

Hagakure

YAMAMOTO Tsunetomo
1716

trad. William Scott WILSON (1979)
éd° Kodansha International (1983)

From the first chapter

27-28 CORRIGER AUTRUI To give a person one's opinion and correct his faults is an important thing. It is compassionate and comes first in matters of service. But **the way of doing this is extremely difficult**. To discover the good and bad points of a person is an easy thing, and give an opinion concerning them is easy, too. For the most part, people think that they are being kind by saying the things that the others find distasteful or difficult to say. But if it is not received well, they think that there is nothing more to be done. This is completely worthless. It is the same as bringing shame to a person by slandering him. It is nothing more than getting it off one's chest.

To give one's opinion one must first judge well whether that person is of the disposition to receive it or not. One must become close with him and make sure that he continually trusts one's word. Approaching subjects that are dear to him, seek the best way to speak and be well understood. Judge the occasion, and determine whether it is better by letter or at the time of leave-taking. Praise his good points and use every device to encourage him, perhaps by talking about one's own faults without touching on his, but so that they will occur to him. Have him receive this in the way that a man would drink water when his throat is dry, and it will be an opinion that will correct faults.

This is extremely difficult. If a person's fault is a habit of some years prior, by and large it won't be remedied. I have had this experience myself. To be intimate with all one's comrades, correcting each other's faults, and being of one mind to be of use to the master is the great compassion of a retainer. By bringing shame to a person, how could one expect to make him a better man?

33 MATTERS OF GREAT CONCERN SHOULD BE TREATED LIGHTLY Thinking about things previously and then handling them lightly when the times comes is what this is all about.

34-35 SUR LA DEUXIEME CHANCE A man who makes a mistake once will be considerably more prudent and useful because of his repentance. [...] A man who has never erred once is dangerous.

37 NE PAS FIXER/S'ARRÊTER It is not good to settle into a set of opinions. It is a mistake to put forth effort and obtain some understanding and then stop at that. At first putting forth great effort to be sure you have grasped the basics, then practicing so that they may come to fruition is something that will never stop for your whole lifetime. Do not rely on following the degree of understanding that you have discovered, but simply think, "This is not enough."

43 APPRENDRE Learning is a good thing, but more often it leads to mistakes. It is like the admonition of the priest Koonan. It is worthwhile just looking at the deeds of accomplished persons for the purpose of knowing our own insufficiencies. But often this does not happen. For the most part, we admire our own opinions and become fond of arguing.

44 UNE TEMPÊTE PEUT NOUS EN APPRENDRE There is something to be learned from a rainstorm. When meeting with a sudden shower, you try not to get wet and run quickly along the road. But doing such things as passing the eaves of houses, you still get wet. When you are resolved from the beginning, you will not be perplexed, though you still get the same soaking. This understanding extends to everything.

46 CONSTANT VIGILANCE! You will be tripped up by people when your resolution is lax. Moreover, if at a meeting you are distracted while another person is speaking, by your carelessness you may think that he is of your opinion and you will follow along saying, "Of course, of course," even though he is saying something that is contrary to your own feelings, and others will think that you are in agreement with him. Because of this, you should never be distracted when meeting with others.

When you are listening to a story or being spoken to, you should be mindful not to be tripped up; and if there is something that you do not agree with, to speak your mind, to show your opponent his error, and to grapple with the situation. Even in unimportant affairs mistakes come from little things

48 RATTRAPER SES ERREURS AU PLUS VITE It is said that one should not hesitate to correct himself when he has made a mistake. If he corrects himself quickly without the least bit of delay, his mistakes will quickly disappear. But when he tries to cover up a mistake, it will become all the more unbecoming and painful.

From the second chapter

94 SUR LES RANTS DES ANCIENS When you are listening to the stories of accomplished men and the like, you should listen with deep sincerity, even if it's something about which you already know. **If in listening to the same thing ten or twenty times it happens that you come to an unexpected understanding, that moment will be very special.** Within the tedious talk of old folks are their meritorious deeds.

From the tenth chapter

158 TRAVERSER LE DANGER Once a group of ten blind masseuses were travelling together in the mountains, and when they began to pass along the top of a precipice, they all became very cautious, their legs shook, and they were in general struck with terror. Just then, the leading man stumbled and fell off the cliff. Those that were left all wailed, "Ahh, ahh! How piteous!"

But the masseuse who had fallen yelled up from below, "Don't be afraid. Although I fell, it was nothing. I am now rather at ease. Before falling I kept thinking 'What will I do if I fall?' and there was no end to my anxiety. But now I've settled down. If the rest of you want to be at ease, fall quickly!"