

From *The Annals of Surgery* (1898):



With the kaishaku on his left, the condemned man advanced slowly towards the Japanese witnesses, and the two bowed before them. Then drawing near to the foreigners, they saluted in the same way. Slowly, and with great dignity, the victim mounted the raised floor, prostrated himself before the altar twice, and seated himself in the Japanese fashion (knees and toes touching the ground, and the body resting on the heels, — always a position of respect) on the felt carpet, with his back to the altar and the kaishaku crouching at his left side. One of the three attendant officers came forward bearing a stand of the kind used in temples for offerings, on which, wrapped in paper, lay the short sword, or dirk, of the Japanese, with a point and edge sharp as a razor. This he handed, prostrating himself, to the condemned man, who received it reverently, raising it to his head with both hands, and placed it in front of himself. After another obeisance, he said, in a clear voice, betraying no sign of fear or emotion, 'I, and I alone, un-warrantedly gave the order to fire on the foreigners at Kobe, and again as they tried to escape. For this crime I disembowel myself. I beg you who are present to do me the honor of witnessing the act.' Bowing once more, he permitted his garments to slip to his girdle and remained naked to the waist. Carefully, according to the custom, he tucked his sleeve under his knee to prevent himself from falling backward, for a noble Japanese gentleman should die falling forward. Deliberately, and with a steady hand, he took the dirk that lay before him, and looking at it wistfully, almost affectionately, for a moment, he seemed to collect his thoughts for the last time; then stabbing himself deeply below the waist on the left side, he drew it slowly across to the right side, and turning the knife in the wound, he gave a slight cut upward. During this operation he never moved a muscle of his face. Finally, drawing out the dirk, he leaned forward and stretched out his neck. At that moment the kaishaku, still crouching by his side, sprang to his feet, poised his sword for a second in the air, and with one blow the head was severed from the body. The kaishaku in dead silence made a low bow, wiped his sword, and retired from the raised floor. The stained dirk was solemnly borne away as proof of the execution."