AS my wife is hard of hearing, she cannot understand what I say unless I speak close to her ear, in rather a loud voice.

Though the time to go on board the ship was approaching, she was still leaning on the window at the first floor of the inn, and would not even prepare to start. Vacantly she was contemplating the sight of the dark green sea, the seamews flying in groups, and the *Surugamaru*, the regular liner, which was about to start for Hakodate, ready to take us two on board. At such times,
she is always weeping, calling to her mind our departed son. This I noticed by the sight of her back. I stroked her on the shoulder and urged her to start.

"Come. Get ready, get ready!"

The day was perfect for a voyage. It was the time when the regular steamship lines were interrupted by the rumor that the Russian ships from Vladivostock, which not long before had passed through Tsugaru Strait, were appearing now and then along the Pacific coast. During five or six days only was this line between Awomori and Hakodate in operation. As it was disappointing to my wife and myself to go home after having come so far, and as the Russian ships were said to be cruising on the open sea in the vicinity of Oshima and the Izu Islands—the very night before
we had heard that the fleet of the enemy was sunk, the announcement of which some of the newspapers printed in an extra --- we left the inn, not worrying about the ships, trusting somewhat to the truth of the statements in the extra.

There were soldiers in the streets in sober khaki-colored summer uniform, watching us hurrying toward the pier. As my wife was walking in meditation, her slowness somewhat irritated me. She suddenly stopped and this is what she said:

"Ah! Ah! If only Ryunosuke were living I would bring him with us to a place like this and give him pleasure."

She sighed. Ryunosuke was the name of our son. I did not know what to do and, putting my mouth close to her ear, as if to scold her, I said:
"You will try me if you keep constantly calling him to mind!"

Instantly, my wife flushed.

"Oh I You are so cruel! I am living only because of the consolation of his memory. If you wish me not to speak of him, bid me die."

My wife is tiresome, for she is just a baby, and I am only a nurse who is taking care of this infant of forty years.

"Tut! tut! How could you say such a thing in the street? Look, everybody is turning and laughing at us."

I spoke thus, but the words were not heard by my wife. Ah!

Nothing is so hard to foresee as human life. We never expected such a sad end to our
son, nor did we ever dream of going together for this journey. It was caused by chance. The daily accidents, who can understand them? It was unforeseen that we should pass a night at this far eastern port of Oshu. It was unforeseen that we should go aboard this ship. Above all, it was unforeseen that we should be crossing Tsugaru Strait.

It was not long before the boat started. She left the shore with the brave shouts of the boatmen, in the Nanbu accent. The sailors of the ship were leaning on the bulwark, looking down at the approaching boats filled with passengers. Unfortunately, the first and the second classes were both full on that day. Although I was somewhat fearful, on account of traveling with my wife, to take the third class and be treated like cargo, I
concluded from experience that nothing is better than the deck in such fine weather. Instantly

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upon our arrival on the steamer, we took our places at the prow.

Meanwhile, upon the stroke of the bell announcing ten o'clock, the noisy sounds of the weighing anchor were heard. The steam whistle was blown as if to bid farewell, and it resounded through the sky overhanging the harbor. The ship began to sail.

The deck where we took our place was near to the mast, larger than one could reach around. When the cool wind blew from the southwest, sending the gay sunshine with the breezes, I felt at last somewhat revived. We spread the mat under the canvas shades and rested ourselves, leaning on some of the cargo.
After a while I wanted to have a smoke, but, searching around my waist, I found there was no tobacco pouch. Then, gazing at my face, my wife said:

"You see? Surely you have left it again at the inn," and she smiled.

This was quite a surprise to me. I thought I was very composed, but, although I was constantly scolding my wife to brace her up, it was proved by this oversight that my own dejection was more than that of hers. "Now, then," I thought, "I myself must be somewhat queer," and I suddenly felt dispirited. The more I tried not to be overcome, the more my brain was oppressed with deep chagrin. No doubt I was becoming an idiot.
The ship sailed out from the gulf of Awomori, leaving behind the lighthouse of Hiradate, white in the distance; the sun was mounting higher in the sky. The dark blue waves of the Japan current rolled in from the Sea of Japan, broke resoundingly against the side of the ship, and sparkled in the sunshine. In the lazy hours of the voyage, people came and went on the deck, pausing to admire the view. I also leaned on the bulwark and listened to the sounds of the summer tides, filling my mind with the voice of the late July sea. Suddenly, my thoughts were possessed by my son. Bitter recollections gushed up in my heart. It may sound strange, coming from a parent's lips, but, although he was only a boy when he died, he was clever enough to understand the joy and sorrow of life; my Ryunosuke was not a boy to be
beaten by his fellow students in any of his studies.

Observing the world, I notice that the present age, lacking in faith, does not keep the young mind in quietude.

Such, was the short life of my son. Such an insatiable spirit as his could not help investigating the meaning of life, from exploring all its works, its glories, and its decadences. Leaving the curious multitudes, who looked upon him as a great fool in his misconceptions, how did he feel when he retired from this life, silently, with unutterable sorrow in his mind?

The desperation of thought--- if the word could be applied also to the life of this youth --- this was certainly the transient but brave span of Ryunosuke. Pity that he was not a sage! He discovered that his learning made
sage! He discovered that his learning made him ignorant. Alas! my son quit his studies and his studies quit him. At last he went to Nikkwo, and died by throwing himself into the fall of Kegon. I shall never forget that day when my son came home quite unexpectedly, and bade us farewell without telling us his intention, nor that evening when I gave him my last reproof. The next morning, and the second morning --- there has been grief in every morning since that time. My wife became crazed, weeping and crying.

"It is your fault that you gave him such a reproof! Give me back my son alive, now, at once!"

It was inevitable. We were compelled to constrain her by force; we wrapped her in quilts, holding her; we scolded and cajoled
her. But the strength of the crazed woman was almost more than ours. I myself did not eat nor sleep regularly for seven days. Indeed, the condition of my wife at that time was such that it would not have been impossible for her to have followed our son, to have thrown herself into the waterfall of Nikkwo mountain. When she became a bit calmer I thought of a plan, which was this journey. I hoped that her distressed mind might be cured by seeing some of the famous places. As she had exquisite taste, in spite of her appearance, I thought I might be able to buy some Obi, or sashes, if she cared for them. Inducing her to see the modern fashions, hoping to quiet her, we started out on this journey.

Alas, my son! After he had passed through the bitterest sufferings, at the moment he
came to think about death, even he could hardly have dreamed of his father becoming an idiot, and his mother a lunatic, weeping during the day, thinking during the night, and roaming thus far to the northern sea.

I, who am speaking this, am only a man who has spent a most ordinary but peaceful and quiet life in the country. How could I foresee that this peaceful life would change abruptly in its forty-third year? Seeking relief, we felt like wandering pilgrims. Inhaling the sea air of July, two fools were listening to the dreamy sounds of the waves, meditating upon the death of their only child.

Strange imaginings came into my mind. If the dead body should float up from the basin of that waterfall, and be borne away by the current, where would it go? Nowhere
but into this ocean! Yes, yes, this restless place of wind and wave; this must be the grave of my son! Here Ryunosuke must be sleeping for ever and ever . . . thus, in fancy, I was indulging my thoughts when the bell of twelve o'clock resounded through the ship.

For lunch, a Bento in a square luncheon-box, was distributed to each of the passengers. We could not eat ours on account of the boiled cuttle-fish. But two young men, who came with their own luncheons, took their seat close to us, and began to eat with gusto. One of them looked as though he were accustomed to labor. He reminded me of "Amkosan," the young men who are said, after indulgence in wine and women, to draw the snow-sledges at such a place as Goryokaku.
The other boy looked two or three years younger than his friend, and seemed just about the age of my son. Apparently, he was a student, as was shown by his naive appearance. And then, the youthfulness of the expression about his eyes when he looked at the sea through his spectacles, was singularly like that of Ryunosuke. There is such a thing as the "haunting resemblance of the stranger." However, I was quite surprised in my own mind, wondering whether it was possible for anyone else to see such a resemblance. How I gazed, rubbing my eyes, at the silhouette of the student!

As for my wife, I looked at her and saw she entertained the same feeling. When we looked at each other, we understood our mutual thought without a word. Ah! it is
unreasonable that I should meet my dead son on this ship, and it was a trick of my imagination that caused me to think that only if I should address him, he would speak to me saying: "Father! Father!" and, taking my hand, would complain of the

mysteries and fears and agonies of the other world. "Surely he is my son, my Ryunosuke." Such an absurd thought could only spring from the foolish heart of a parent. I do not know how often I repeated "Ryunosuke! Ryunosuke!" in my mind. I was tempted to cry out in a loud voice, and was astonished at my own absurdity.

At last I addressed the young man.

"Pardon me. Where do you come from?"

"I?" the student smiled. "I came from Goshu."
"Goshu? Then you came from along way off!"

"Yes. I have an uncle in Sendai, and came up to ask his assistance, but as I found him absent, being called out for war ... Anyway, I am going up to Hokkaido to try to find some work. I have been told that there is profitable employment at Sapporo. If I cannot find work in Sapporo, I may go even to Asahigawa."

"Is that so? Young men ought to be that way. You do not need to worry. You will find plenty of work, if only you have a mind to do it."

Thus, comforting him, I recognized the simple, cheerful, and yet manly
temperament of this student. Now and then the older companion glanced stealthily toward us with distrustful looks. I could not understand why this student had such a companion. I inquired of him, and was told that they became comrades by chance. They seemed not especially friends nor men from the same district; in other words, they were only fellow wanderers.

My wife took out some apples from her package. These were bought the evening before, at Awomori, from a basket when we were surrounded by the women who sell fruits. Ryunosuke was
fond of things with a delicate flavor,

which my wife seemed to remember.

As if to give them to her son, she selected the alluring yellow apples from the green ones and recommended them to the two young men. I told the younger one in detail of the loss of my son and the reason of starting on
this journey with my wife, who cannot hear well, and added:

"This also must be the work of fate, to meet you in this place. Please take one of them. Don't be ceremonious."

"Come, they are so kind. Let us accept them," said the companion, as he
pushed forth impudently.

"Please do so," I urged them, offering my knife.

My wife was leaning on me like a child, and gazing at the hands of the student paring the apple. Tears of memory seemed to flow ceaselessly down her cheeks. Forgetting everything, even our bodies, we longed for the recalled face of our son whom we never expected to see in this world.'

The student and his companion bit the apples like hungry
animals, so that even the crunching sounded delicious, and ate them heartily with vigor and appetite.

"Sweet! Isn't it?" Whispering to his companion, the student smelled the flavor of the apple, squinting his eyes.

"Sweet!" The companion also tasted his eagerly.

By the time the one o'clock bell had rung, all of the passengers were tired of their journey; some of them were lying down with
their packages as pillows, some were sleeping on the deck with their mouths open like fishes. The reports of the Russo-Japanese War, which were much discussed about the mast, had entirely ceased. There was nobody on this ship who did not desire speedily to reach Hakodate. The only passengers who wished to continue the journey as long as possible in this way were ourselves; that was because we knew there were only three hours more to be with this young man, and be reminded of Ryunosuke. After parting from him here, we
were not sure that we should ever meet him again; nay, not only should we never see again our son, but we should probably never again in

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our lives see the face that resembled his.

"You are gazing at something, aren't you?"

The student stepped out and patted the shoulder of his companion. The companion turned to him.
"Look at that smoke."

"Smoke?"

"It is strange that smoke appears in this direction."

"Let me see! Where --- no, there is no smoke, nothing like it."

"Why, can't you see it?"

Wondering at the conversation of these two men, I also left the side of the mast. Far off to the east of the Strait the dark "Father Tide" -- on which groups of cuttlefish are accustomed to ride down, that Kurile tide dipping the
Groups or clouds were floating in the sky. The excessive heat of a midsummer noon on the thirtieth of July, seemed to burn the sea. The sky above the horizon was a dark gray, mingled with purple. The air was hazy, but nothing like smoke was to be seen. Before I realized it, the captain, who, for some time had been reading "The Law of General Average," went up to the bridge, and was eagerly looking through the marine glass.
Suddenly, we felt uneasy. The ship had probably sailed at a fair speed since leaving Awomori. When she was sailing at full speed toward Cape Oma, which was on her starboard side, the cloud of smoke was seen exactly in that direction. After twenty minutes, a second smoke appeared, then a third. The Vladivostock fleet, which was said to have appeared along the coast of the Pacific Ocean, was slowly sailing, from Cape Oma to Cape
Tatsuhi. Approaching nearer, the ships became more distinct. When the three gray ships of the enemy, of portentous appearance, were seen approaching our defenseless vessel, sailors and passengers all stood up. The battle formation of the enemy was in single line. First came the Rossia, then the Gronboi with the Riurick a little behind them.

Joyful or sad memories or imaginings were all blotted out by this unexpected view. Nobody remained in the dark cabin.
Forgetting the vertigo, the nausea, and the sufferings of fatigue, the hundred and fifty passengers came out at once on deck. All those who have been standing at the stern passed through the kitchen and pressed toward the prow.

"Go down! Go down! Go down if you want to save your life!"

But the cries and scoldings of the sailors could not control the confusion of the excited men, screaming women and children.
The dreadful sound of the engine gave an added touch of gloom. As the enemy were known to be such vicious fighters that they sank even the sailing boat 
Seishomaru and robbed it of the money and cargo, all on board felt that there was no time for delay. They bared their feet, and tucked up their skirts, in order to be as prepared as possible.

"I will take charge of your wife."

The words of the student were hardly heard. Having already lost her color,
my wife stood shuddering, close to the student.

Death --- we were face to face with that force! A group of sailors took off the duck rain-covers from the lifeboats to prepare them for lowering at any moment. As it was the captain's hope to be within the limit of the protection of the fort, if only the ship could run one hour more at full speed, the ship dashed along with all possible speed, nay, even with a desperate force rather than speed.
In this dangerous situation there appeared, suddenly, from the direction of Hakodate, our fleet running in the same direction as the Russian ships. 'The enemy also saw this fleet and, seeming to hesitate, stopped their advance. The fact is that it was the time when they took the last resolution to pass the Tsugaru Strait again. Sending up volumes of black smoke, they began all at once to flee like a flock of birds. With the exclamation of "Banzai! Banzai!"
all the people on the deck shook their hats toward our fleet.

"Now, we are safe!"

Turning back to my wife, I sighed with relief.

"Safe!" I repeated. My wife was still leaning on the shoulder of the student.

As my wife and I, turning again to the thought of our son, settled down to spend the few remaining hours in conversation with the student, the mount Gagyu appeared to our view. We caught
sight of the red cliff jutting into the sea, the rugged precipice from whose surface the reflection of the sun shone white on the sky of the port of Hakodate. A sea-gull flew near to the bulwark as if to congratulate us on our safe arrival.

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Hakodate. A sea-gull flew near to the bulwark as if to congratulate us on our safe arrival.

We arrived at the entrance of the port at the appointed hour, four o'clock. Ah! I How great the joy of the people when they saw the streets of Hakodate from the deck! The gray roofs of planed
board on the slope of the mountain; the new ridge poles soaring among the houses built in Nanbu style of stone and sand; the landscape covered with the green leaves of Matsubuna and Itaya, from the high tower of the temple shining in sunlight to the custom house, hospital, and the buildings of many schools. This prospect of the port of New Japan extended before our eyes, exciting our interest.

The enormous group of people, gathered on the seashore, raised a wild shout
of joy to welcome the safe arrival of the liner. The *Surugamaru* also made the air resound with whistles! Passing through the many sailing ships, steamboats, cargo-boats, sampans and lighters, the *Surugamaru* approached the pier, --- looking like a scared water-bird, who had barely escaped from peril, and was hurrying to the shore, crying out to her friends. When the ship stopped, and seemed to sigh with relief, the waves lapped about her with whisperings.
Then the passengers jumped into the sampans and hastened to land on the pier. What a sight of madness! Persons landing, persons waiting to receive them, parents embracing their children, sisters their sisters, caressing and embracing! All the women wept for joy, which stirred the emotion of all onlookers.

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At last the time came to part with the student. Full of regret, I was standing vacantly in the crowd, and forgot not only the clamoring hotel-runners, but everything,
even to the package I placed on the ground and the bag I was carrying, wishing only to continue speaking with this young man. How I was moved at this unexpected intimacy and this parting, thinking over the events of the day's voyage!

Becoming conscious of the disappearance of his companion, we turned back and saw his arm firmly taken by a big policeman.

"There! pickpocket!" said those who gathered around us.

"Look! What are you thinking
about? Don't you know you have been robbed?"

Being addressed by the policeman, I was aware for the first time that the package I had placed on the ground was gone.

"What! Impudent!" exclaimed the student excitedly. "I am, not such a man as to commit lawlessness!"

"Don't be excited. Where did you come from? I myself did not see
you break the law. But you are the companion of the man who did it, aren't you?"

As the policeman said this, I told him every fact I knew, and defended the student from the imputation of being a suspicious character. The policeman nodded at each of my words and, after he inquired of the student how he became a companion of such a scoundrel as the pickpocket, he made more inquiries and admonitions, and also advised me to appear against the thief in court.
"Wait a bit. I want to keep your name and address."

The policeman took out his notebook and gazed at the face of the student.

"What is your address?"

"Kusatsu town, Awata district, Omi county."

"Your name?"

"Nishihara Yasutaro."

"Your age?"
“Nineteen.”

After this catechism, the student bade farewell to my wife and me, and started again on his wanderings. I looked at the appearance of his back as he disappeared, and could not help being again reminded of my departed Ryunosuke. My wife, weeping and scarcely able to stand, looked after him, leaning on my shoulder. Gazing this way and that, we continued to look until
the straw summer hat, the student-like figure in the white cloth of Kasuri, disappeared amid the crowd, and at last faded away.

THE END