

Naked Laborers

Aoto-Fujitsuna was a samurai in the Kamakura period, working at the Council of State. This is one of the episodes about him.

One day in winter, when Aoto got across a river on horseback with his fellows, he happened to drop some coins from his money-bag in the middle of the river.

"Oh dear! Even if they are small change, I have to find them. I can't leave them here."

He hurried to get to the other side of the riverbank, and checked his money-bag. The money he lost was 10-*mons*.

"If I leave them on the riverbed, they'll get rusty. I have to pick them up at any cost."

Aoto ordered his fellows to hire ten hands. He said to the hands,

"When I got across this river, I carelessly dropped 10-*mons*. If someone find them, I'll give 50-*mons* to each of you as a reward."

Listening to him, they began working to look for the coins Aoto had dropped.

"They must be somewhere around there. Well, maybe you should stand a little to the right. No, a little to the left!"

Aoto spoke to them loudly to suggest their place.

A few hours had passed. Though they vigorously worked at first, they gradually felt cold. They soon got cold from top to toe, and wanted to stop the work.

They started complaining,

"It's so cold! I have to get out of this cold water. Otherwise I'll be frozen to death. I don't want 50-*mons* anymore. "

Just then, one of the hands cried,

"I've found some!"

"Have you found any coins?" Aoto asked the hand.

"Yes, I found 3-*mons*."

"Don't move there! The others must be near there. Find the rest of them!"

The man crouched down again and put his both hands into the cold water and cried,

"I found another coin! Oh, I found one more!"

At last he picked up all 10-*mons* by himself. He was a man with a scar on his forehead.

So pleased, Aoto said,

"You have a sharp nose to find them by yourself. I'll give you an extra 100-*mons* as a prize in addition to 50-*mons*."

Aoto said to all the hands,

"I am so satisfied. It sounds like absurd for me to pay you 50-*mons* to each of you, and additional 100-*mons* for the finder. But if the coins had been left on the riverbed, they would have gotten rusty. Though they were only 10-*mons*, they were treasures made in this country. Even if I wasted my money, the money I paid comes and goes around. This country must make a profit from them. I've done something good today. Thank you so much! Enjoy yourself with the money you've



gotten!”

Seeing Aoto and his men off, they said to each other,

“There's a beautiful moon tonight, and we have money to spend. Let's drink and sing and have a good time!!”

Soon they started to have a big party around a fire on the river shore.

One of the hands said to the man with a scar,

“I have to say thank you. What wonderful instincts you have to find 10-*mons* in this broad river! It's a miracle.”

The man with a scar laughed and said,

“Do you really think that I have a sharp nose? I only used my head.”

“So how did you find them?”

“I used a trick. It is absolutely impossible to find small coins in the broad river. To tell the truth, they were my coins. Ha-ha-ha,” he gave them a hearty laugh.

“What? Your coins? How did you pick them up?”

“I didn't pick them up. I stealthily took out 3-*mons*, and then 2-*mons*, little by little from my pocket, and pretended to be looking for the coins Aoto had lost. Think of it! Even if I use 10-*mons*, I can get 50-*mons*. I didn't want to work in the cold water for hours. What is more, he gave me an extra 100-*mons*. I'm more clever than Aoto.”

The man who had asked the man with a scar was struck with his remark.

“What a great idea! You are indeed more clever than Aoto!”

Another man, who had also worked with them in the river, made a wry face and cried to the man with a scar,

“Idiot! The trickster is much more vicious than the thief. When Aoto gave us rewards, he said that the coins were treasures made in this country without minding his own loss. What a sinful man you are to deceive such a man of a shining example! I have my old mother to support, so I had joined the work to get that money, but after hearing your boasting, I can't get this dirty money,” he threw away his 50-*mons* to the trickster, “I am completely disgusted by you. I'll go home and serve my old mother.”

The man who had thick eyebrows angrily left there.

Before long, Aoto got the rumor that one of the hands deceived him at the work in the river. He remembered what had happened that day.

“Now that I've come to think of it, there was something suspicious about the man who had found the coins, It is surely strange that he could find 10-*mons* by himself while the others couldn't find any.”

He ordered his fellows to find out the fact and to bring him the man who had tricked him. Soon the man was taken into Aoto's residence.

Aoto said to the man with a big scar on his forehead,

“I heard that you told the rest of the hands that you had done a wicked deed to me. Is it true? If you don't tell the truth, I'll ask other men and you'll be severely punished.”

The man with a scar gave up and confessed everything.

Aoto said to the man,

“What a rude man you are to deceive me! I'd like to tear you apart as a sentence, but I'm worried

about 10-*mons* left in the river. So I order you to look for 10-*mons* alone in the river. Even if it takes you five or six years, you have to keep looking for them until you find all ten coins out. You have to serve the sentence with nothing to put on except a loincloth so that you can't trick us again. You are not allowed to take a day off even in rain or snow. You'll be always watched by my fellows.”

He at last found 1-*mon* 15 days later, which encouraged him a lot. It was getting colder and colder early in the winter. He felt that he would be frozen to death if he kept working.

The rumor soon spread all over Kamakura (in Kanagawa Prefecture) that a naked man was working to find ten coins in the cold river and many people went there to watch him.

“How poor a man he is! But he has no choice but to do so, because he deceived Aoto.”

In the depth of winter, the water in the river became less and less and the sandy river bottom began to appear. He found 2-*mons*, then 3-*mons*. At last he succeeded in finding all the coins.

Aoto said to the offender,

“Though the crime that you deceived me is heavy, I'll forgive you because you've found all the coins. Never commit such a crime again!”

The man made a deep bow to Aoto several times and left there.

Meanwhile, Aoto heard of the man with thick eyebrows who had angrily left his company. He secretly made his fellows investigate the background of the man with thick-eyebrows. He was a respectable man, but a master-less samurai at that time for a reason, so he was joining that work. Aoto was moved by his courageous act and reported about him to Tokiyori, the fifth regent of the Kamakura shogunate. The man was drafted as a samurai again and lived a happy life. (2014.9.1 With Itaya)



裸で銭さがし

鎌倉時代、青砥藤綱は鎌倉幕府の評定衆の一人として重要な役割を担っていました。この逸話は彼にまつわるものの一つです。

ある冬の日、家臣と共に馬で川を渡る際、川の中ほどで、青砥は銭入れから小銭を数枚落としてしまいました。

「これはしたり！たとえ小銭であっても、捜さねばなるまい。このまま捨て置くわけにはいかん。」

青砥は向こう岸に急ぎ、銭入れを調べると十文足りません。

「川の中に捨て置いたなら、錆びるであろう。何としても捜さねばならぬ。」

青砥は家臣に命じて村人を十人ほど雇いました。

青砥はその人夫たちに言いました。

「わしは不覚にも、この川を渡る際に十文落としてしまった。誰ぞ、このうちで十文捜し出す者あらば、褒美としてそれぞれに五十文ずつ取らせよう。」

これを聞いて、人夫たちはさっそく青砥が落としたお金を捜し始めました。

「確かあの辺りだ。もう少し右。いや違う、もうちょっと左だ。」

青砥は大声で場所を指示しました。

数刻が過ぎ、最初は必死になって捜していた人夫たちですが、段々と体が冷えてきました。頭の前から足の先まですっかり冷え切り、もうご免とブツブツ言い始めました。

「おおっ、さむっ！この冷たさは身にしみる。凍え死んだらおしまいだ。五十文なんぞ、もうどうでもいい。」

その時、人夫の一人が大声を上げました。

「あったぞ！」

「本当か？」青砥はその人夫に確かめました。

「三文見つけました。」

「そこだ！残りもその辺りにきつとあるに相違ない。捜し出せ！」

男は再び前かがみになり両手を冷たい川に入れると、声を上げました。

「また一文あったぞ！おっ、もう一文！」

とうとう男は一人で十文全部を見つけ出しました。男の額には傷痕（きずあと）がありました。

青砥は大層喜んで言いました。

「お前一人で全部見つけるとは中々大したものだ。五十文に加えて、さらに百文あげよう。」

青砥は人夫全員に言いました。

「わしは大変満足だ。お前たち全員に五十文ずつ、さらに当の本人に百文あげるのは馬鹿げているように思うかも知れぬ。だが、もしあの銭が川底に捨て置かれたら、錆びてしまうであろう。たかが十文ではあるが、銭はこの国のお宝だ。わしが銭をこのように使ったとしても、銭というものは天下の回り物、この国の利益となる。今日は良いことをした。皆の者、よくやった。手に入れた銭で十分楽しむがよい！」

青砥の一行を見送った人夫たちはお互いに、

「今夜はいい月だ。銭も手に入れた。飲んで歌って楽しもうぜ！」と、声を掛け合いました。

人夫たちはさっそく川原で火を囲んで、酒盛りを始めました。

一人の人夫が傷痕のある男に言いました。



「恩に着るよ。こんな広い川で十文を見つけるとは大したもんだ。まさに神がかりだ。」

傷の男は笑って言いました。

「俺が本当に捜したと思っているのかい？頭を使ったんだよ。」

「じゃあ、どうやって見つけたんだよ？」

「ごまかしたのよ。こんな大きな川で小銭を捜し当てるなんて不可能なことよ。実はな、あれは俺の小銭さ。はっ、はっ、はっ」

男は腹を抱えて笑いました。

「何だと？お前の小銭？じゃあどうやって拾ったんだよ？」

「拾ってなんかいないさ。青砥さまの落とした小銭を捜しているふりをして、俺の懐からこっそり三文、二文と少しずつ出したのさ。考えても見ろよ、俺が十文損しても五十文貰える。こんな冷たい川に何時間もいるのはご免だぜ。その上、さらに百文も手に入った。青砥さまより俺さまの方が一枚上手（うわて）さ。」

傷の男に尋ねた男は、その言葉に感じ入りました。

「なるほど。確かにお前のほうが青砥さまより知恵がまわる！」

川で一緒に働いていた別の男が、不快感に傷の男を怒鳴りつけました。

「この阿呆！詐欺は盗人よりずっと質（たち）が悪い。青砥さまが褒美を下さるとき、自分の損を気にすることなく、銭は国の宝である、と申された。そんな、人の鑑（かがみ）とも言いえるようなお方を騙すとは、なんと罪深いことよ！俺は、年老いた母親を養う銭を得ようと、この仕事に加わったが、お前の自慢話を聞いた上は、不浄な金は受け取れぬ。」

男は詐欺師に五十文を投げつけました。

「お前には呆れ果てた。帰って年老いた母の面倒を見るよ。」

眉の濃いその男は怒って立ち去りました。

やがて、青砥は川の銭さがしで自分を騙した人夫の噂を耳にしました。あの日のことを思い浮かべてみました。

「つらつら考えるに、小銭を見つけたあの男には何やら怪しい節（ふし）があった。他の者が一文も見つけられぬのに、見つけてしまうとは。一人で十文も見つけられるわけがない。」

青砥は事の次第を明らかにし、自分を騙した男を連れてくるよう家臣に命じました。まもなく男は青砥の屋敷に連れて来られました。

青砥は額に大きな傷のある男に言いました。

「お前は、私に悪事を働いたことを他の人夫に話したそうだな。それは真か？嘘を申すと、他の者にも尋ねて、罪を重くするぞ。」

傷の男は観念して自供しました。

青砥は男に言いました。

「私を騙すとは何と無礼な！八つ裂きの刑にしたい所だが、川の中の十文が気にかかる。たとえ、五、六年かかろうとも、お前は十文すべてが見つかるまで捜し続けよ。二度と悪さができぬよう禪（ふんどし）以外は身に着けてはならぬ。雨の日も雪の日も休んではならぬ。家来がいつも見張っているであろう。」

男は十五日経って、やっと一文見つけると、やる気が出てきました。冬に入って段々と寒くなって来ました。動いていないと凍え死んでしまうと思いました。

まもなく鎌倉中に、裸の男が寒い川で十文を捜している、という噂が広まり、多くの人が男を見に来ました。

「可哀想に！でも青砥さまを騙したのだから仕方がないさ。」

冬の真っ只中、川の水が段々と少なくなり川床が現れ始めました。男は、二文、そして三文というように見つけました。そしてついに十文全部を見つけることが出来ました。

青砥は男に言いました。

「お前が私を騙した罪は重いが、落とした銭、全部見つけたゆえ、許す。二度と悪いことはするでないぞ！」

男は何度も深々と頭を下げ、去って行きました。

さて青砥は、怒って仲間の下（もと）を去った眉の濃い男のことも耳にしました。眉の濃い男の身元を密かに家臣に調べさせました。男は、ひとかどの人物であったが、やむなき理由で浪人となり、あの銭さがしに加わったのです。青砥は男の立派な振る舞いを感じ入り、男のことを鎌倉五代執権時頼公に言上（ごんじょう）しました。男は再び侍として召しかかえられ、幸せな生活を送りました。（kudos）



原作：西鶴「武家義理物語」巻1の1『我物ゆえに裸川』