length even at risk of life and limb to defend.

Almost every Kabuki play has its injustice, its swords and its fights sometimes between the samurai themselves and sometimes between the samurai and members of other classes. These sword fights are called *tachimawari* in the Kabuki. Being more conventional and picturesque than realistic, they are in good keeping with the spirit of the drama. When a Samurai cuts an opponent of a low rank, the victim turns a somersault. The perform-

A "michiyuki" (travel of two lovers)

"Tachimawari" (a sword-fight)

"Kubijikken," inspecting a severed head

A picture-scroll of actors on parade from the Tales of Princess Usuyuki

ing of this acrobatic feat is called "tombo wo kiru." The grim seriousness of a fight for life is softened and made humorous by a man leaping down from the roof with the lightness of a leaf driven by a wind. Moreover, a fighting scene is interrupted with much festivity as music is furnished by the *geza*, or unseen orchestra, already described elsewhere. All these endeavors make the severity of a struggle as unreal and artistic as possible. Examples of Tachimawari are found in "Marubashi Chūya" (Marubashi Chūya the Conspirator) by Mokuami (1816–1893), and in "Sakaro no Higuchi" (Higuchi the Faithful), the third act from "Hiragana Seisuiki" by Izumo Takeda (1691–1756), a historical play illustrative of the feud between Yoshinaka, a 12th-century Minamoto general, and some other members of his clan.

5. "Monogatari"

This does not mean "story," but "narration." By means of the *monogatari* an important matter is narrated to another. Many of the Kabuki plays adapted from puppet plays make use of this device, which marks the climax of a particular art. Gestures like that of a stage dancer and music by *chobo* combine to make such a narration congenial to the Kabuki. *Monogatari* is considered to be a very difficult piece of Kabuki acting, and there are many conventions to which the actor must conform. Here an actor has an opportunity to exhibit his talent and skill. Consequently *monogatari* is well worth the careful attention of the student of the Kabuki.

At the risk of repetition, the reader should be warned that here as elsewhere in a Kabuki play the performance should not be judged by the standard of realism. The eye must see the beauty of harmony produced by form, attitude, manner of utterance, and motion combined, and this in the midst of the appearance of the unnatural and the grotesque. There is a symbolistic beauty in the actions of a human being imitating a puppet. Examples of *monogatari* are to be found in the third act of "Ichinotani Futabagunki" (Tales of the Ichinotani Battle) and in the "Sanemori Monogatari" (Sanemori's Monologue) scene from "Gempei Nunobiki no Taki," a play based on the famous story of "The Rise and Fall of the Genji and Heike Clans."

6. "Kubijikken"

Migawari is a feature of the Kabuki play of puppet-show origin. It means an act of sacrifice in time of danger made for the master by a loyal retainer who bears a resemblance to him in person and age. *Kubijikken*, or inspection of the detached head, is the way in which such a fraud is discovered. The head is brought on to the stage in a wooden vessel, and the inspection is conducted by one who can tell whether the head belonged to the right man.

In feudal Japan, war was the order of the day and sacrifice in the form above specified was often called for. The institution of *kubijikken* was born as a countermeasure. The identification of a bloody head placed on a stand and a group of men in breathless attention is

"Monogatari" (a narrative) by Kichiemon Nakamura, foremost Kabuki actor of today, in the scene entitled "Kumagai Monogatari" from the "Ichinotani Futabagunki" (see P. 93)

not a scene calculated to give artistic pleasure to the audience, but the hand of Kabuki art has succeeded in giving a light touch to it so as to soften and beautify a sight otherwise grotesque. As in the case of *monogatari* already mentioned, *kubijikken* invariably accentuates the climax of a play. It is valuable for the student of Japanese culture as it gives a glimpse into the inner life of the Japanese Samurai of yore. Examples of *kubijikken* are found in the "Terakoya" (Private School) scene from "Sugawara Denju Tenaraikagami" (The Sugawara School of Penmanship) and in the "Moritsuna's Camp" scene from "Ōmi Genji Senjinyakata," a play dealing with two 12th-century generals, Sasaki-Takatsuna and Moritsuna, brothers who fought in battle on opposing sides.

7. Revue Element

Reference was made at the beginning of this brochure to the analogy between Kabuki and the revue. Ever since the days of Okuni who created it, the Kabuki has been a popular theatrical performance calculated to catch the fancy of the masses. Unlike a certain kind of highbrow drama of the new school which, presented at a small theater and often expressed in a style not understood by the people, the Kabuki has never been intended for persons pretending to superior intellect or culture. The Kabuki was and still is synonymous with a form of stage art easy for the multitude to understand, an art designed primarily to appeal to the taste of the general public. The Kabuki play is a spectacle, colorful and intoxicat-

ing, which purports to be a feast for the eye, as well for the ear.

We have a case in point in the "Flower-Viewing Scene" of the "Shin Usuyuki Monogatari" (Tales of Princess Usuyuki), one of the best, if not the very best, historical pieces of the Maruhommono type now included in the repertoire of plays whose performance is approved. (This play was performed for the first time in 1746 at the Nakamura-za in Edo, the original script being jointly by Koizumo Takeda (d. 1753?) and a few others.) In this particular scene an element of the revue is clearly in evidence where a lady of birth, her maids, colorfully attired menservants, young samurai, important-looking samurai, and bizarre *chōnin*, or townspeople, all appear on the stage, one after another, so spectacularly as to give you the impression that there is a picture-scroll of actors on parade unrolled right before you.

Another example may be furnished by the well-known dancing scene in the "Yoshitsune Sembonzakura" (Yoshitsune in the Yoshino Mountains), a historical drama written by Izumo Takeda in 1748. This scene of *michiyuki* (traveling) is backgrounded by the Yoshino mountains resplendent with cherry blossoms and is a sort of revue. The *michiyuki* scenes in Maruhommono pieces are, on the whole, rich in revue elements.

Then there is the celebrated *seizoroi* (mustering) scene of "Benten-Kozō" (The Robin Hood of Japan), a representative play by Mokuami Kawatake (1816–1893). The way Benten-Kozō and his associates assemble on the bank of the Inase river to the accompaniment

"Musume Dōjōji," a typical Kabuki dance play (see P. 115)

A chorus dance by footmen

of a complicated piece of music is definitely suggestive of a revue scene.

8. "Sawari" and "Tsurane"

In historical drama, transplanted from the puppet play, a marvellous stage effect is achieved by means of a unique, if irrational, technique.

First and foremost among such devices is the *sawari*. *Sawari* is somewhat analogous to an aside or a soliloquy in a western play. But it is unique, for it differs from its western counterpart in being exclusively put into the mouth of a female character. This technique is employed only in a puppet play and a Kabuki play of puppet-show origin, employed in time to Jōruri music which is an important adjunct to such a play.

In all probability *sawari* was originally devised to give expression, by means of impassioned passages as chanted by a Gidayū singer, to the emotions which cannot actually be put into the mouth of a doll representing a woman character in a puppet show. In the Kabuki, too, this technique is adopted with great effect. The Japanese Kabuki dramatist did a good thing in creating this device which really does duty for a psychological description of the heroine of a play as impersonated by an *onnagata* actor. The word 'sawari' means literally 'touch' and certainly it does touch the chord of pathos like many of the oft-quoted soliloquies in Shakespearean plays.

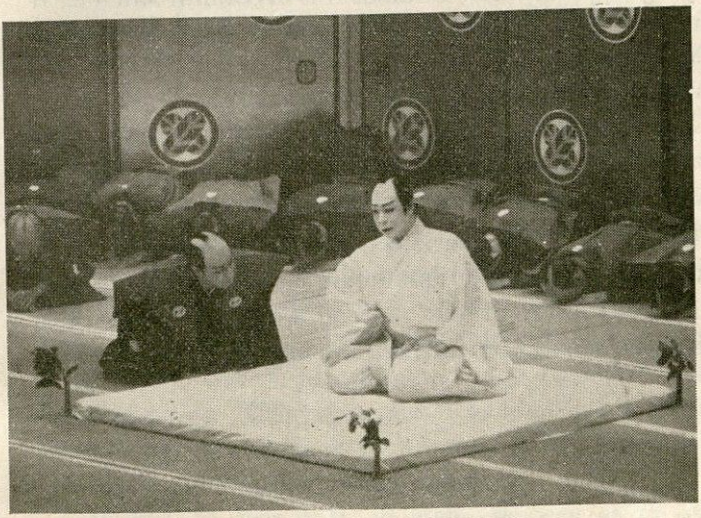
Another effective technique resorted to in the Kabuki is what is called *tsurane*. This consists in making the principal character of a play, as in "Shibaraku" (Stop

a Minute!), suddenly burst, in the midst of a dialogue spoken in plain language, into a lofty passage couched in phrases felicitous, well-turned and metrical. On the face of it, nothing seems more irrational, and yet actually it does not fail to produce a telling stage effect.

When used in a Kizewamono piece of Edo origin, the *tsurane* is often called *yakuharai*. Looking through the history of the Kabuki, we find the first examples of "yakuharai" in one of the scenes of that gruesome ghost play "Yotsuya Kaidan" by Namboku Tsuruya (1755–1829) and in the "Genjidana" (At Genjidana) scene from "Kirare Yosa" (The Love Affair of Yosaburō and Otomi) by Jōkō Sagawa (1806–1881). Mokuami got this technique from Namboku, and brought it to perfection in such plays as "Sannin Kichisa" (Three Robbers) and "Murai Chōan," (Murai Chōan, a Fiendish Quack-Doctor). *Sawari* and *tsurane* have proved as valuable an asset in popularizing traditional Kabuki plays as the star actors and noted dramatists.

Yet another technique which may be included in this category is *kakeai*. This is used in an old play like "Sayaate" in which two principal characters enter at the same time, one over the *hon-hanamichi* (main passage) and the other over the *kari-hanamichi* (auxiliary passage) which runs parallel on the opposite side, and start an exchange of words. The dramatist Mokuami was fond of this technique of making dramatic capital out of the double passage and the two characters, and used it in such a play as "Izayoi Seishin," (The Love affairs of Monk Seishin and Izayoi, a Courtesan).

A scene from "Kirare Yosa," the Love Affair of Yosaburō and Otomi



The *harakiri* scene from "Chūshingura"

9. "Seppuku" (Harakiri)

In feudal days the ethical ideal of the Samurai was to give up his life for his lord. When it became necessary for him to die, he resorted, by preference, to a painful method of disembowelling himself by cutting into his abdomen with a sword—called by foreigners *harakiri*, but more commonly known as *seppuku* among the Japanese. From a profound sense of shame and responsibility the samurai would as often as not resort to this act of daring by way of self-inflicted punishment.

Thus up to the dawn of New Japan a multitude of Samurai of great promise took their own lives by committing *harakiri*.

The Kabuki play makes it a point of actually portraying *seppuku* when a Samurai is to commit suicide. It may indeed be said that *seppuku* is a feature peculiar to the Kabuki.

One notable example of *harakiri* is found in Act IV of the "Chūshingura," already mentioned. The name of the character is En-ya Hangan. The scene, which is an important part of the play, shows a *harakiri* scene true to life. En-ya Hangan is ceremonally dressed in white. And other details of etiquette are closely followed, such at the condition of the mat on which the actor sits. When *harakiri* is performed, the mat must be reversed.

VI. SYMBOLISM AND IMPRESSIONISM IN THE KABUKI

As has repeatedly been stated, realism and rationalism must not be sought in a Kabuki play, which is not a play to be heard, but rather a sort of revue to please the eye. In revues, however, reality and truth are not lost sight of by their writers in their work of presenting the beautiful. Though there are some exceptions, the contrary method is used by the Kabuki dramatist. He aims at the beautiful presentation of the unreal and the unnatural. This point is dwelt on at some length in the following paragraphs.

There is a well-known play named "Suzugamori," (At Suzugamori), which belongs to the Kizewamono class. In this play one sees at the opening, when the curtain is drawn off, a black curtain in the background. This *kuromaku*, as the black curtain is called in the language of the Kabuki stage, symbolizes the darkness of night. The suggestion of a black night is what it is intended to convey, and it is needless for the spectator to inquire whether it is a rice-field or a hill that is hidden. In the same scene there is at the right and left a sort of two fold screen called *yabudatami* made of bamboo and bamboo twigs. This represents a bamboo grove. Sometimes a sea is symbolized by a board on which are painted waves—technically called *namiita*.

It will be seen that, in stage scenery as in other

features, the Kabuki play is essentially symbolic in technique. It is important that the audience should be prepared to adjust their minds to symbolic representation.

Some twenty years ago "The Forest," a new Russian play, was staged in Japan by a theatrical company then recently organized. In the production of the play, it is said, the method of Meierchold was adopted. Symbolism was used in the stage scenery to a considerable extent. A tree, for instance, was meant for a large grove. Similarly, a single window served for a group of windows. The Kabuki play works on the same principles of symbolism and impressionism. For the past two centuries or more these principles have characterized the Kabuki play not only in setting, but in the spirit of the actor. To do the Kabuki full justice, therefore, this quintessence of Kabukiism should not be lost sight of.

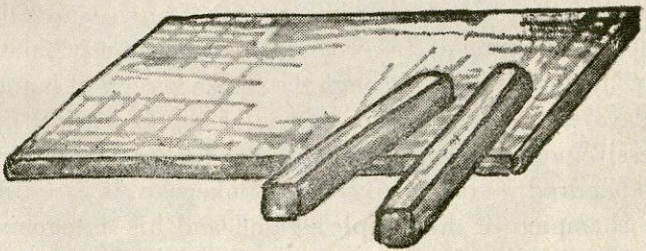
It is related of the fifth Danjūrō Ichikawa, one of Japan's stage stars who lived in Edo more than one hundred years ago, that when taking a meal on the stage he never used real boiled rice, but instead had some white cotton in the bowl, which he manipulated so skilfully that the audience was deceived. This shows what his idea of art was like. The art of Kabuki consists not in making the real look real, but in making the unreal look real. From this it may be argued that symbolistic representation is the soul of Kabuki.

Let us take up the case of the *mie* already explained. The straining of the eyes and a steady gaze which make up the pose of *mie* may seem unnatural, but this is the Kabuki way of emphasizing the senses of excitement,

sorrow, and emotion.

Those who laugh at the Kabuki play as unnatural are themselves at fault, as it is an art which puts unnaturalness out of the question. What it aspires to is something higher—to transport the audience to the world of illusion by presenting a piquant slice of life or a strong expression of human sentiment through the medium of suggestion, impressionism, and symbolism.

In the appreciation of the Kabuki, therefore, one must be richly endowed with imagination; otherwise one will fail to understand the symbolic and impressionistic expression of the Kabuki. One must also be a person of great sensibility, who is capable of perceiving beauty in the apparent grotesqueness and cruelty of a *kubijikken* or who discovers a dramatic element in *harakiri*. Only with such imagination and such sensibility can one penetrate into a feeling intricate but common to all humanity roughly represented by a *mie*, a pose reinforced by the sound of wooden clappers.



"Ki" or wooden clappers used to indicate the beginning, the end, and the intermissions of a play.

VII. THE STORY VALUE OF THE KABUKI

At the outset of this volume, the writer recommended that the Occidental, in approaching the Kabuki play, should assume an attitude similar to that of one who looks at Mt. Fuji looming in the distance. The beginner was warned not to be too critical—that is scientifically—of the contents. Having prepared the reader by what has been said in the foregoing about the essentials of Kabuki, the writer hastens to add that the Kabuki play is not without merit in its contents. This merit, however, is different from that approved of by ideas of modern literature and modern drama.

In making clear this point, some of the plays already introduced will be taken for illustration. "Sukeroku," or "Sukeroku Yukari no Edozakura," to give its full title, as already mentioned, is one of the selected eighteen of the Kabuki plays. It is full of charms peculiar to the Kabuki in form and structure, especially as regards the spectacular acting of Sukeroku on the *hanamichi* ("flower way"). In this play, through the smoke screen of humor and gaiety, flashes a strong popular revolt against oppressive power which was going on in feudal Japan some two hundred years ago. The hero, Sukeroku, is in reality the champion of the people's right, and his antagonist, Ikyū, stands for the government. Ikyū, the Samurai, is ridiculed to death by Sukeroku, the commoner, in Yoshiwara, the famous pleasure resort where people of vari-

ous ranks stood on the same footing of equality. No doubt it is due to this moral indignation, which proceeds from the desire for justice, that the play has appealed to the populace and has won for itself the honor of being the most successful of the Edo plays of Kabuki origin.

"Kumagai's Camp," which is the third scene of "Ichinotani Futaba Gunki," is one of the most distinguished scenes of all the Kabuki dramas. The story Kumagai is based on a historic fact—it forms a chapter of the classical war romance, "Gempei Seisuiki," tracing the fortunes of the two rival clans, Minamoto and Taira. It is about a warrior, Kumagai Jirō Naozane, who, by way of repaying his indebtedness, saves the life of a young captain of the enemy, Atsumori in the battle

Sukeroku (*left*) and Ikyū (*right*) in a scene from "Sukeroku"

of Suma-no-ura by the sacrifice of his own son, Kojirō Kumagai. "Kumagai's Camp" begins after the battlefield episode, and, stripped of the brilliant ornamentation given to most Kabuki plays, it still has in its plot elements of human interest and universal appeal.

The author describes the mental state of Kumagai at the beginning of his play in these words: "Now that he put to the sword Atsumori, in the flower of his youth, he, though a daring soldier, has come to realize the vanity of the world, presumably from seeing the vicissitudes of life." Kumagai was certainly a general of unparalleled prowess; his sole interest in life was war and battle, leaving little or no room in his heart for the play of tender emotions. It so happened that he was compelled to face in a single combat this young Atsumori from the enemy, to whom he owed gratitude. His eyes were opened to the frailty of man. His conscience would not permit him mercilessly to kill his antagonist. He cut the Gordian knot by a pathetic resolution—to victimize his own boy. So Atsumori was allowed to go his own way unharmed. He now stood in a critical situation. He had saved the life of Atsumori by the sacrifice of his son. The difficulty was that this might be interpreted as an act of betrayal by his friends, and the showing of goodwill to the foe, so he decided to renounce the world and to abandon his military career. He sought refuge in religion, and passed the rest of his life in wandering about as a priest in the service of Buddha. The play depicts the metamorphosis a man undergoes when he experiences a great shock. Though it is not entirely

Okaru (*left*) and Kampei (*right*) in the "michiyuki" scene from "Chūshingura"

A scene from "Iohinotani Futabagunki"

free from grotesque features in its acting, it is of perennial merit because of its literary value.

Let us now take up "Chūshingura," to which reference was made more than once in the preceding pages. The scene of Kampei's *harakiri* in Act VI is noteworthy for the story it tells. Kampei was grieved to learn of the sad end of his master, but he was participating in amorous relations with a girl named Okaru, with whom he decides to elope into the country. The news of his friends, planning to revenge the death of their master, comes to Kampei's ears, and he decides to join them in their enterprise. But by the irony of fate he is led into believing that he has killed the father of his sweetheart, Okaru. Despairing of cooperation in the revenge of his master's death and overburdened by the crime of murdering his sweetheart's father, he puts an end to his hapless life by committing *harakiri*. At the moment of his death he regrets his past life which was marked by grave mistakes—that a falling in love with Okaru, which prevented him from joining the loyal league, and that of falling a victim to the illusion which made him believe for a time that he had killed Okaru's father. Thus he ends his life—that of a mere youth not yet thirty. The tragic element in the story has a compelling interest even for the people of the present day.

Examples might be multiplied, but space forbids and the reader is referred to the appendix in "Notes on Some of the Famous Kabuki Plays." (P. 85)

VIII. PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE PRESENT-DAY KABUKI

In present-day Japan there are several large theaters which specialize in the presentation of Kabuki plays. The celebrated Kabukiza Theater in Ginza-Higashi, Tokyo, which was badly damaged during the War, was restored in January, 1951, to its former magnificence (capacity: about 2,000), and is devoted exclusively to the performance of Kabuki plays. There are, as a rule, two performances a day—part I from 11.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. and part II from 4.00 p.m. to about 8.30 p.m. The plays shown in part I (generally three) are all different from those in part II (generally three or four).—This general rule applies throughout the country. (Admission for the Kabukiza: ¥650 for a first-class ticket)

Next in order of merit comes the Meijiza Theater in Hamachō, Tokyo, which was rebuilt in December, 1950, with a seating capacity of about 1,700. The Meijiza Theater often but not invariably, gives Kabuki performances. The size of the stage, which is a little smaller than that of the Kabukiza Theater, is considered more advantageous for the staging of Kabuki plays. Besides these, Tokyo has the Shimbashi Embujō Theater with

seating accommodation for 1,500 people. The Mitsukoshi Gekijō Theater, one of the auditoriums in the Mitsukoshi Department Store, is large enough to hold just about 600 people. In this smart little theater young Kabuki actors and also the Shingeki troupe give performances.

Then there are three other important theaters in Tokyo, where, however, Kabuki plays are very seldom staged. One is the Teikoku Gekijō (Imperial Theater), a three-storied edifice facing the Emperor's Palace. This play-house (capacity: 1,300) is suited for all sorts of theatrical performances, including the revue, opera and ballet. The second is the Yūrakuza Theater (capacity: 1,500) which, though inferior to the Teikoku Gekijō from an architectural point of view, is a useful theater of practical value. The last one, the Tokyo Gekijō Theater, is now used exclusively for the movies.

Ōsaka has also one of the largest theaters in Japan; namely the Kabukiza, which has accommodation for 2,000 people. It is a fine palatial theater; in fact, it is even open to the charge of being a little too spacious for purposes of any other branch of stage art than the Kabuki pure and simple. The Nakaza Theater (capacity: 1,200) was rebuilt in January, 1948 and is just the kind of theater that is suitable for Kabuki performances. No description of Ōsaka theaters would be complete without mention of the Bunrakuza Theater at Yotsubashi (capacity: 700), the only theater in Japan devoted to the performance of the puppet-play. It was rebuilt completely in February, 1946. As the Bunraku puppet show

is Ōsaka's most time-honored institution, foreign visitors should by all means visit this novel theater.

Mention must be made, last but not least, of the Minamiza Theater in Kyōto and the Misonoza Theater in Nagoya. These are well-equipped theaters which can accommodate 1,500 and 1,600 people respectively.

So much for the theaters. Now a few words about the actors. Chief among the great Kabuki actors of today is Kichiemon Nakamura, who is an outstanding actor of plays with historical backgrounds and who is past master in the observance of all the Kabuki traditions.

Besides him there is Tokizō Nakamura, veteran Onnagata, (actors playing women's parts). Then there are Mitsugorō Bandō and Ennosuke Ichikawa who are great Kabuki dancers. Among the younger Onnagata actors in Tokyo may be mentioned Utaemon Nakamura, Baikō Onoe and Tomoemon Ōtani. Ebizō Ichikawa, Kōshirō Matsumoto, Shōroku Onoe, Kanzaburō Nakamura and Hikosaburō Bandō are actors of great promise in Kabukidom.

Among the veteran actors in Ōsaka we have Jukai Ichikawa, who usually plays the parts of handsome men, and Jusaburō Bandō, who is more at home in the new type of Kabuki than in the classical. In addition to these there are Ganjirō Nakamura, Nizaemon Kataoka and Minosuke Bandō, all in their forties.

The group of poses in the following pages (p. 81 ~ 84) are of well-known Kabuki actors in their favorite roles from popular Kabuki plays. (Names of actors below each photo)

Kichiemon Nakamura

Ennosuke Ichikawa

Mitsugorō Bandō

Jukai Ichikawa

Jusaburō Bando

Ganjirō Nakamura

Nizaemon Kataoka

Kanzaburō Nakamura

Utaemon Nakamura

Baikō Onoe

Tokizō Nakamura

Tomoemon Otani

Ebizō Ichikawa

Shōroku Onoe

Kōshirō Matsumoto

Hikosaburo Bandō